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OBJECTHOOD is a series of podcasts on new approaches to the role of the object in contemporary art and philosophy.

Curated by Roc Jiménez de Cisneros

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Production, interviews and documentation: Roc Jiménez de Cisneros. Audio essay written by Quim Pujol.

Roc Jiménez de Cisneros is an artist. He lives and works in Barcelona. vivapunani.org

Quim Pujol (1978) is a writer, curator and artist. His most recent works include *Trance Colectivo* (2014) and *ASMR of the Future* (2015). He has collaborated in publications such as *Repensar la dramaturgia*, *A veces me pregunto por qué sigo bailando*, *Efímera* and *Maska*. Along with Ixiar Rozas he has edited the volume on affective theory *Ejercicios de ocupación*. Pujol co-curates the *Secció Irregular* programme at Barcelona's *Mercat de les Flors* and he is a lecturer at PEI (MACBA).

OBJECTHOOD #3

This third instalment of the OBJECTHOOD series delves into monsters, otherness, hybrids, agency and fetish, with anthropologist Martin Holbraad and artist and curator Quim Pujol. Below you can find the transcript of Quim Pujol's audio essay.

01. Quim Pujol's Transcript

1

Pokarekare ana
Nga wai o rotorua
Whiti atu koe hine
Marino ana e

E hine e
Hoki mai ra
Kamate ahau
-i te aroha e

Tuhituhi taku reta
Tuku atu taku ringi
Kia kite to iwi
Raru raru ana e

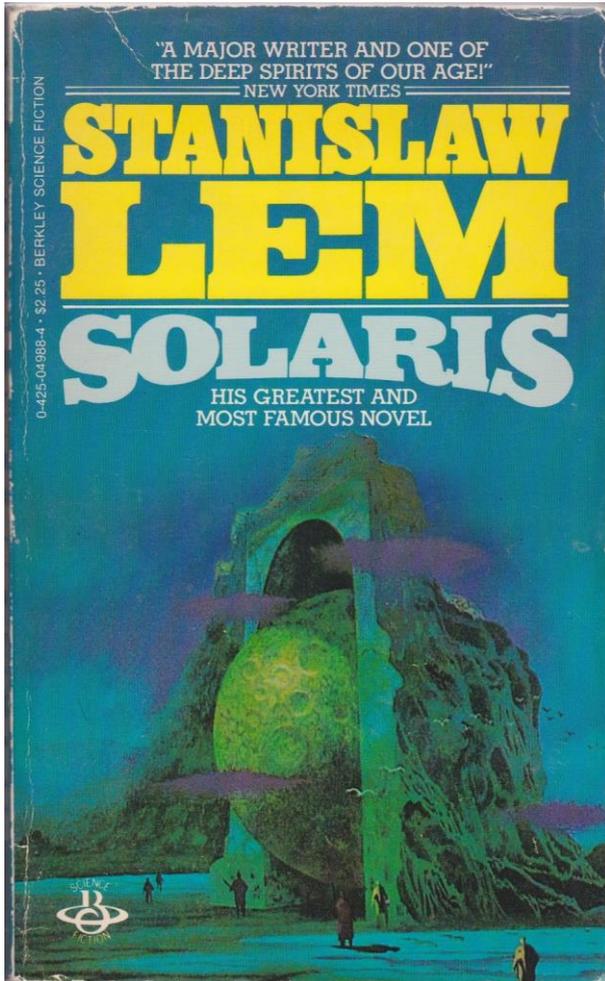
E hine e
Hoki maira
Kamate ahau
-i te aroha e
E kore te aroha
E maroke i te ra

Makuku tonu
I aku roimata e
E hine e
Hoki maira
Kamate ahau
-i te aroha e
Tua whati taku pene
Ka pau aku pepa
Ko taku aroha
Mau tonu ana e

E hine e
Hoki maira
Kamate ahau
Kamate ahau
-i te aroha e

2

In *Alien Resurrection*, military scientists use blood samples to revive Lieutenant Ripley and the Alien queen that had been growing inside her. But during the cloning process, Ripley's DNA becomes mixed up with the Alien's, and Ripley acquires some of her traits, such as enhanced strength and acidic blood. The Alien queen's DNA is also impure, and she later gives birth to a hybrid Alien-human that only recognises Ripley as its mother and kills the Alien queen who engendered it. In the final scene, Ripley (a human with a little bit of alien in her) confronts the extraterrestrial (an alien with a little bit of human in it). Ripley manages to breach a hole in the hull of the ship and the difference in pressure between the interior and the exterior causes the hybrid Alien to be sucked into



[Stanislaw Lem's Solaris]

cyberspace crushed to pulp. The Other is returned to its proper symbolic space: the outside. Even so, after killing the Alien, Ripley whispers in dismay 'sorry, sorry'.

3

The artist Amanda Piña produced a poster with the words *Theater hier und jetzt* (Theatre here and now) Präsentiert (Presents) 'Ich beim lesen dieses Plakats', which is to say, 'me, the person reading this poster'. 'In der Hauptrolle: der Mensch, der das liest' (performed by 'the person reading this poster'), Regie (directed by) Amanda Piña. Piña describes it as a two-dimensional performance.

4

'Cargo cults' first appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in various Melanesian and Polynesian islands. The tribal societies that lived on these islands were governed by a political system according to which the people who had the most material goods shared their belongings amongst the entire community. If the other members of the tribe were unable to reciprocate, the community remained in debt to the gift-giver. This meant that the person who gave the most was the one who acquired the most prestige and political power. Conversely, those who received the most and were unable to reciprocate and share more gifts had the least power and prestige, and were known as 'rubbish men'.

Things changed with the arrival of Europeans on the islands, however. The white men received cargo shipments of supplies that were dropped on the island by aeroplanes. This meant that the Europeans had an endless supply of objects that they gave to the tribes, who were thus hopelessly indebted to them.

The indigenous tribes soon began to feel uncomfortable with this situation that seemed to entrench them in the status of 'rubbish men'. Unfamiliar with modern manufacturing techniques, the natives assumed that the consumer goods had been produced by spiritual means that involved the deities and spirits of their ancestors. According to this interpretation, the goods were actually intended for the tribes, but the Europeans had schemed to get their hands on them. Cargo cults were the belief systems that the natives developed based on the conviction that their ancestors would one day arrive on the island in an aeroplane and shower them with an infinite array of material goods that would restore them to their rightful political status.

5

In *Solaris*, Stanislaw Lem tells the story of a planet inhabited by a giant single cell organism, which weighs millions of tonnes and forms a kind of ocean covering the entire surface of the planet. This ocean sometimes displays phenomena that the human scientists repeatedly try to interpret to no avail. For instance, there are 'longus' – accumulations of enormous waves that take on a cylindrical shape –, 'symmetriads' – a type of plasma tornadoes –, and 'asymmetriads' – gigantic quantum phenomena in the form of an explosion. There are also "mimoids" – a term related to the word 'mimesis'. Mimoids consist of solid, fleeting phenomena that form on the surface of Solaris, mimicking the shape of objects that approach the planet and recreating them on a larger scale. Given that only human beings bring objects to Solaris, the mimoids inevitably take their shape, and can appear as a helicopter, for instance.

6

In 1990 Tim Etchells presented a performance without actors entitled *Drama Queens*. The piece featured motorised replicas of sculptures by seven major twentieth-century artists: Giacometti, Helpworth, Arp, Koons, Ruckermier, LeWitt and Warhol. The remote controlled sculptures move on their own onstage, suggesting a series of clashes and crossovers between the various artistic movements, from Formalism to Minimalism, Pop and Postmodernism.

7

One of the characteristics of cargo cults consists of imitating the behaviour and objects of the Westerners. The members of cargo cults make helicopters out of



[An airplane built by a Cargo Cult]

twigs and branches and build fake runways for the cargo aeroplanes in which their ancestors will supposedly arrive. Or they organise military parades that mimic those of the United States army, using rifles made out of reeds. But the mimesis does not stop there. There are religious rituals in which the members of the tribe sit around a table and behave as if they are drinking tea like the British, with empty cups. And they also impose curfews on their members, as the Europeans did in their plantations. The members of these cargo cults also display 'glossolalia', speaking in what appears to be a foreign language, but is actually unknown to anybody. The anthropologist Peter Worsley argues that 'the odder – the most difficult to explain – elements of cargo cults, particularly the hysterical mimesis of European behaviours are an emotional outlet found in imaginary projection.' That is, he deduced that archetypal cargo cult behaviour is its own goal and end – its own creative enactment. These self-fulfilling enactments are an aspect of, for lack of a better term, existence. They are simply what people do – that is, the physical or corporeal enactment of a context.

8

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E maroke i te ra

Makuku tonu
I aku roimata e
E hine e
Hoki maira
Kamate ahau
-i te aroha e
Tua whati taku pene
Ka pau aku pepa
Ko taku aroha
Mau tonu ana e

E hine e
Hoki maira
Kamate ahau
Kamate ahau
-i te aroha e

9

In his classic article *Art and Objecthood*, Michael Fried criticises the fact that Minimalism is based on the spectator's experience rather than on the relational qualities of the artwork. As such, he argues, Minimalism offers an experience of theatricality or of 'presence', instead of being 'in the present'. In response to Fried, the art critic Stephen Melville argued that theatricality is an ontological characteristic of art that can be temporarily neutralised to some extent, but can never be totally destroyed.



[Melon soup]

10

Over time, many cargo cults became resistance movements against European occupation, and anthropologists were forced to reconsider the phenomenon. Was the natives' imitation of the traditions of the Europeans a parody, rather than a hysterical embodiment? Had the natives been laughing at the Westerners all along? Indeed, members of cargo cults were not really driven by an ambition for material goods, but by a desire to strengthen the social bonds amongst members of the community. When members of cargo cults were asked to go and work on plantations in exchange for objects, they refused and remained waiting impassively beneath a tree. With half a smile they argued that one day their ancestors would arrive piloting an airplane and provide them with everything they need.

11

In May 2013, Barcelona Football Club and the sports brand Nike launched a campaign by dressing Barcelona's emblematic Christopher Columbus monument in a giant replica of the club's famous blue and red T-shirt. Colonising the coloniser.

12

Although some have come to see 'performance' as a genre, there is no consensual definition of the term. As any tradition using a specific medium for experimental purposes, dissensus constitutes an essential aspect of its practice. In that sense, performance is embedded with Otherness.

13

In his article *Dissolving the Self-Other Dichotomy in Western 'Cargo Cult' Constructions*, Elfriede Hermann discusses a supposedly paradigmatic case of a cargo cult, led by a leader of a resistance movement against colonial rule whose name was Yali. Analysing the first-hand accounts of the inhabitants of Yali's native village and of his widow, Hermann concludes that Yali was not actually the head of a cargo cult: the accusations of leading a cargo cult had been used to discredit his resistance movement. Herman's surmises that perhaps these cults never existed as such, that they may have been an invention of the white man. In this case the obsession with consumer goods says more about the Europeans than about Papua New Guinean natives. The very word 'cargo cult' provided us with a mirror in which we failed to recognise ourselves.

14

On 23rd July 2013, after reading out this text in the auditorium of Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Lluís Nacenta made his way to the exhibition area, raised the glass that protected the work *Pila de plats* by Antoni Tàpies, picked up the pile of dishes with his hands and took them into the auditorium. There, he and other members of the *Objectes d'estudi* research group dished out melon soup and served it to the members of the audience who had listened to the reading. As there were not enough plates to go around – the sculpture consists of thirty plates – some people had to make do with plastic cups.

The ingredients of the melon soup are:

For 6 people
1 Melon
250 grams of Mascarpone
Chopped fresh basil
A drizzle of olive oil
Salt.

Remove the rind and seeds from the melon and chop it into small pieces. Combine with the Mascarpone in the blender jug. Mix until a fine, creamy texture is achieved. Add the basil, oil and salt to taste. Chill the soup in the refrigerator before serving. Enjoy!

02. Copyright note

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