



EXHIBITIONS

Lili Reynaud-Dewar "TEETH, GUMS, MACHINES, FUTURE, SOCIETY" at Museion, Bolzano

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Lili Reynaud-Dewar (La Rochelle, France 1975, lives in Paris and Grenoble) opens Museion's 2017 exhibition programme. One of the most distinctive artists on the contemporary scene, Reynaud-Dewar's complex oeuvre references the liberation movements and subcultures of the twentieth century, exploring the notion of cultural, social and emotive identity.

The Bolzano exhibition is the artist's first solo show in Italy; in 2014, at the invitation of guest curator Pier Bal Blanc, for Museion she produced the video "Live Through That?!", which featured her dancing naked through the empty museum.

The video is currently on show in the exhibition "The Power of Photography" devoted to the photographic works in the Museion collection (on till 17/09/2017). Reynaud-Dewar's show is one in a series of solo exhibitions by female artists who firmly reject conventional frames of reference – from VALIE EXPORT to Teresa Margolles and Monica Bonvicini, Rosemarie Trockel, Isa Genzken and Rossella Biscotti.

"TEETH, GUMS, MACHINES, FUTURE, SOCIETY" is presented in the spacious area on the fourth floor of Museion. Amidst science-fiction and rap music, imposing layouts and disorder, the exhibition comes across as one large installation comprising a range of different elements such as video, film, panels and objects. Everything revolves around two interconnected themes. On one hand, the so-called grills, teeth decorations that are a status symbol in rap and hip hop culture, that the artist provocatively appropriates. The fact of using grills to modify part of the anatomy in turn recalls another key element of the show, the essay *A Cyborg Manifesto* by the feminist Donna Haraway. Published in 1985, the essay calls for a move beyond a binary mindset based on dichotomies such as nature/culture, man/woman, right/wrong, truth/illusion and self/other, envisioning a future without discrimination. The other works on display include a new video created in Bolzano for the exhibition.



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The starting point and core of the show is the eponymous film *TEETH, GUMS, MACHINES, FUTURE, SOCIETY* (2016), shown on a large screen. White cushions scattered on a black carpet give visitors somewhere to sit and watch the film, which shows the preparation and

staging of a performance in Memphis, Tennessee.

On the stage of the city's famous "Levitt Shell" amphitheatre, excerpts from Donna Haraway's manifesto are recited, while four local stand-up comedians improvise on the text. Reynaud-Dewar chose Memphis for its history as the centre of the slave trade and the Civil Rights Movement, which culminated in the sanitation strike by a majority of black workers, and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Memphis is also the legendary home of American blues, the final resting place of Elvis Presley, and now a dynamic hub for rap culture.

In the performance, the white, European artist uses this specific historical and socio-cultural background, and the four comedians, to tackle the issue of appropriation and transmission of a status symbol like grills – dental ornaments made of precious metals. While the "metal mouth" look has become popular with celebrities in recent years, including Lady Gaga and Madonna, they have been an ambivalent presence in black musical culture since the early 1990s. On one hand they are an example of ballin' and flossin', namely making a show of wealth and success. On the other, they are also used to hide rotten teeth, highlighting the part of society excluded from dental insurance cover. Grills thus emphasise the teeth and their special position between the outside and inside of the body, between the public and private dimensions. More broadly speaking, they are also a subverted image of the American dream. Grills are also physically present in the exhibition – 12 handmade pieces in gold, silver and silver-plated gold – and as oversized installations that serve as waste bins. Rubbish gathered by the artist during the filming of the performance in Memphis as a way of commemorating the historic strike is also littered around the venue.

Reynaud-Dewar's interest in grills as a "cybernetic" prosthesis and element of social emancipation connects up to the 1985 essay by Donna Haraway entitled *A Cyborg Manifesto*. Albeit ironically, the feminist manifesto deploys the cyborg as a metaphor for eliminating the dividing lines between human, machine and nature, heralding a chimeric fusion in which boundaries of class, race and sex no longer apply. Various excerpts from Donna Haraway's manifesto appear on large panels which structure the space, and on posters scattered on the ground.

The exhibition also includes a "video of the dance" in colour, previously unreleased, filmed in Museion, which shows the artist wandering around the venue, her naked body painted silver and wearing grills on her teeth, almost like a human grill herself. Her fleeting physical presence connects the exhibition to the film and explores issues of cultural and spatial appropriation, that of roles and her own identification with the issues raised in the project.

at Museion, Bolzano (<http://www.museion.it/?lang=en>)

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