

PROTEIN

Nina Beier and Simon Dybbroe Møller present *PROTEIN*, a collaborative project they developed for La Carpinteria, an old carpenter's workshop which has been converted into Ses12Naus's exhibition space. It sits in an old industrial area of Ibiza that feels weirdly functional and real, considering that most parts of the island have already been polished by redevelopment. Patchy asphalt, peeled walls, broken shop signs: driving through Can Bufí offers a behind-the-scene glimpse of the machine room of the cruiseship, where production reigns over appearance.

The exhibition features 500 solar-powered bugs scattered in the space, a series of framed photographic portraits of real estate agents hung on the wall at eye-level, as well as two low plinths holding piles of double-sided A1 posters.

Embedded with tiny solar panels on their backs, the bugs only move when in direct sunlight. As a result, the swarm produces patterns of accumulation that correspond to the path of the sunbeams piercing through the windows and skylights of the exhibition space. Despite the cheap plastic and exaggerated proportions, their motion and the sound of their mechanical humming feel oddly real. The infestation of such a pristine, spotless space gives an idea of what contemporary architecture could look like some hours after a mass extinction. The insects seem to be reclaiming a space designed to keep them at bay.

As a child, one of my favourite TV shows was *MacGyver*, the man who could repair anything with some chewing gum and a paper clip. Every night at 7pm, when hearing the opening intro of the theme song, I would run to the living room and watch the daily episode with my older brother. In *Trumbo's world*—aired in August 1989—*MacGyver* travels to the Brazilian jungle to deal with a swarm of ants threatening to kill the local villagers. I remember very clearly the scene

where the ants devour *MacGyver's* friend in a matter of seconds. *MacGyver's* deadly ants, alongside plenty of similar fiction stories of insects threatening human wellbeing, contributed to building an aesthetic of disgust and fear that has lived on to this day. Yet, since a few years ago, edible insects are considered an alternative to meat, potentially playing a significant role in addressing the looming food crisis linked to global warming. From pest to protein, the status of insects is changing and can prompt contradictory emotions. Like most of the objects and creatures that surround us, such as real estate agents or nightclubs, their emotional and economical value is purely contextual, providing us a rich ground for epistemological speculation.

In *PROTEIN*, a series of portraits of men and women overlook the colony of insects. The faces of this cohort blend the conventions of classical painting portraiture and corporate headshots. When looked at individually, each depicted individual bears unique facial features, yet, once stripped of their last names, they soon form a faction of generic, interchangeable individuals. In fact, the photographs reveal a side-effect of what could be an aesthetic uniformization aimed at generating a sense of familiarity. As hard as they might be trying to inspire trust in the viewer (or the customer), the straight gazes and reassuring grins of these real estate agents seem to be trapped in the super thin surface of the photographic paper behind the framed glasses.

The impossible conversation between the agents and the robotic insects creates an eerie atmosphere that is reinforced by the absence of artificial light in the exhibition space. After sunset, the bugs stand still and the portraits recede into the dimming light.

As an island whose current identity was shaped by various generations of individuals and cultural currents—from the 1950s beatniks to the hippies, the clubbers,

charter tourists and now luxury real estate hunters—one could say that Ibiza is a territory strongly driven by desire. The concept of the island as a place where desire can be pursued and achieved freely is partly what has been attracting those willing to escape different types of institutional authority. In the late-1980s and early-1990s, when rave culture emerged in the UK, some young Britons decided to flee the moral panic that plagued the UK. As a result, many of them flocked to the island, contributing to reinforce the island's club culture (and the economy related to it).

Ants is a club night taking place at *Ushuaia*, one of the largest clubs on the island. *Ushuaia*'s famous club night's logo—a giant ant—appears on the billboards lining the island's main highway. In *PROTEIN*, Nina Beier and Simon Dybbroe Møller collaborated with Kris Latocha to create a poster that borrows the *Ants* logo. Tracing an analogy between the sensual and collective intelligence of

ants, on one side, and clubbers on the other, the *Ants* night invites the public to “join the colony”.

Here the artists apply this logic to exhibition making; they treat the gallery space as a stage and this collection of fundamentally different objects, images and participants as the cast of their decidedly non-hierarchical play, *PROTEIN*.

“Sculpture and photograph and poster, bugs and houses and dancing, toys and the housing crisis and entertainment, factory work and portraits and horror, commodities and images and advertisements, fossil fuel and art and leisure, global warming and representation and swarm intelligence, sustainability and gatekeepers and vacation, plastic and appearance and style, scale and surface and sound, automaton and profession and coat of arms, solar-powered plastic bugs and portraits of real estate agents and clubbing on Ibiza.”¹

Elise Lammer

List of works

Protein, 2023

Solar cockroaches, solar spiders, solar ants, solar beetles
Dimensions variable

Entrance

Tariq, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

Space 1, from left to right

Danielle, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

Florence, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

Ian, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

Walter, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

David, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

Anson, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

Space 2, from left to right

Laura, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

Heidi, 2023

C-print, frame
56,4 × 46,2 cm

¹ Nina Beier, Simon Dybbroe Møller, excerpt of *PROTEIN*, July 2023

Nina Beier

Nina Beier (Denmark – 1975) works with found objects whose value has been shaped collectively across different time periods, generations or global realities. Hybrid and unstable, the selected objects are elastic motifs that are forever mutating in a continuous state of transformation. Following an interest in objects that carry narratives about the fundamental power structures which our society is built on, Beier's work digs into cultural codes that are particularly layered and contradictory. Her sculptures unpack the space between the intention, production, distribution, trading and use of her selected material and explores how these factors have changed over time.

Nina Beier has presented solo exhibitions at Rønnebæksholm, Denmark; Spike Island, Bristol, England; Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany; Contemporary Art Centre, Lithuania; Kunsthaus Glarus, Switzerland; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Denmark; the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California; Mudam, Luxembourg; Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. Group shows include Kunsthaus Zürich, Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Maxxi in Rome, Power Station of Art in Shanghai, Center Pompidou in Paris, Museum of Contemporary Art in Detroit, Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin and the Hammer Museum in LA. Nina Beier lives and works in Copenhagen, where she runs the exhibition space AYE–AYE together with Simon Dybbroe Møller.

Simon Dybbroe Møller

Simon Dybbroe Møller (Denmark – 1976) thinks with and through things. In his practice he digs for objects that are sort of blurry. Or rather perhaps, suspended in a kind of limbo between different conditions; objects frozen in a state of transitioning between disparate modes of existence. He is interested in objects and images that seem to have almost invented themselves, in such a way that – in his own words – they act as “nonverbal articulations of our collective subconscious”. In his photographic work he investigates the relationship between the most fundamental sensate experiences and the increasing remove and autonomy of representational media. In other words Møller's practice centers around the question of how we change media and how media changes us.

Simon Dybbroe Møller has had solo exhibitions at Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, Fondazione Giuliani in Rome, Kunsthalle Sao Paulo, 21er Haus in Vienna, Kunstverein Hannover, Frankfurter Kunstverein, among others. His work was included in the 5th Moscow Biennial, the 2nd Turin Triennial and the 9th Berlin Biennial and in group exhibitions at MOCA Detroit; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; SMK National Gallery, Copenhagen; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, and Kunstverein München. Since 2019, Dybbroe Møller has been a professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts' Sculpture School; he organizes the performance series Why Words Now and, together with Nina Beier, runs the exhibition space AYE–AYE.

Elise Lammer (curator)

(Lausanne, CH) is a curator based in Switzerland and Mallorca. Her work is committed to questions related to the role of space (public, domestic) in defining identity construction. In 2015 she founded the research platform and collective Alpina Huus, a performance-led project and research collective dedicated to investigating the relationship between performance and domestic space. Elise Lammer is currently PhD candidate at Institute Art Gender Nature in Basel, and University Linz, Austria, doing research on the garden of British artist, filmmaker, author and gay rights activist Derek Jarman (1942–1994). Since 2019, she's been developing a garden in

homage to Jarman's Prospect Cottage at La Becque | Artists Residency, La Tour-de-Peilz, where she's also putting together an archive and artistic programme aimed at raising awareness around Jarman's legacy.

As an independent curator, author and researcher Elise Lammer has created projects for institutions worldwide, including Kunsthalle Basel; FRAC Lorraine, Metz; MACRO, Roma; Garage Museum, Moscow; Kunsthaus Langenthal; Centre culturel suisse, Paris; MAMCO, Geneva; Kunsthaus Glarus; Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts, Lausanne; Istituto Svizzero di Roma, Rome; Goethe Institut Beijing, among others.

SES12NAUS

Ses12naus (the twelve vessels in Ibicencan) is committed to develop contemporary culture on Ibiza with a strong international profile. Our name is a metaphor for the artists as vessels we bring to Ibiza to interact with the island, bring ideas, and contribute with cultural and social value.

The Foundation fosters artists' residencies, exhibitions and public programs, promoting the island as a place for creation, production and enjoyment of contemporary art. We bring artists and thinkers to research and produce projects within the context of Ibiza, its narratives, and its culture. La Carpintería, our space for production, exhibition and encounter is located in an active industrial area. The foundation is firmly focussed on the future of the island, always having in mind its rich heritage while embracing its global audience.

Supported by:



www.ses12naus.org

La Carpintería.
Río Arno, 58. Can Bufí