

empty a humble paper bag. The machine even 'sighs' 158 times per day – to match the average respiratory frequency for an adult at rest. As with *Voice Array*, Lozano-Hemmer sets machinic rhythms against bodily chaos: leftover voices haunt the gallery; breaths are caught in a strange system of mechanical certainty. *Last Breath* plays on the futility of attempting to archive life – Portuondo is still alive, yet Lozano-Hemmer seems to have already embalmed a part of her – which always escapes through the gaps.

In Carroll / Fletcher's front space, a sea of flat, black speakers spread across one wall, each labelled as a country. As though they were individual pixels (an idea Lozano-Hemmer has discussed previously), the speakers in *Pan-Anthem* (2014) build a stark yet wry portrait of our nationalized, fragmented world. Set to play the country's national anthem as a visitor approached, they were organized along the walls according to national military spending per capita, with demilitarized countries like Andorra singing out at the other end of the wall to China, Russia and, of course, the 'Star Spangled Banner', which blurred with the anthems of Israel, UAE and Saudi Arabia, audible from eight metres away (the full length of the gallery).

Sound does not respect borders: it seeps, bleeds and soaks through them. *Pan-Anthem* stews the sonic symbols of nations together, using military might, the force through which borders are most ruthlessly maintained, as the metric to blend them. Just as a pixel is a carrier of information made sensible via a greater whole, so Lozano-Hemmer's speakers produce broader portraits, bringing disparate, competing sounds together, composing through simultaneity.

Throughout this remarkable exhibition, Lozano-Hemmer's work invited close proximity: *Last Breath* has an uncanny, almost medical intensity and *Pan Anthem* requires closeness and curiosity to trigger the work. In *Sphere Packing* (2014), orbs hang from the ceiling, in varying sizes, each containing the entire *oeuvre* of composers such as Ligeti, Mahler and Mozart. From a metre or so away, the room merely buzzes. But up close, with your ear skimming the orbs' surfaces, glimpses of symphonies emerge: moments of meaning amidst the ambient buzz.

BASIA LEWANDOWSKA CUMMINGS

1
Grace Schwindt
*Only a Free Individual Can
Create a Free Society*, 2014,
HD video still

2
Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
Pan-Anthem (detail),
2014, 300 speakers with built-in
sound playback, power supply
cables, ultrasonic range finders,
IR sensors, steel

3
Timur Si-Qin
'Premier Machinic
Funerary: Part II', 2014,
installation view



3

TIMUR SI-QIN

Carl Kostyál, London

Timur Si-Qin's sculptures have, for the past few years, stemmed from a consistent, prolonged and generally reasonable conflation of radical biological and evolutionary theory, commercial and retail visual tropes, and state-of-the-art technologies of production and display. They've been divisive from the start. Si-Qin's sleek, iconoclastic objects have been alternately celebrated and derided for their apparent artlessness: both in the sense that the works lack 'art', doing away with aesthetic principles in favour of commercial and evolutionary mantras, and in the apparent sincerity or guilelessness with which this is done.

The white funerary wreath (*Untitled*, all works 2014) that hung on a tripod in the first room of Si-Qin's exhibition 'Premier Machinic Funerary: Part II' was dually apt. It commemorates the speculative death of a human subject (*à la* post-humanism) – also evoked by two plinths each housing a 3D-printed scan of a proto-humanoid skull. Equally, the wreath, along with three bouquets of white, decaying flowers, signified the natural expiry of categories such as 'art' and 'artist' in favour of biological-commercial principles (which contain, like the art world, their own systems of production, value attribution, selection, circulation and decay). Si-Qin's exhibition was hence framed as a 'funerary' for a human subject who has completely lapsed into hyper-commercialism. 'Post-human' might also stand for 'post-artist': what might art become without the image of artist as ego-driver of production? Need we view any of this as art, or might art productively become retail, biology, ritual devotion or, simply, gift-exchange?

These questions might seem absurd, but Si-Qin is gravely serious. In addition to the two vitrine-plinths (*Skull Coffin Manifold KNMWT 17000* and *Skull Coffin Manifold KNMER 1813*) and the untitled funerary wreath, the exhibition comprised

displays showing, with no real distortion, empty, cold, contemporary retail imagery: three large, Abercrombie & Fitch-inspired black and white photographs showing male and female models in a pastoral lake setting, backlit with an LED light system (*In Memoriam 1, 2, and 3*), and a UV canvas print (*Campaign for PEACE*) covered in yin-yang symbols and the word 'PEACE'.

Peace here seemed to imply both 'R.I.P.' and 'peace on earth'. The dual premises of this exhibition – and of Si-Qin's works to date – coalesce into a forceful equation: the death of art as a return to innocence. Hence the representational impeachment of the Zen mirror referred to in the exhibition's press release and booklet as, 'thoroughly egoless and mindless [...] everything is revealed as it is'. The claim is: in an age of the post-subject, an image cannot comment or re-present, but only present the culture that begets it.

This conjecture is troubling not on account of its cynicism (perhaps, more cynically still, there *is* no cynicism), but because Si-Qin's claims are so logical and consistent. His work is remarkable for already having, like a mirror, counterclaims to much of what can be said against it. Is it commercial? Yes. Is it art? Maybe not, but nobody has it required them to be, aside from the viewer and his or her expectations. Is it good? Does it sell?

There is some truth and self-awareness here: the suggestion seems to be that, in terms of labour practices, artists need not in fact 'make' anything anymore, so the category of 'artist' might be seen as empty (or all-encompassing). There is often little outside of the conventions of a sometimes-anachronistic art world to distinguish an artist from, say, a designer, commercial photographer, choreographer, entrepreneur or mere celebrity. Several other industries have done away with such terminology altogether, in favour of more ecumenical expressions ('creatives').

But the political notion undergirding this deliberate naivety – in the sense that the work has a real idealistic faith in processes of evolution and capitalism – is that of non-accountability on the part of the art. While the works appear to advance a position on art's relationship to commerce and evolution, they ultimately shirk the consequences of this link back onto the viewer and, in doing so, refuse to acknowledge the issues that they themselves (their sale; their circulation) perpetuate. Still, as tough as it might be to admit, Si-Qin's science-fictional exhibition provokes real questions about viewership, industry, circulation, labour and the future of art, questions that we best not avoid, lest we fall into the opposite end of non-reflection. In fact, the exhibition's ideas, on the part of art or post-art, are not new: in his realist novel *The Red and the Black* (1830), Stendhal wrote that art could be 'a mirror carried along a high road. At one moment it reflects [...] the azure skies, at another [...] the puddles at your feet'. The problem, alas, with such effortless non-reflection is that no mirror can account for at least one fact: that of its own history.

PABLO LARIOS