

ALBUM
BASMA ALSHARIF
SARA CWYNAR
LIZ MAGIC LASER
DEANA LAWSON
ZOE LEONARD
SANDRA MUJINGA
JOSEPHINE PRYDE

WHOSE BODY NOW?

Egija Inzule and Josephine Pryde first met when Inzule brought work by Pryde and Sarah Staton into her exhibition Excerpts from *How They Met*. Part 1: *Mother and Her House*, *SupaStore*, *The Issues of Our Time* (1 & 3), *Fille/Garçon*, *In the Middle of Affairs in 2014 in Vienna*. *Inzule and Pryde have more recently worked together in a cooperation with some of Pryde's students in Berlin and Riga, and reconvened for this conversation in Paris.*

Egija Inzule: We are speaking at Goton in Paris, a gallery where your exhibition in close collaboration with artist Marilyn Thompson *Traces of Accessibility* is on view. For *Subjektiv* you have contributed pieces from two older series, *It's Not My Body* and *Conception*. Could you describe the conditions that influenced this work, which debuted in 2011, and how these have or have not changed in the time since? The year 2017 seems like an ongoing mess of extremely conservative political decisions. While we are talking here in Paris, the electorate in France is about to vote either for a far right candidate or a neo-liberal centrist to become the next president of France. In 2011, I probably could not have foreseen that, in 2017, we would have come down to this narrow a political imaginary.

Josephine Pryde: Outlined in the invitation I received to participate in *Subjektiv* was a description of current circumstances as "a time when the basis of democratic subjecthood is called into question." One of the curators, Nina Strand, wrote she was interested in showing works I had made for *Embryos and Estate Agents*. Those art pieces had been conceived in 2011 in part as a side-step to affective, self-identification dynamics—to try instead to stage a scenario in which, "I don't have to identify with this image, even as I look at it." The invitation to the *Subjektiv* show in 2017 was a fresh chance to refer to pregnancy as a shared material state, rather than exclusively foregrounding an individual subject's experiences of it. *It's Not My Body 1–15* shows MRI scans of a fetus in the womb montaged onto colour landscape shots. For the photographs called *Conception*, I worked with three teenage models whom I had asked to act as if they had just discovered that they were pregnant, sometimes using a pregnancy test stick as a prop. In 2011, these two series were installed opposite each other.

EI I am thinking of the women's strike in Poland last autumn, in protest against a planned abortion law that had criminalized all pregnancy terminations with women punishable by up to five years in prison. This was in Poland, one of the larger countries within the EU; in other parts of the world it is even more difficult. You had mentioned one book as particularly helpful when thinking about the context around *Embryos and Estate Agents*: a collection of essays by various writers titled *Fetal Subjects, Feminist Positions* and edited by Lynn M. Morgan and Meredith Wilson Michaels. You cited in particular Michaels's essay *Fetal Galaxies—Some Questions About What We See*, which examines Lennart Nilsson's 1965 photo essay for *LIFE* magazine titled *Drama of Life Before Birth*. You mentioned that the anti-abortion movement has been using these images . . .

JP Nilsson's photographs have become famous even though, as the essay by Meredith Michaels points out, only a small number of these images are of a live fetus in the womb. The majority of the photographs in fact depict a dead fetus. Inserting a camera into a pregnant woman to take such a photograph was very painful and invasive. At that time terminations were carried out in Sweden, where Nilsson was working, and he could photograph laboratory samples. Michaels remarks how the images, some of which have been used in anti-abortion movements to indicate the humanity of the fetus, only exist as a result of terminations being legal and carried out.

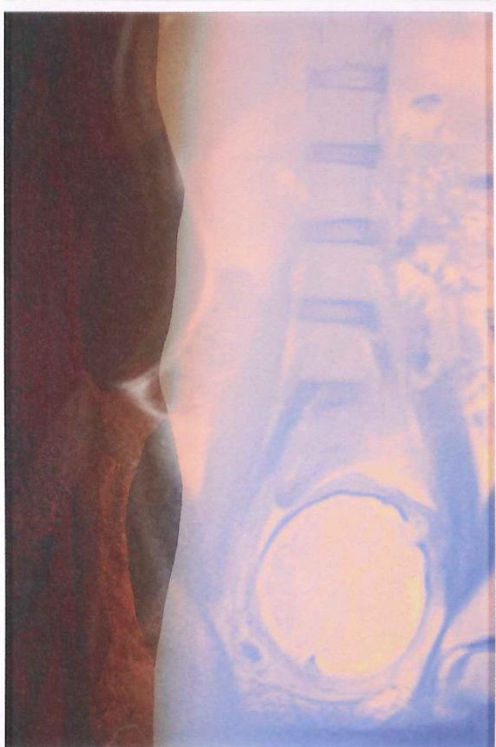
EI The MRI scans of fetuses in *It's Not My Body* are overlaid onto desert landscapes with rocks, sand, and sky—a volcanic island whose only vegetation seems to be cacti.

JP Yes. I sought to construct an illusion of this empty landscape as if it, too, is where the fetus, visible in the body of its mother, is implanted. The MRI scans show more detail than ultrasound scans, which parents-to-be might fish from their handbags. They were a relatively new technology in the UK in 2011, and their use here recalls the scientific history of photography for me, too, like the information or data contained in an x-ray, for example.

EI The x-ray is often used as an example in the critique of social documentary photography—as opposed to the reading of images based on interpretation, for example by Diane Arbus. An x-ray is representative of certain facts; it is a technical tool and requires a person capable to read the information it carries.

JP The way the data can be read by someone with medical training is potentially different to the kind of reading of data that an anti-abortion supporter might make. What reading does an artist make? I was also attempting to document a play of the imaginary, you could say.

EI So if you imagined the planet as the mother in *It's Not My Body*, then with *Conception* you were working the other way around. The expressions of the girls become this imaginary. Is it they who are caught imagining something?



Josephine Pryde, *It's Not My Body, IV*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

JP I decided to feature teenage girls who found out that they were pregnant because I was thinking about the pressures and expectations of what a young woman's life might turn out to be. There are pressures and expectations as to what a young man's life might be, too, of course, but in this particular instance I was interested in young women. It is she who would carry a child, not he. The assumptions are about types of labour attendant on that biology, how those assumptions can complicate what might be her choices.

EI In her essay about your work, the artist

Melanie Gilligan mentions this quote by M. Sandovsky published in *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism*: "The problem for women is not just uncovering what is political in the personal and the personal in the political, it is finding a way to live inside of a contradiction where we experience simultaneously the concrete and the abstract nature of gender relation." As contradiction is not a statement, but rather something that has to unfold out of material in space, it needs material in order to take place, to contradict.

JP This, then, could be something to say about the kind of subjectivity I can speak about, in exhibiting these works now: the contradiction unfolds in the subject. I hadn't been intending to join in any "urgent response"-type exhibitions at this political juncture, but what caught my attention here was another chance to NOT say how it feels to be a (pregnant) individual. To suggest a shared material state, instead of an appeal to unique feeling, and to work from there. I'm interested in these pieces being included in this exhibition now because I think human reproduction is extraordinary and because I also think that the history of women as property, as the designated site of reproduction, still haunts our popular mythologies and cultural exchanges. How these ghosts return, how they duplicate themselves and occupy imaginations, is a matter of intense relevance to me.



Josephine Pryde, *Conception, XI*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery London/Hong Kong.



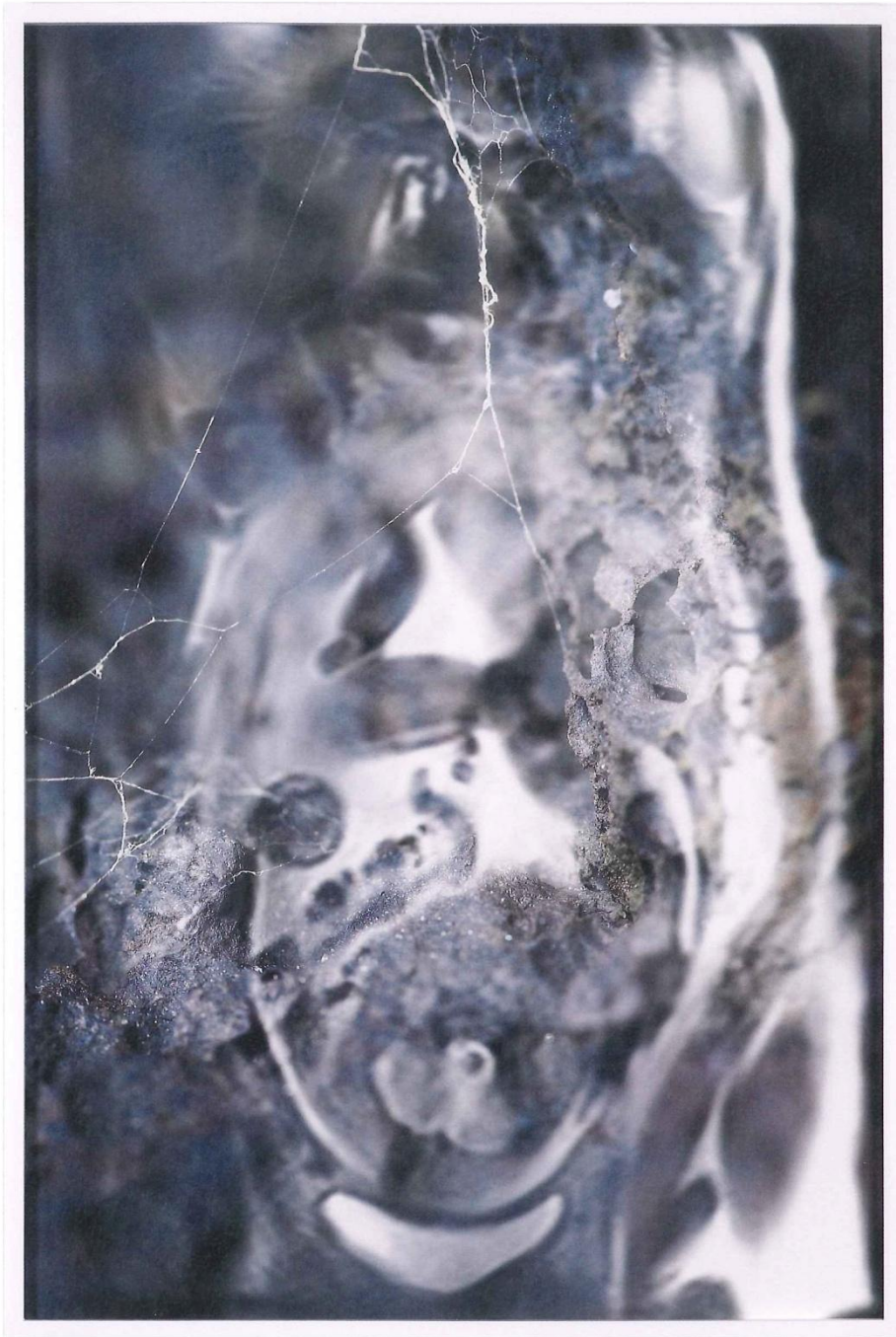
Josephine Pryde, *Conception, X*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery London/Hong Kong.



Josephine Pryde, *Conception, VI*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery London/Hong Kong.



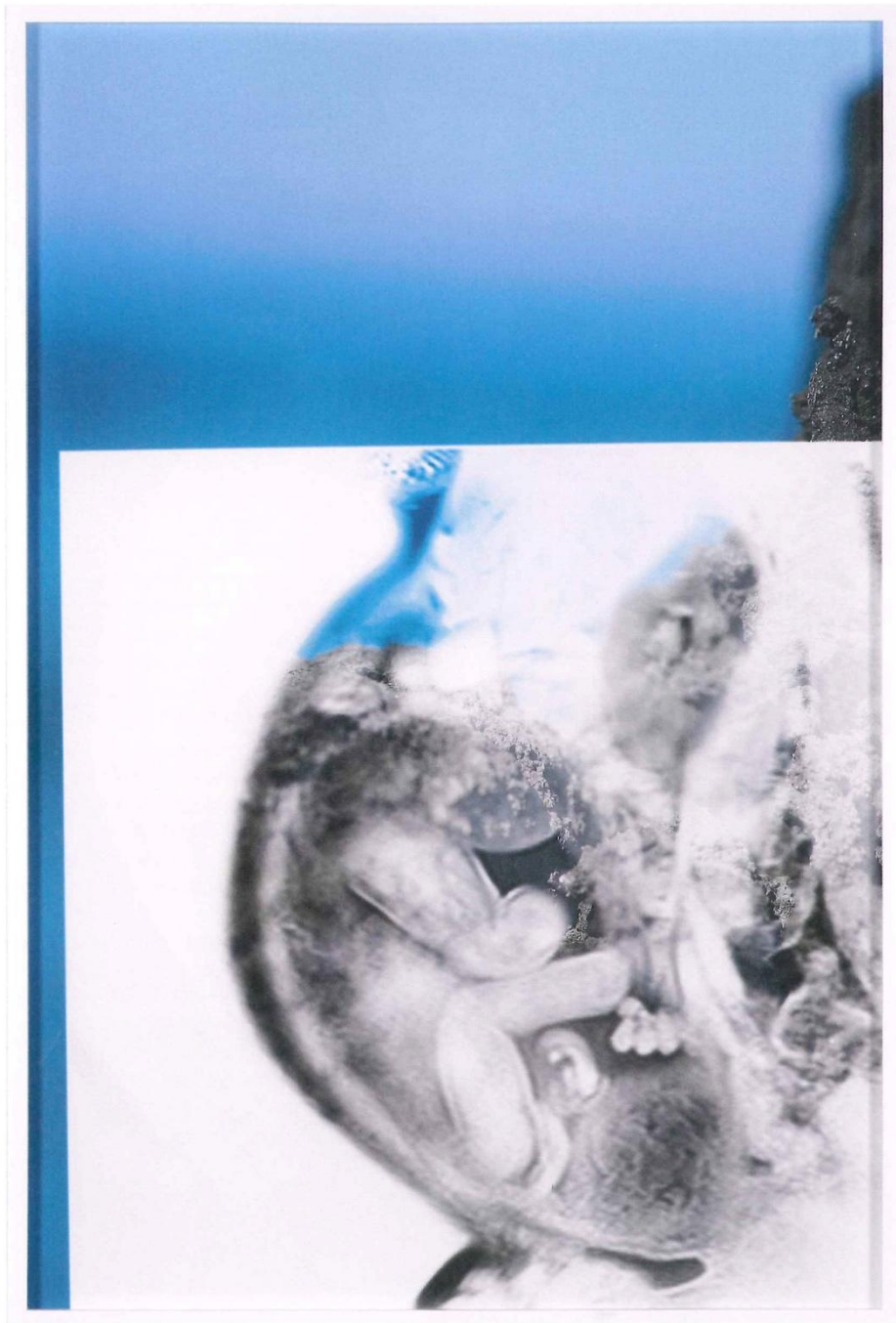
Josephine Pryde, *It's Not My Body, IX*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.



Josephine Pryde, *It's Not My Body, XIII*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.



Josephine Pryde, *It's Not My Body, VII*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.



Josephine Pryde, *It's Not My Body, XI*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.



Josephine Pryde, *It's Not My Body, X*, 2011, courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

BIOGRAPHIES

ALBUM began in 2008 as a cooperation between artists Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen. *ALBUM* has participated in shows at amongst other venues, Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland, MoMA, New York, White Columns, New York, the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard Massachusetts, Kunsthall Oslo, Fotogalleriet, Oslo.

Basma Alsharif (b. 1983, Kuwait). Major exhibitions include: the Whitney Biennial, Le Prix Découverte Rencontres d'Arles, les Module at the Palais de Tokyo, Here and Elsewhere at the New Museum, the Jerusalem Show, Yamagata Documentary Film Festival, the Berlinale, the Sharjah Biennial, Videobrasil, and Manifesta 8. Alsharif is represented by Galerie Imane Farés in Paris and distributed by Video Data Bank in Chicago and Arsenal in Berlin.

Sara Cwynar (b. Vancouver, BC, Canada, 1985) currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She holds an MFA from Yale University, New Haven, CT; a Bachelor of Design from York University, Toronto, ON; and studied English Literature at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC. Selected exhibitions include: *L'Image Volée*, Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2016); *Greater New York*, MoMA PS1, Queens, NY (2015/16); *If You Leave Me Can I Come Too?* Hunter East Harlem Gallery, New York, NY; *Under Construction – New Positions in American Photography*, Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, NY (all 2015.) *Big Pictures: Public Art Project*, Billboards across Greater Cincinnati, organized by Cincinnati Art Museum, OH (2014); *Everything in the Studio Destroyed*, Foam Photography Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (solo) (2013.)

Liz Magic Laser (b. 1981, New York). She earned a BA from Wesleyan University (2003) and an MFA from Columbia University (2008). She attended the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture (2008) and the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program (2009). Selected solo exhibitions at Kunstverein Göttingen, Germany (2016); Mercer Union, Toronto (2015); Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2015); Various Small Fires, Los Angeles (2015); Paula Cooper Gallery, New York (2013) the Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, Germany (2013). Laser had solo shows at CAC Brétigny (France) and Jupiter Arland (Scotland) in May, 2017.

Deana Lawson (b. 1979 Rochester, NY). Lawson received her M.F.A. in Photography from RISD in 2004. Her work has been exhibited at the Whitney Biennial, the

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, New Photography 2011 at Museum of Modern Art, Greater New York at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in New York, Helene Bailly Gallery in Paris, Studio Museum in Harlem, KIT Museum in Dusseldorf, Artists Space in New York, Print Center in Philadelphia, and Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta. In 2013, Lawson was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, which allowed her to expand her locations of work to include Jamaica, Haiti, and West Africa.

Zoe Leonard (b. 1961, Liberty, NY) Lives and works in New York. In 2014 she won the Whitney Biennial Bucksbaum Award. A traveling retrospective of Leonard's work originated at Fotomuseum Winterthur (2007-2010). Other solo exhibitions include MoMA, New York (2015); Chinati Foundation, Marfa (2015); Camden Arts Centre, London (through June 24, 2012); Dia:Beacon, Beacon, New York (2008 –11); Dia at the Hispanic Society, New York (2008); Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2007); and Vienna Secession (1997); Leonard participated in Documenta 9 (1992) and 12 (2007), and the 1993 and 1997 Whitney Biennials.

Sandra Mujinga (b. Goma DR, Congo, 1989) is a Norwegian artist with a bachelor and master's degree from Malmö Art Academy. Recent exhibitions include: The Norwegian Sculpture Biennial at the Vigeland Museum, Oslo, *Lovely Hosts*, Mavra in Berlin, *Real Friends* at Oslo Kunstforening and the group show *Missed Connections* at Julia Stoschek Collection in Düsseldorf.

Josephine Pryde (b. 1967 in Alnwick, Northumberland) lives and works in London and Berlin. She holds a B.F.A from Wimbledon School of Art, London, and a M.F.A from Central St. Martins, London, UK. Selected solo exhibitions include *Lapses in Thinking by the Person I Am*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, PA, 2015, *These Are Just things I Say, They Are Not My Opinions*, Arnolfini, Bristol, UK Knickers, Berlin, Temnikova & Kasela, Tallinn, Estonia, 2014, *PHOTOGRAPHS YOU TAKE Josephine Pryde*, The Schtip, Sheffield, 2013, *Josephine Pryde*, Galerie der Stadt Schwaz, Schwaz, Austria, 2013, *Night Out*, Simon Lee Gallery, London, UK, 2012, *Miss Austen Enjoys Photography*, Kunstverein Düsseldorf, Germany, 2012, *Embryos and Estate Agents: L'Art de Vivre*, Chisenhale Gallery, London, UK, 2011.