

Press

2025

Ballantyne-Way, Duncan, "Let in the messiness": Artist Ghislaine Leung on her latest show, Reproductions," The Berliner, July 16, 2025.

Durón, Maximiliano, "The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Effect: Artists Weigh in on His Enduring Influence," Art in America, April 16, 2025.

Kelly, Brian. "'On Education' Review: An Alternative Curriculum at Amant," The Wall Street Journal, April 4, 2025.

2024

Frost, Robert. "'NO QUESTIONS,'" Emergent Magazine. June 2024.

Geiser, Frank. "Immaterial Instruction: A Review of "Holdings" by Ghislaine Leung at the Renaissance Society," New City Art. January 26, 2023.

"Ghislaine Leung," Zeitung Magazine, December 30, 2024.

Judah, Hettie. "Ghislaine Leung Finds Strength in Her Own Vulnerability," Frieze. April 24, 2024.

Luna Cánepa, Mariana. "Nancy Holt's "Ventilation System" (1985–1992)," Holt/Smithson Foundation, October 20, 2024.

O'Dwyer, Jayne. "Headed to Switzerland? Here are the 9 Must-See Shows in Zurich & Basel," Cultured Magazine, June 10, 2024

Q.U.I.C.H.E. "Ghislaine Leung – Commitments," ooo, September 19, 2024.

Russeth, Andrew. "Review: Artists Find Beauty and Darkness in Child's Play," The New York Times. August 8, 2024.

Upson, Toby. "Ghislaine Leung, Holdings," FAD Magazine. February 19, 2024.

Wetzler, Rachel. "Terms and Conditions," Artforum. May 2024.

2023

Turner Prize 2023 Review: Coming Out the Other End, Salena Barry, artreview.com, 29 September 2023

'Turner prize: pandemic problems and Windrush scandal among shortlist' by Harriet Sherwood, 27 April 2023

2022

'Time, Tabled: Ghislaine Leung's Constitutional Critique' by Annie Godfrey Larmon, Topical Cream, 12 October 2022

'Ghislaine Leung: The Porous Boundaries of Parenthood' by Maddie Hampton Art Review, 12 October 2022

'Ghislaine Leung's "Balances" - Criticism' by Katherine C. M. Adams Art Agenda, 27 September 2022

En Liang Khong, 'The public sculpture debate — 47 potential ways forward', Financial Times, January 29 2022

Eddy Frankel, 'Testament at Goldsmith's Centre for Contemporary Art', Time Out, January 20 2022

Barbara Casavecchia, 'Ghislaine Leung Causes a Short Circuit', Frieze, 14 January 2022

2021

Yang Yang, "'More, More, More" TANK SHANGHAI', Artforum, March 2021

2020

Anderson, Fiona, "The Making of Husbands: Christina Ramberg in Dialogue," Art Monthly no. 441, November 2020, pp. 27-28.

Culpan, Daniel. "The bound and fragmented bodies of Christina Ramberg," Apollo, October, 2020, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/christina-ramberg-in-dialogue-review/>.

"Image Contributions," Spike Art Magazine 63, Spring 2020, pp. 46-47.

2019

Bussel, David. "Bizarre Love triangle," Texte zur Kunst, No. 114 / June 2019, pp. 194-197.

'Ghislaine Leung at Chisenhale & Essex Street', Contemporary Art Writing Daily, 29 March

Nicholson, Hugh. 'Ghislaine Leung: CONSTITUTION', This is Tomorrow, 18 March
 ZM. 'Ghislaine Leung, CONSTITUTION @ Chisenhale', The White Pube, 17 March
 'Gallery Peeping: Six March Shows Not To Miss In The Fair Frenzy', Cultured Magazine, 6 March
 Korczynski, Jacob. 'Not an Additional Substance but the Body Feeling Itself', Flash Art, #325, pp.46-53
 Ruiz, Alan. 'Context Contingent', BOMB, March
 Constable, Joseph. 'Ghislaine Leung: CONSTITUTION', Art Monthly, March, pp.423-424
 Sykes, Rebecca. 'Ghislaine Leung', Burlington Contemporary, 26 February
 Upson, Toby. 'Refracted Through a Pool of Pink Noise', Garageland, 17 February
 Dixon, Charlie. 'Review | Ghislaine Leung at the Chisenhale Gallery', The London Magazine, 31 January
 Schmitz, Edgar. 'CONSTITUTION', KUNSTFORUM International, Vol. 259

2018

Barker, Noah. 'Cancellations', Mousse 65, Summer, pp.54-59

2017

Cortell, Rafael Barber. 'Become what you are', This is Tomorrow, 13 March
 Jones, Eliel. 'The Moves', Artforum, March
 Lin, Ming. 'The Moves', ArtReview Asia, Spring\

Published Writings

2021

Ghislaine Leung, Divided Publishing, Brussels & London (forthcoming)

2019

'Approximations', A Plume, Glasgow, UK January, 2019
 'Bedroom Tour', Let's Not Dispute The Useless..., Am Nuden Da

2018

Ghislaine Leung, New Press, Brussels, October
 Partners, Ghislaine Leung, Cell Project Space, January
 'Description Item', San Serriffe Journal, Amsterdam
 'Bedroom Tour', Let's Not Dispute The Useless..., Am Nuden Da

2017

NGL, Cell Foundation, London, July
 'Things are circulating', Catalogue, Display Distribute, Hong Kong, June
 'Your Condo..', The Exits are Symmetrical, Amsterdam, June
 '29042017', Dysfction, Issue 4, Pure Fiction, Frankfurt am Main, May
 '29042017', How to Show Up?, San Serriffe, Amsterdam, April

2016

'Reasons to Act?', Spike Magazine, December
 'Bottles', How to Sleep Faster 7, Arcadia Missa, Winter
 'Keys-Cut-While-U-Wait', NL.LA, Amsterdam, July
 'Approximations', Dysfction, Issue 3, Pure Fiction, Frankfurt am Main, May

2015

'On & For Production', Auguste Orts (BE) in collaboration with LUX (GB), May

2014

'A Structural Fluidity', Mousse Magazine, October

2012

'Things are circulating', Open File, Grand Union, December
 'Institution', Spike Art Quarterly, Winter
 'Pin Pricks', Defining Holes at CC Tobačna 001, Ljubljana, September

2011

'Clouds instead of Construct', Benedictions, June

2010

After before now, Chisenhale Gallery, London, July

“The Room is the City”

by Ghislaine Leung

Flash Art Issue 347, Summer, 2024

Flash Art



SHOP



• 347 SUMMER 2024, LETTER FROM THE CITY

26 July 2024, 9:00 am CET

The Room is the City by [Ghislaine Leung](#)



1 2 3 4 5

Ghislaine Leung, *Four Years in Ten Years in Twenty Years*, 2024. Detail. A three-tier anniversary cake to mark four years of being a mother, ten years of being an artist, and twenty years with her partner. Photography by Philipp Hänger / Kunsthalle Basel. Courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Basel.

London
April 2024

This room is the city. Before that, the ward was the city. The bedcovers mass, the sun from the window heats their fibers. The wounds are closed, but I bleed. They removed 573 grams of my body, the place my daughter first lived in. Her home in me. The place that grew with her and grew before her and grew outside of itself. So much growth. A weight of growth that made me sick with its virility. My capacity to make life incompatible with my capacity to live. That is gone now, I will have to make life differently. Time has slowed or sped or changed, exhibitions open and close. I feel her cheek pressed against mine. Everything.

They don't know why the growths grow. Too much hormone, too little of another hormone. Because my mother had too much hormone or too little. Because I am stressed. You say that stress is not an emotion. You ask me how I feel. I lack the words to talk about what I can't speak. I never noticed that I got sick with my cycles, maybe because it was so slow, insidious, so many increments of exhaustion over so many years. I felt tired in the park one year, and then another year I couldn't go to work. I never knew why. I wanted to work, to have measurable gains, a metric life, perpetual growth. Wanted this before I couldn't work, when I couldn't work. To not face myself, not at work, not, unknown. The work of the body that is always already happening.

“The Room is the City”

by Ghislaine Leung

Flash Art Issue 347, Summer, 2024

Before the surgery, they put me on hormone inhibitors. One injection a month in the stomach. The city was still cold and wet, and I took the first injection with me to Chicago, implanted in my stomach, my hands too cold to open the combination lock to get the keys to the rented apartment. Without my daughter in four bedrooms, each with their covers turned over, tucked in. The radiators are loud. My sockets hurting, coughing, lagging. The implant flew back with me home. The city is opening up its roots, mild rain on my face. The implant puncture bleeding under the plaster as I carry her home. Wet kisses on my face. My stomach flattening. The third implant with the leaf buds graying and fine haired. I hide the chocolate eggs I bought in Basel in the unfinished garden.

They gave me two choices at the consultation. I could have the surgery or take a hormone inhibitor until I inhibited my own hormones at menopause. I chose surgery because they used the term “definitive management.” And because my mother had uterine cancer. My mother has no uterus or ovaries. Uterine cancer is hormone-dependent, so is breast and ovarian cancer. My partner’s sister will be on inhibitors long-term after treatment for breast cancer. The cancer her mother had. She cannot have hormone replacement. I will keep my ovaries, my hormones. I will have no periods, no uterus, no fallopian tubes, no cervix. These will no longer be in my body. I wasn’t going to use them, but I miss the unused more than the used.

I fold up my clothes and put my shoes under the chair in the day surgery unit. I breathe in deep and wake cut emptier. My teeth moving against each other in my mouth. My body heating up against its loss. I throw up water from my stomach. The woman in the next unit knows my name. She is an artist. She has had an ovary removed. She leaves before I do. They wheel me to a bed, it’s in a blood cancer ward, the heaters in the ceiling are overactive. There is no food. I eat a pack of miniature cheese biscuits, the chewed paste stuck on my dry tongue. Bags of drip, bags of medicines, the cannula drips blood. They can’t find my veins. They don’t know why my body is so hot. They use the word spike. The ward is the city. I sleep two nights. I go home.

This room is the city. The aging flowers sent by friends. Blue and purple, pinks, cream white, sprays. The framed printout of a spreadsheet I made for my partner’s fortieth birthday. The white paper hospital bags, shoes wrapped in plastic, boxed medicines. Her document folder, the one they gave us when we left the hospital, the first time we wrote her name. Piles of clothes on the floor and the trees outside the window. The broken blind propped up with a stick. The wardrobes empty. The baby monitor amplifies the drilling in the walls. I have bled every month since I was twelve so I could reproduce. I bleed now because I can’t. And then that will stop, too. The cuts in my stomach are covered in glue, and the orange dye brushed on my skin. The purpling wrinkle of the wounds. My stomach hanging over. I talk to the gallery on the phone. I tell them I won’t be there, won’t be coming. My daughter is coming up the stairs. I will make life differently.

Ghislaine Leung (1980, Stockholm) lives and works in London. Leung’s practice takes a critical look at the sociopolitical and spatial conditions of art production, its presentation and re-presentation. Recent solo exhibitions include: Simian, Copenhagen; Maxwell Graham Gallery, New York; Ivory Tars, Glasgow; Caravan, Oslo; Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach; Ordet, Milan; Cabinet, London; Chisenhale Gallery, London; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart; Netzwerk Aalst; and WIELS, Brussels. Leung’s work has been included in group shows at Frac Lorraine, Metz; Marta Herford Museum for Art, Architecture, Design; Mudam, Luxembourg; Unit 17, Vancouver; NICC Vitrine & Etablissement d’en face, Brussels; Solid Haus Kunsthalle, Melfon; Musée d’art moderne et contemporain, Geneva; A Tale of a Tub, Rotterdam; Galerie Mollitor, Berlin; Halle Für Kunst Steiermark, Graz; mumok, Vienna; Para Site, Hong Kong; Kunstverein in Hamburg; Towner Eastbourne; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Galerie Johann Widauer, Innsbruck; CAPC, Bordeaux; Emalin, London; Goldsmiths CCA, London; and Museion, Bolzano. Leung’s solo show “Commitments” is on view at Kunsthalle Basel through August 11, 2024.

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The art of Ghislaine Leung

By Rachel Weltzer



Ghislaine Leung, *Public Sculpture*, 2018. *Score*: A group of toys in the collection of a public library are given a catalog or call number inclusive of the group. The group is loaned and displayed in an exhibition space. Originally commissioned for Reading Library for Reading International, 2018. Installation view, Towner Eastbourne, England, 2023. Photo: Angus Mill.

SOMEWHERE IN THE BOWELS of a corporate data server, there are hundreds of recordings of me singing the Raffi song "Baby Beluga," captured by the smart baby monitor positioned over my daughter's crib. Connected to an app on my phone, the monitor sends push alerts whenever it detects excessive levels of noise or movement, so I can track her sleep from anywhere. ("Is the heat on? She seems cold," I recently texted my husband from a hotel room a thousand miles away.) Sometimes, the app sends exhortations to maintain a consistent bedtime routine when it registers that she took too long to settle, or messages of praise when she sleeps through the night. Once a week or so, it compiles the footage into highlight reels overlaid with animated moons and stars. Such sentimental flourishes present the monitor as a kind of benevolent aide, an expert-guided extension of the loving, protective parental gaze, instead of what it really is: a sophisticated surveillance device with a probably objectionable user agreement that I didn't bother reading in my postpartum haze.

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Ghislaine Leung's *Monitors*, 2022, allows no such magical thinking. The work comprises a score that mandates, simply: "A baby monitor installed in one room and broadcast to another." At Towner Eastbourne in England, where *Monitors* was recently on view as part of the 2023 Turner Prize exhibition, the diminutive receiver hung in the gallery, dwarfed by a crisp white wall, displaying a live feed of what is normally out of sight: employees milling around a cluttered storeroom. If *Monitors* suggests the intrusion of the domestic into the gallery space, it also punctures the pretense of the baby monitor as something other than a spy camera, just as capable of tracking adults at work as sleeping infants. In so doing, it lays bare the extent to which parenting is bound up with scrutinizing, supervising, *monitoring*—and opening oneself up to scrutiny in turn. Of course, turning the camera on the typically unseen inner workings of the gallery also nods to the history of institutional critique and its legacy of revealing the hidden operations and infrastructures behind the slick white cube. And yet: Leung isn't the one who places the camera. What we see is the institution baring itself.



Ghislaine Leung, *Monitors*, 2022. Score: A baby monitor installed in one room and broadcast to another. Installation view, Towner Eastbourne, England, 2023. Photo: Angus Mill.

Monitors was first presented in Leung's solo show "Balances" at Maxwell Graham in New York in fall 2022. The show's press release reproduced an email from the artist to her gallerist. "I write to you at a point of crisis, probably a necessary one," she began.

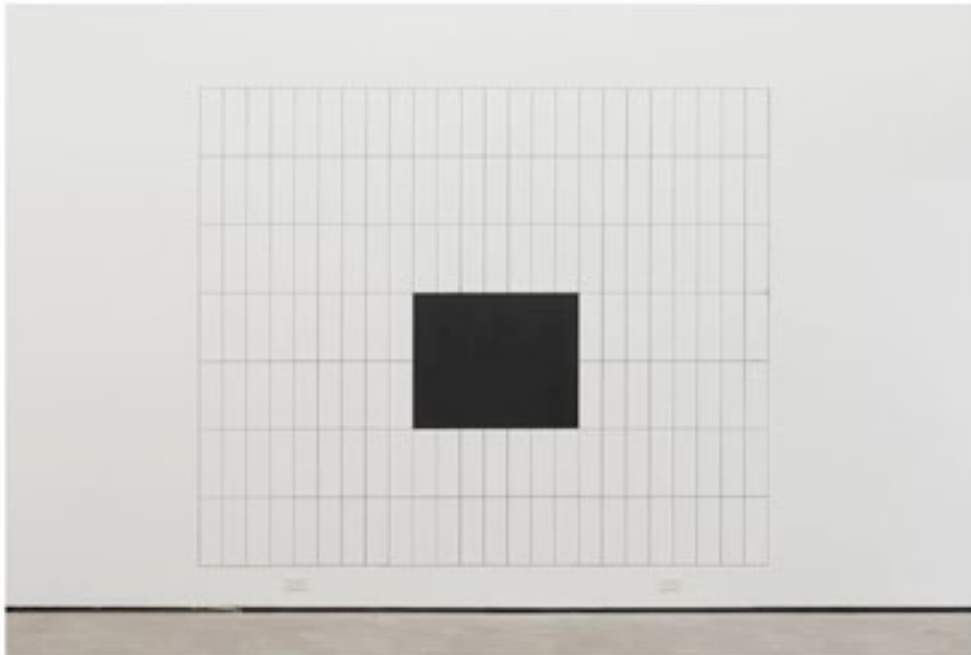
I feel unable to make the new works requested of me because I do childcare evenings and weekends, and weekly. I do this childcare not in spite of my work as an artist but as an active and empowered choice to be a mother. As a mother and artist, committed to my child and committed to my art, I am able to work a fraction of the time assumed by societal models that preclude care work. . . . I do not wish to drop out from my art, I do not wish to entirely outsource care for my daughter. I wish to do both art and care and in doing so change the terms of identity and labour within our industry.

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Ghislaine Leung, *Hours*, 2022. Score: A wall painting the size of the artist's home studio wall divided into all the hours of the week with the portion of studio hours available to the artist marked in black. Thursday 9 AM–4 PM, Friday 9 AM–4 PM. Installation view, Maxwell Graham, New York, 2022. Photo: Charles Benton.

LEUNG BEGAN WORKING with scores in response to what she saw as an intractable problem: As an artist, she could only maintain absolute control over her work for so long. If she wanted to exhibit it publicly, the work would inevitably confront new institutional or environmental conditions, ones she could not necessarily account for in advance. She could either attempt to artificially replicate the perfectly controlled conditions of the studio by mitigating anything that might encroach on the work—an uphill battle—or give in to contingency and embrace it as a constitutive element of her work's real existence and public reception. As Leung explains in *Bosses*, "Rather than thinking, How can I fix this and control this? How can I maintain its integrity in the way that I have conceived it?, I shifted to thinking that the agency or the identity of the work could come from its vulnerability, its total contingency, its complete reliance and dependency."

Because Leung's scores tend to be descriptive rather than instructional, they hand off a considerable amount of responsibility for her work's execution to the presenting institution. The same work may look radically different from one exhibition to the next, depending on the whims of curators and preparators and the affordances of each particular gallery environment. Though Leung's Turner Prize exhibition ostensibly restaged her show at Simian, the score *Fountains*, 2022 ("A fountain installed in the exhibition

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space to cancel sound"), was interpreted at Towner as a relatively conventional water feature gurgling in a metal tub, whereas in Copenhagen, it appeared as a cascade of water piped in from a man-made lake above and raining down from a ceiling directly onto the floor of the subterranean gallery.



Ghislaine Leung, *Fountains*, 2022. Score: A fountain installed in the exhibition space to cancel sound. Installation view, Simian, Copenhagen, 2023. Photo: GRAYSC.

But the simplicity of these proposals can be deceptive: The more semantically open the score, the more institutional soul-searching is required to fulfill it. Take, for instance, the work *Browns*, commissioned by the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, Germany, for Leung's 2021 exhibition "PORTRAITS": "All available walls in brown to standard picture hanging height." As the show's curators recounted in a roundtable, parsing the score prompted a kind of philosophical crisis over the definition of an "available wall."

The lineage of the artistic score inevitably leads back to Fluxus, but Leung tends to cite another set of references: Hanne Darboven, Jef Geys, Lee Lozano, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, and especially the Artist Placement Group, cofounded by John Latham and Barbara Steveni in 1966, which organized artist residencies at industrial and government organizations under the slogan "Context is half the work." The most decisive influence on her mode of working, however, comes from structural film. Before turning her attention to her own artistic practice, Leung worked from 2010 to 2014

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in distribution and programming at the organization LUX, an outgrowth of the London Film-makers' Cooperative that screens and distributes artists' films. Her initial scores took the decentralized existence of film and video as a model for how an artwork could manifest itself in an exhibition without being wholly identified with a unique object, on the one hand, or inextricably tethered to a specific site on the other. *Public Sculpture*, 2018, originally commissioned by Reading International, took up the idea of a given object belonging simultaneously to different conventions of circulation: "A group of toys in the collection of a public library are given a catalog or call number inclusive of the group. The group is loaned and displayed in an exhibition space." Each individual toy retained its original call number, allowing it to be borrowed by library patrons as usual, while the group could be loaned collectively to institutions for exhibition as an artwork by Ghislaine Leung, now accessioned to the library's collection. (She also purchased duplicates of the toys for the library collection, to replace the ones made unavailable to patrons when they were being exhibited.) *Public Sculpture* was an attempt to apply the mechanics of film and video distribution to the presentation of sculpture and installation: A moving-image work does not exist solely as a specific print, tape, or file, but incorporates a set of rights dictating the circumstances under which it can be shown.



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Ghislaine Leung, *Fountains*, 2022. Score: A fountain installed in the exhibition space to cancel sound. Installation view, Towner Eastbourne, England, 2023. Photo: Angus Mill.

The other key concern Leung extrapolated from structural film was a persistent attention to the apparatuses of production and display. As London Film-makers' Cooperative cofounder Peter Gidal put it in his 1975 essay "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film," "Each film is a record (not a representation, not a reproduction) of its own making." With her scores, Leung wanted to encode something of the institutional and material relations shaping the work. Often the scores are designed to accentuate some aspect of the exhibition space's infrastructure. *Shrooms*, 2016, calls for the placement of mushroom night-lights and adapters in all available electrical outlets. *Violets 2*, 2018, comprises all of the ventilation pipes removed from the bar at the cultural center Netwerk Aalst in Belgium after the imposition of a smoking ban made them obsolete, reinstalled in whatever configuration will allow them to remain interconnected and fixed to the floor within a given room. (In contrast to these exacting specifications, the second part of the score reads, simply, "A welcome sign is to be installed.") *Flags* and *Toons*, both 2019, stipulate that all internal doors within an exhibition space must be painted glossy black, and the walls glossy white, respectively, in a gesture designed to counteract the conventional demand that the gallery be as unobtrusive as possible.

Though Leung's works are highly attentive to their physical surroundings, she conceives of them not as site-specific but "context-contingent," capable of being realized again and again in different places, but each time conditioned by institutional circumstances that would determine their form. Likewise, they accrue new layers of meaning as they circulate through different situations. When *Violets 2* was originally exhibited at Netwerk Aalst, for instance, it was installed on the floor of the gallery space one story above the bar from which the pipes had been removed, mirroring their former placement, only this time as a waste product instead of a conduit for its elimination, as if the building were spilling its guts. Subsequent presentations, however, must contend with the challenges of one set of architectural footprints descending on another, with the reconfigured pipes

now foregrounding the spatial eccentricities of their new containers. Meanwhile, *Shrooms* is particularly effective in group exhibitions, where it acts as a kind of fungal encroachment on the works of other artists, subtly influencing their placement.

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Leung dispensed with the pretense that it was possible to occupy a fully detached, reflexive critical position toward an institution while working within it.

As Leung described in a 2019 *Bomb* magazine interview, when she began working on *Public Sculpture*, she was surprised not only by how many of the toys in the Reading library collection were oriented around domestic role-play, but by the presence of branded replicas of commercially available goods, such as miniature Dyson vacuum cleaners or Miele washing machines. While Leung was fascinated by the curious double brand identity of these objects—the mini Dysons, for instance, were made by the toy manufacturer Casdon, the Miele by Theo Kline—she was especially concerned with the kinds of social and ideological standards such putatively innocent objects worked to normalize. The toys were not just playthings but instruments for teaching children how to belong in society—in this case, as little consumers in training. Leung's response was to create a number of scores that stage confrontations between different standard registers or scales, estranging juxtapositions designed to foreground the deceptiveness—and insidiousness—of “neutrality” as a concept. *_ : _/_*, 2018, comprises a toy playhouse purchased in the country where the exhibition is held and a line of tape demarcating the minimum ceiling height for local buildings; to realize the score, the blanks of the title are filled in with the measurements of the minimum ceiling height and the venue's standard hang height for an artwork. *Closer*, 2019, part of an ensemble of works commissioned by Chisenhale Gallery for Leung's 2019 exhibition “CONSTITUTION,” entailed

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the replacement of the gallery entrance so that the door and doorway would conform to the standard domestic size delineated in the building regulations of the country of exhibition, a norm that appeared drastically out of proportion in a public building.



View of "Ghislaine Leung: PORTRAITS," 2021, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany. Wall: Browns, 2021. Center: Onions, 2021. Photo: Achim Kukulies.

In "CONSTITUTION," Leung explicitly framed her scores as a set of conditions to be met, locating each work's execution in a network of relations between forces—institutional, infrastructural, formal, spatial—rather than a particular group of objects or materials. *Closer*, for instance, "physically exists when the door and doorway are standard size. The door and doorway are not the work." *Flags* and *Toons* likewise did not comprise painted walls and doors, or the act of painting walls and doors, but the condition of the walls and doors having been painted. The included scores were an attempt by Leung to think through her own role within and her relationship to institutions. In place of institutional critique, she adopted the term *constitutional critique* to describe her methodology, dispensing with the pretense that it was possible to occupy a fully detached, reflexive critical position toward an institution while working within it. The term *constitution*, she told the Chisenhale's Ellen Greig in an interview published in the exhibition booklet, connoted both the physical characteristics of the

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human body and the legislative principles accepted by a political body, a public. "I started thinking on the relationship between the institution and an individual as a relation between bodies; a partnership, a relationship, romantic, dysfunctional or exploitative, inclusive."

The show's centerpiece was a trio of works employing prefabricated wall panels, all 2019, that analogized different relations of dependency between the gallery's power supply and the score as types of interpersonal connections. For *Parents*, a pair of panels linked by crisscrossing extension cords supports a monitor displaying a YouTube "Stuff-a-Loons" tutorial in which a smiling woman demonstrates the process of inserting a stuffed bunny inside an inflated balloon to create an elaborate bouquet celebrating the arrival of a baby girl; *Children* is a single panel with a battery-powered generator capable of running a small heater and a night-light for two or three hours before it must be reconnected to the gallery's power supply to recharge; *Lovers* incorporates three panels, two of which bear security lights drawing power from one another. *Bosses*, 2019, meanwhile, took the form of an absurd array of twenty pairs of THE BOSS mugs gift-wrapped in heart-printed cellophane festooned with red ribbons and placed in a row on the gallery floor. Each pair of mugs represents an edition of the work *Bosses II*, 2019; *Bosses* materializes when the entire edition of twenty is exhibited together, the work's stark legislative agenda, so to speak, in tension with the hyperbolic sentimentality of its appearance. Not coincidentally, though it is acknowledged only obliquely in the exhibition materials, the show took place in the contentious aftermath of the Brexit referendum, a moment when millions of British "remainers" found themselves contending with the fact that, soon enough, they would undergo a physically imperceptible but categorically decisive change of state, as they no longer met the conditions constituting them as Europeans.



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Ghislaine Leung, *Shrooms*, 2016, Score: All available electrical outlets filled with a mushroom night light and adapter. Installation view, Wiels, Brussels.

I WILL ADMIT HERE to finding “CONSTITUTION” exemplary of an excessively cerebral tendency that runs through some of Leung’s earlier scores, so reliant on layers of theoretical exegesis that their physical realization seems almost incidental, despite the artist’s insistence that the works’ existence hinged on contextual enactment. But two pivotal things happened in the run-up to her 2021 Museum Abteiberg commission with profound implications for the way she worked. The first was, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic: Unable to travel to Germany to participate in the show’s installation, Leung was forced to delegate the scores’ realization to a heretofore unprecedented degree, and thus was pushed toward the kind of “co-creativity” with institutional partners that she’d wanted all along but had

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been unwilling or unable to fully implement. The other was the birth of her child, which seemed to crack open something in her practice, giving concrete, living urgency to her exploration of entanglement, vulnerability, and dependency. As she writes in *Bosses*, "I am thinking about porosity, and trying not to segregate or compartmentalize parts of my life: I have to let the material that's around me in."

As do the scores in much of Leung's previous work, those in "PORTRAITS" foregrounded the institutional frame, in terms of both museum architecture and organizational/curatorial convention. *Browns*, in fact, emphasizes the tendency of these two categories to collide, in leaving it to institutions to decide which walls should be considered "available" and the shade and consistency of brown to paint them, as well as how to measure standard picture hanging height, particularly in spaces, like stairwells, where pictures are not typically hung (in this case, a thin, almost watery wash of light brown, roughly five feet high measured from the floor up, which clung to every dent, mark, and trace of past use that is normally camouflaged by the endless expanse of white). Because the Museum Abteiberg lacks dedicated galleries for temporary exhibitions, the score was executed in fits and starts throughout the building, as the curators, Susanne Titz and Haris Giannouras, determined wall by wall what would be considered off-limits. Another score, *Arches*, 2021, called for "A white inflatable welcome arch in all available rooms," prompting a similar process of self-scrutiny on the part of the museum staff. Here, the cheery signs took on something of a menacing edge, heightened by the placement of one along a narrow corridor constructed with temporary walls, all but blocking viewers' passage: Much as Leung's specification of "available wall" in *Browns* ultimately required curators to specify what would be made unavailable, implicit in the ostentatiously marked welcome is that there are other spaces where one is unwelcome.



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View of "Ghislaine Leung: CONSTITUTION," 2019, Chisenhale Gallery, London. From left: Parents, 2019; Bosses, 2019. Photo: Andy Keate.

But "PORTRAITS" also included a work of another kind, one that seemed like an outlier at the time: *Onions*, 2021, a little oil-on-canvas still life in a gilt frame. The painting, which hung in Leung's childhood home, is a copy of a work by Renoir originally owned by German-Jewish relatives of the artist's grandmother, who were killed during World War II; the replica was commissioned by Leung's grandmother before she sold the remains of the collection. As the artist describes, she believed the painting to be the original for much of her life, and when she discovered otherwise, it suddenly seemed like a lesser thing, a bit of dumb fakery instead of a family treasure. The object had not changed, but its status had, stripped of the validating imprimatur of the name Renoir. Installed in the museum, the object returns to the status of an artwork, but now it's the artist's home, instead of the artist's hand, that becomes the guarantor of authenticity: More than a simple readymade, the painting is an artifact from Leung's life, one that we might imagine has, on some level, influenced her entire understanding of art's identity.

The works in Leung's recent exhibition "Holdings," on view this past winter at the Renaissance Society in Chicago, took up this thread. (Additionally, Leung is opening a new exhibition, "Commitments," at Kunsthalle Basel this month.) Whereas much of her work to date has revolved around artworks that come into being when certain conditions are met, the core of the Chicago show was a set of objects whose identity as artworks has been withdrawn. Each of the show's five realizations of the score *Holdings*, 2024,

'TERMS AND CONDITIONS: The art of Ghislaine Leung'

by Rachel Weltzer

Artforum, May 2024

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was “an object that is no longer an artwork.” Some repurposed components from previous installations of Leung’s own work, only this time presented in ways that deviated from the original scores, rendering them inert: for instance, a stack of foam tiles from an installation of *Mixed Sports*, 2021 (“interlocking puzzle flooring tiles with proportional central square in complementary colors. No more than two colors of foam flooring tiles to be used. The tiles must fill the exhibition floor area”), at the Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain in Geneva in summer 2023, and baby gates from an installation of *Gates* at Berlin’s KW Institute of Contemporary Art in 2021, which leaned unsecured against the wall. Others were objects with a similar status from the institution’s own collection, among them a swath of orange striped fabric from Daniel Buren’s *Intersecting Axis: A Work in Situ*, 1983, a site-specific installation comprising fabric partitions that intersected with the gallery’s existing walls, presented here as a neatly folded square on the floor. Complementing these fugitive objects—now paradoxically reinscribed as artworks according to a different set of conditional criteria—were three new works that more explicitly invoked Leung’s own personal history and her experiences of hybridity as the daughter of a Chinese father from Hong Kong and a Jewish mother from London, born in Stockholm and raised in France. *Jobs* was a list of every job ever held by the artist, past and present, printed on Renaissance Society letterhead and displayed at the institution’s welcome desk. *GLX* was a handmade card addressed to her grandfather in Hong Kong as a child, but never sent, a school photo onto which she has copied out characters in a language she doesn’t know. *Wants* was a song from a Western film that Leung’s father would watch over and over before moving to the United Kingdom in 1970. There was an arresting intimacy to these works, but their tone is hardly confessional; instead, Leung posited them as provocative analogues to the non-artworks with which they were juxtaposed—as emblems of identity’s own restless contingency.

'Ghislaine Leung Profile'

by Hettie Judah

Frieze, May 2024

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Profile: *Hettie Judah* reveals
the gracious intimacy and fortitude
of an artist who leaves no trace

Ghislaine Leung

'Ghislaine Leung Profile'

by Hettie Judah

Frieze, May 2024

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How to identify Ghislaine Leung amid the lunching crowd at a south London cafe? In this image-greedy world, Leung is that rare creature: a public figure of whose physical person no trace seems to exist online. Google suggested a scant handful of faces in response to the prompt: 'Ghislaine Leung, portrait'. Among them, jarringly, was my own. It turned out to be the headshot from my article about Leung's nomination for the 2023 Turner Prize. Still, I felt disconcertingly like I was on the receiving end of a conceptual prank.

Leung makes art that explores, among related subjects, the labour conditions of making art. Often, this is through what she refers to as 'scores': written descriptions or instructions to be followed to physically realize the work. For 'Holdings', Leung's spring 2024 exhibition at the Renaissance Society in Chicago, these scores included 'An object that is no longer an artwork' (*Holdings*, 2024) and 'A song from a film the artist's father watched repeatedly before moving to the United Kingdom in 1970' (*Wants*, 2024). Leung is an artist who lays down clear rules of engagement, who establishes boundaries. Part of the way she does this is by ensuring that the images which circulate are of her work rather than her self.

We met. Leung did not have my face.

Leung stopped making art for many years. Between her BA (2002) and her MA (2009), she swerved from fine art to aesthetics and art theory. For over a decade, she held positions at art institutions including LUX and

Previous page
Public Sculpture, 2008. Score: A group of boys in the collection of a public library is given a canning or call number inclusive of the group. The group is listed and displayed in an exhibition space. *Fountains*, 2023, installation view. Unless otherwise stated, all images courtesy: the artist; Simian, Copenhagen, and Maxwell Graham Gallery, New York.

Opposite page
Fountains, 2022. Score: A fountain installed in the exhibition space to cancel sound. *Fountains*, 2023, installation view.

Below
Violent 2, 2008. Score: All parts of a ventilation system removed from Network Asia Bar during its 2007 refurbishment are reinstalled within the space of the exhibition and fixed from the floor, using as much of the material as possible while keeping it all interconnected. Spare pieces that do not fit in this configuration are bracketed together in smaller formations. A welcome sign is installed. *Fountains*, 2023, installation view.



Tate. It was only in 2015, midway through her 30s, that she started practising as an artist again. In the intervening period, she had watched her peers getting 'run through the mill of the industry', she tells me. Some survived as artists. Most didn't. They had made art for low or no pay, turned up for events, posed for photoshoots, complied and participated, yet still struggled to satisfy the demands of this voracious industry.

Working at that level was something you could only sustain for a few years before burning out, she thought. That wasn't what she wanted. 'People like to say that anyone can make art. Well, maybe. But there's a really big question of who can continue making art, who that life is available to and on what terms.' The practices that most interested Leung were those of 'octogenarian women' who had been developing their work for years. 'I began to think: how would you build a practice that would do that? How would you aim for a six-decade career? You would have to have a very different commitment to energy and to yourself.'

Withdrawing her image was less a gesture of pure refusal than a strategy towards a sustainable career. To resist the pressure to package herself as a commodity, to be present, to be visible. Her conceptual practice is formed around the question of how to make art possible: working with scores rather than physical objects, she needs neither a dedicated studio nor a storage unit. In theory, the performance of Leung's scores can be delegated to others, meaning that the art can circulate independently of her. This is not always the case in practice. Leung's instinct is to be engaged and collaborative. I think she sometimes tells herself off about this.

During the years in which she didn't call herself an artist, alongside her jobs in the art world, Leung wrote. She still writes - her first book, *Partners*, was published in 2018, and the second, *Bosses*, in 2023 - but it was a realization about the limits of what she was doing with the written word that pushed her back into making art. She had been asked to write a text on vulnerability. 'I wrote what I thought was a pretty great essay: good citations, bibliography was intact, it was well written. And then I realized that, formally, it was absolutely antithetical to the politics of vulnerability I was talking about. The form was defensive. It was an essay: a well-defended thing.' Leung wanted instead to find a way to make something vulnerable. Hence, art.

Not being recorded or photographed creates a space in which Leung feels able to be maximally vulnerable. Or, to put it another way, it helps the artist allay what she describes in *Bosses* as 'the fear that turns you towards conservatism'.

It's interesting, though, thinking back to the earliest work of Leung's I saw - her Chisenhale Gallery commission, 'Constitution' - in 2019. That didn't feel particularly vulnerable. It felt cool and distanced. Hermetic. She used gloss and black paint to make the functional structure of the space evident. Attention was drawn to the portals in the white cube, and the presence of offices, broom cupboards and storage rooms beyond. There was an unyielding sound work and a row of gift mugs cellophane-wrapped in pairs running down the middle of the room. It felt smart and highly controlled. Things change, though. People change. Leung changed.

'Ghislaine Leung Profile'

by Hettie Judah

Frieze, May 2024

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'Ghislaine Leung Profile'
by Hettie Judah
Frieze, May 2024
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Motherhood became part of the context in which Leung made art, but it took her a while to reconcile that with her work.

Hettie Judah

Last summer, I performed live public readings of a book-in-progress on art and motherhood. Most attending the readings were artist mothers. There was a passage on 'Balances', Leung's 2022 exhibition at her New York gallery, Maxwell Graham. Her scores for the show included *Monitors* (2022), 'A baby monitor installed in one room broadcast to another', and *Gates* (2019), 'Child safety gates installed on all thresholds of the exhibition space'. The *pièce de résistance*, however, was *Times* (2022), which dictated: 'Access to exhibited works is limited to the studio hours available to the artist, Thursday 9am–4pm and Friday 9am–4pm.' *Times* always got a laugh from my audience. They all knew that feeling. The studio week shrinking from a caffeine-fuelled abundance to a few, hard-fought slivers.

Leung's book *Bosses* opens with a brutal account of giving birth and struggling to breastfeed, of being consumed by guilt and helplessness, of no longer recognizing herself, of feeling set adrift. She invites her readers to think about her body and its functions, weakness and sickness. This feels like a very different person to the

artist who created 'Constitution'. Here, Leung is out of control. She is inviting us in. Motherhood became part of the context in which Leung made art, but it took her a while to reconcile that with her work, to fight against the internalized prejudice she held about art and motherhood being antithetical. In *Bosses* she lays down her new rules of engagement, the shift in her context. 'I am tired of hiding everything about it,' she writes. 'Hiding becomes intolerable at some point.'

Leung's immediate instinct had been to grasp hard onto her old life and ways of doing things. 'Two weeks after I gave birth, I was doing meetings. I was terrified. The identity as an artist was so hard-fought for me. I was frightened that this thing that was so precious to me would be taken away.' It had taken her a long time to 'come out' as an artist and would also take her a long time to 'come out' as a mother. 'I realized that I was fighting to keep this artist identity, while I had another new nascent identity to take care of,' she recalls. 'I felt like I'd been trying to push against a pull door.'

Opposite page
Gates, 2019, Score
Child safety gates
installed on all thresh-
olds in the exhibition
space. 'Balances',
installation view

Above
Bosses, 2019.
Courtesy: the artist;
Chisenhale Gallery,
London, and Maxwell
Graham Gallery,
New York; photo-
graph: Andy Kratz

'Ghislaine Leung Profile'

by Hettie Judah

Frieze, May 2024

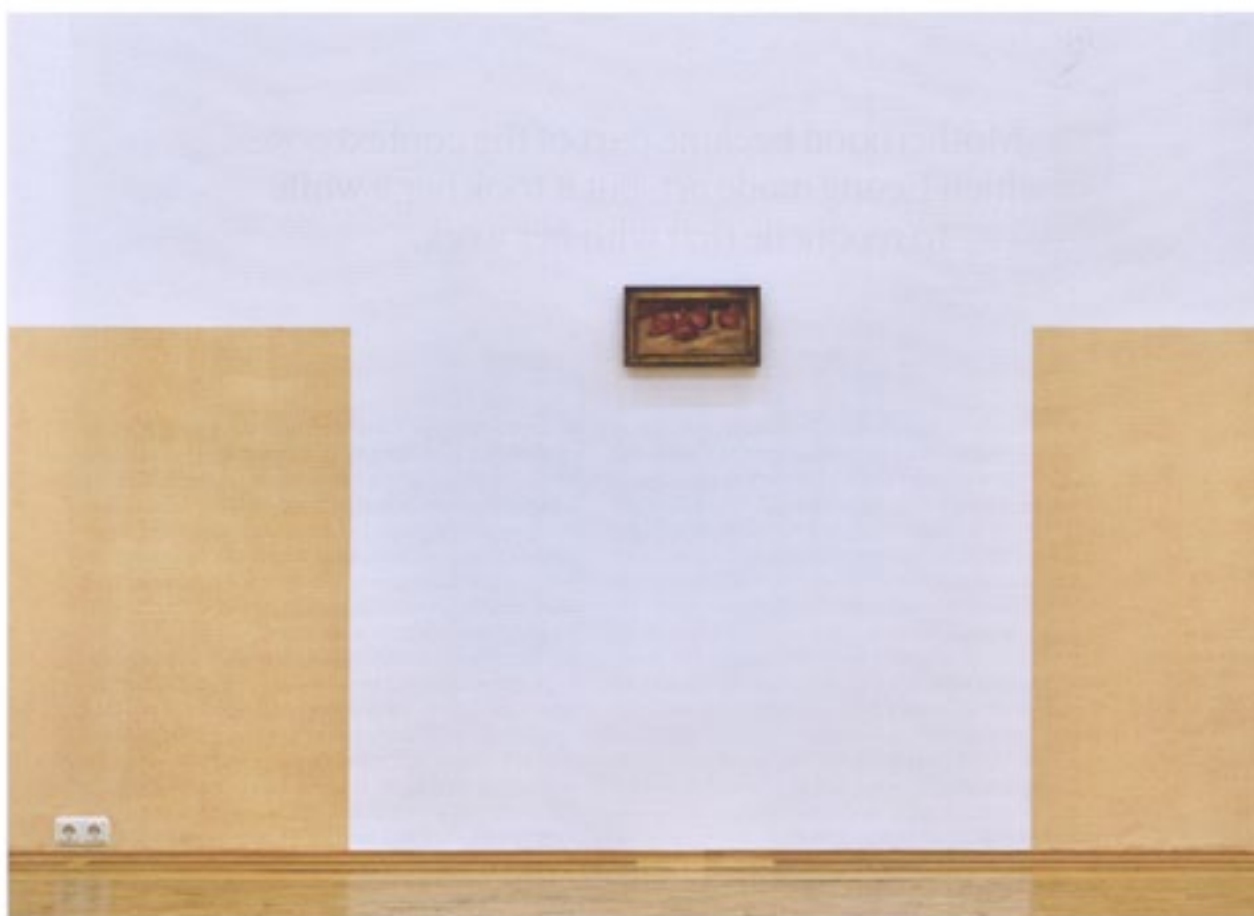
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Leung's voice is animated by laughter. There is a lot of humour to her work, though she says that when she tries to write something funny, people find it sad, and when she tries to write something sad, people find it funny. "Balances" was an angry show: I became very rageful on becoming a mother. It was a real awakening to a massive structural inequity that I thought I was aware of but, it turned out, I was not – at least, not in a lived situation.

The scores, originally a strategy for sustainable art-making, turned out to be well-adapted to the constraints of motherhood. Likewise, the constraints of working during the pandemic. In June 2021, Leung's exhibition 'Portraits' opened at Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach. Unable to travel, Leung 'started to realize how much I could let happen without me there. I've never really done that. It was a plan, but I've always turned up for installs. And, suddenly, I couldn't because of COVID, and because I had a kid. Suddenly, the scores had to work 20 times harder. And then the work was much better. I was so much braver because I had to put my trust into somebody else.'

All of the things I do in
my practice are not because
I'm good at them, but
because I'm bad at them.

Ghislaine Leung



'Ghislaine Leung Profile'

by Hettie Judah

Frieze, May 2024

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'Portraits' included *Browns* (2021) for which the score ('All available walls painted in brown to standard picture-hanging height') really doesn't convey the unleashed colonic impact of flooding the interior of a museum with watery paint the colour of baby poo. Leung wouldn't get to see her own exhibition until four months after it opened.

There is a thread connecting many of the artists Leung cites during our conversations – among them Stanley Broun, Trisha Donnelly, Lee Lozano, Agnes Martin and Charlotte Posenenske – of refusal, withdrawal, non-compliance. She admires their fortitude, their cool, their integrity. Refusal is not something that comes naturally to her. 'I'm not a "no" person. I'm very verbose. I'm giggly.' She tells me that she used to have an alarm that went off on her phone every day that read: 'SAY NO.' She recounts a story of Donnelly delivering a talk at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and, at the end, asking if there were any questions. Then saying: 'No questions.' Leung is in awe, but she also wants to resist her own instinct to control things. In her talks, she does the opposite: rather than preparing a presentation, she invites a collective Q&A. 'All of the things I do in my practice are not because I'm good at them, but because I'm bad at them.'

Leung and I talk a lot about the expectations placed on artists – the enduring clichés of modernism that romanticize obsessive behaviour, privation, the rejection of family life and, on the flipside, the intersecting factors that make art-making impossible for many people. Her display for the 2023 Turner Prize exhibition included *Hours* (2022), a work that related to *Times* but which represented the studio hours available to her through a wall painting of a gridded timesheet.

Hours and *Times* are not only about childcare, but the full range of things she has to fit into the hours around making art: a support structure that includes salaried employment. Working for a living – possibly even in a job you enjoy – isn't part of the modernist vision of the ideal artist, disengaged from normal life. It is, however, the reality for most artists, though squeamishness around admitting it endures. At the Renaissance Society, Leung showed *Jobs* (2024), a poster baldly listing all the positions she had held over a 20-year period, including curatorial and lecturing roles as well as babysitting, various internships and 'mother'.

At the time of our meeting, Leung is working towards an exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel. She is thinking of calling it 'Commitments'. Some years ago, she asked the director of an institution what they looked for in an artist. They said 'commitment'. This answer gnaws at her. 'What do we understand as commitment? If it's the capacity to give our all to the practice, what does that mean for life, especially when labour conditions in the art world are not conducive to being able to support life?' She locates the shame she's felt about having other jobs and becoming a mother as internalized anxiety that she will be judged insufficiently committed as an artist. 'I want to change that, because the capacity to work in other roles is what allows me to make art.'

Babysitter
Flyer Distributor
Retail Intern
Charity Volunteer
Graphic Design Intern
Massage Therapist
Retail Assistant
Glass Collector
Call Centre Operator
Studio Assistant
Retail Assistant
Gallery Volunteer
Studio Manager
Flyer Designer
Videographer
Casual Gallery Assistant
Art Handling Technician
Casual Art Handling Technician
Editorial Intern
Writer
Curatorial Intern
Curatorial Assistant
Audio Visual Technician
Distribution Manager
Curator
Associate Lecturer
Visiting Tutor
Visiting Speaker
Mentor
Head of Programme
Artist
Artist Assistant
Casual Teacher
Editor
Hourly Paid Lecturer
Trustee
Lecturer
Mother

R

GHISLAINE LEUNG
HOLDINGS MAY 2024 14, 2024

Opposite page

Browns, 2021. Score: All available walls in brown to standard picture hanging height. and *Onions*, 2021. Framed oil painting, 'Portraits', installation view. Courtesy: the artist; Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, and Maxwell Graham Gallery, New York; photograph: Achim Kukulies

Above

Jobs, 2024. Score: A list of jobs held by the artist, 'Holdings', installation view. Courtesy: the artist; the Renaissance Society, Chicago, and Maxwell Graham Gallery, New York

A late inclusion in 'Portraits' was *Onions* (2021), for which her description simply read: 'Framed oil painting'. Specifically, it was a reproduction of a small painting by Pierre-Auguste Renoir that had once belonged to Leung's German-Jewish grandparents, sold under duress as the family fled persecution in the 1930s. The reproduction hung in Leung's house growing up. She had always known it as 'the onions'. In fact, it is a still life of pomegranates. *Onions* acknowledges the broader context of Leung's family and its relationship to art, but the title is also a reminder of how little control there is over interpretation once art enters the world. You paint pomegranates. They see onions. ●

Hettie Judah is a writer and curator. Her latest book, *Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood*, will be published by Thames & Hudson in July.

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Immaterial Instruction: A Review of "Holdings" by Ghislaine Leung at the Ren

BY FRANK GISER | JANUARY 26, 2024



Ghislaine Leung, "Holdings," 2024. Score: An object that is no longer an artwork/Photo: Frank Giser

My eye was caught by a poster pinned up behind the welcome desk outside the Renaissance Society's gallery during the opening of "Holdings." The poster displayed a visually succinct but exhaustive list of jobs held by Ghislaine Leung throughout her life. The list includes formal art positions like "lecturer," "artist" and "curator" as well as positions that feel more disconnected from the usual context of an art opening, such as "call centre operator," "massage therapist" and "flyer distributor." The list ends with "mother." I scanned through the list of thirty-eight jobs, taking particular note of anything I've also done. I suspect many artists can relate to the long list of positions that Leung has held, although this is a reality seldom talked about in the context of artists as internationally renowned as Leung. Success as an artist is tricky. When a critic says that an artwork is successful, they mean the artwork accomplishes goals outlined in either the formal presentation of the work or the contextual information that surrounds it. When asking an artist if they've been successful, many people simply want to know if the artist can afford groceries.

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by Frank Giser

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Ghislaine Leung, "GLX," 2024. A school photo of the artist in its original cardboard frame with a handwritten note on the back. The Cantonese characters copied out by the artist as a child, unreadable to her then and now, translate as "To grandpapa from Ghislaine, 87." Never sent./Photo: Frank Giser

"Holdings" is a physically sparse show. In addition to the list of jobs in hallway display cases, the show also contains an edition of five artworks titled "Holdings," a song "from a film the artist's father watched repeatedly before moving to the United Kingdom in 1970" played on repeat from a small speaker, and an artwork titled "GLX" consisting of "A school photo of the artist in its original cardboard frame with a handwritten note on the back. The Cantonese characters copied out by the artist as a child, unreadable to her then and now, translate as 'To grandpapa from Ghislaine, 87.' Never Sent."

Physical objects in the exhibition jut out like icebergs on a tiled sea, and much of the conceptual weight of these works remains hidden beneath a surface of context. Each manifestation of "Holdings" is an interpretation of a short "score" provided by the artist which reads "An object which is no longer an artwork." Three of these works are fragments of Leung's past exhibitions: Two pink curtains with a pattern of colorful circles are wrapped in protective plastic to the immediate right of the gallery's entrance. Two wheeled carts hold pallets of pink and blue foam floor tiles. White metal baby gates lean against a wall to

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the left of the gallery entrance. The other two "Holdings" are objects from past exhibitions at the Renaissance Society: Near the baby gates is a folded orange and white curtain from a Daniel Buren exhibition in 1983. An alcove in the far right of the gallery contains a single black office chair that was featured in a 2008 exhibition by Trisha Donnelly. I'm told it also functions quite well as a normal office chair.



Ghislaine Leung, "Holdings," 2024. Score: An object that is no longer an artwork/Photo: Frank Giser

Conceptual art shows often feel like a puzzle, and being able to speak to both the artist and the curator at this exhibition's opening alleviated some of the difficulty of piecing together clues hinting at the message of these artworks. I'm familiar with Daniel Buren's work, but not familiar enough to recognize a folded curtain from one show of his work in 1983 without context. An exhibition booklet with a list of artworks is available for audiences to read, but it leaves out many details which helped me appreciate these works. The office chair and folded curtains are a nifty way to interpret the artist's "scores" in a literal sense, but for those in-the-know they become extraordinary coincidences! Karsten Lund, the

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curator of the exhibition, shared some of his thoughts with me on the importance of letting audience members arrive at their own conclusions. He pointed out that institutional communication can feel too authoritative, suffocating perfectly valid interpretations that audience members could arrive at within their own understanding of the objects on display. This is a great point, but I'm not convinced that including extra context for the works on display would prevent people from authentically engaging with the work. I suspect holding the viewer's hand a little more would help many people who are unfamiliar with conceptual art appreciate the historical placement of Leung's "Holdings." Luckily, Leung's artist talk scheduled for March 9 is set to ditch the formal monolog and instead skip straight to answering questions from the audience; anyone struggling to fit the pieces of the puzzle together on their own has a chance to do so in collaboration with the artist in person.

The objects selected from Leung's past exhibitions would all feel appropriate in the context of a child's bedroom. Pink pastel curtains and foam flooring feel eerily similar to piles of leftover materials I've seen stored in basements after the household nursery is renovated for older inhabitants. There is a melancholic aspect to the cheery, playful colors and soft materials piled together for efficient storage. This is mirrored by the baby gates' leaning acknowledgment that anything they were able to confine certainly escaped some time ago. Considering these household artifacts alongside objects from past conceptual exhibitions at the Renaissance Society speaks volumes about the way in which artworks are preserved and stored affects how ideas are maintained by institutional archives. But Leung's scores ask who these archives are benefitting. The school photo and sound artwork in the exhibition also help bridge these larger, institutional concerns back to Leung's lived experience.



Ghislaine Leung, "Holdings," 2024. Score: An object that is no longer an artwork/Photo: Frank Giser

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The "scores" that Leung provided for this exhibition are breathtakingly concise. I was struck by the extent to which Leung's scores require trust: Trust in the people behind the scenes to assemble, arrange or fabricate work, but, even more importantly, to interpret her directions with real agency. The Renaissance Society has done an amazing job of finding objects that amplify her voice, but Leung's name would be on the artworks even if they hadn't. Handing over this responsibility to interpret her scores is a manifestation of vulnerability in ways that specific instructions can't be. This is a beautiful concept already, but I think Leung's "Holdings" also calls attention to the relationship between artists and the institutions that display, preserve and finance their work. Many artists don't get to choose whether or not they trust the good intentions of art institutions and the people acting on their behalf—exposure doesn't pay for groceries, but institutional recognition often does. Leung's willingness to trust the Renaissance Society in a collaborative effort is inspirational. Art is never created in a vacuum, but Leung's work is refreshingly honest about its reliance on the people supporting her. So many people both inside and outside of art institutions play a part in the lives of any artist: curators, teachers, administrators, fabricators, assistants, flyer distributors, mothers...

All doing the best they can with an uncertain set of instructions.

"Ghislaine Leung: Holdings" is on view at the Renaissance Society, 5811 South Ellis, at the University of Chicago through April 14.

Frank Geiser

Frank Geiser is a visual artist and arts writer based in the south suburbs of Chicago. He is a professor of Visual Communication and Design at Purdue University Northwest.



Turner Prize 2023 Review: Coming Out the Other End

Salena Barry Opinion 29 September 2023 artreview.com



Barbara Walker, *Burden of Proof 11*, 2023, charcoal, graphite and conte, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Crislea Roberts Gallery. Photo: Angus Mill

The four nominated artists explore the power of community to bind and divide

The Turner Prize 2023 exhibition, held at Towner Eastbourne, may be the first edition in a few years taking place when things, at least pandemic-wise, feel 'back to normal'. However, as the range of works by the four artists nominated for this year's Turner Prize demonstrate, 'normal' can feel just as disorienting as the upheaval that preceded it. The artists each exhibit works that explore different facets of this uneasy normal – political, social, economic – through a range of media including installation, drawing, sculpture and film. However, the throughline connecting this range of practices is the idea of community. For Ghislaine Leung and Rory Pilgrim, community can facilitate support and empathy. Jesse Darling and Barbara Walker explore its rough, blemished side, which, especially when considered in a nationalistic sense, can be alienating and destructive. Another throughline in the artists' works is their response to the effects of recent or ongoing experiences. Pilgrim and Leung take a more personal route, focusing on how community influences the individual experiences of the pandemic and motherhood, respectively. Darling, whose work considers the aftermath of Brexit, and Walker who examines the Windrush scandal, contemplate how national policies can damage the communities they are meant to serve.

ART REVIEW



Installation view of Ghislaine Leung's works at the Turner Prize 2023, Tower of London. Left: *Fountains*, 2022, score: a fountain installed in the exhibition space to cancel sound, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist, Cabinet and Maxwell Graham. Right: *Public Sculpture*, 2018, score: a group of toys in the collection of a public library are given a catalogue or call number inclusive of the group. The group is loaned and displayed in an exhibition space, dimensions variable. Courtesy Reading Central Library. Back: *Hours*, 2022, score: a wall painting the size of the artist's home studio wall is divided into all the hours of the week with the portion of studio hours available to the artist marked in black. Thursday 9AM-4PM, Friday 9AM-4PM. Courtesy the artist, Cabinet and Maxwell Graham. Photo: Angus Mill

For Leung, community is baked into her process. Her presentation featured five of her *Scores*, text-based instructions or descriptions that are realised by the gallery team in close conversation with the artist. The works, all initially shown at her nominated solo exhibition at Simian in Copenhagen, adapt to the space, but are meant to follow the function Leung has predetermined in the initial score. *Fountains* (2022) is meant to cancel sound in the exhibition space. In its Copenhagen iteration, this was achieved by water pouring dramatically from the ceiling to the floor. The Eastbourne version, which involves water springing up from the centre of a metal tub, feels tame in comparison although it still accomplishes its objective. Other works, like *Hours* (2022), allude to a community beyond the gallery space. The work is a grid painted onto the gallery wall, which is divided into the hours of the week, with the hours available to Leung to make art – 9:00 to 16:00 on Thursdays and Fridays – painted in black. These are the times Leung takes away from her other work, which includes parenting. Keeping this schedule, and fulfilling her multiple duties, involves the support of others. Leung's work demonstrates that these bonds are symbiotic. They sustain, albeit in varying ways, the artist and the networks of people that ripple out around her. Leung's work is an understated ode to what happens and who works behind the scenes to keep things going.



Rory Pilgrim, *RAF75*, 2022, HD film with sound, 1 hr 6 min. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London. Photo: Angus Mill

Pilgrim takes a more granular approach to community, considering the individuals that form and expand it. The main work in his exhibition space is an hour-long film, *RAFTS* (2021), which documents a project of the same name produced during the pandemic in collaboration with Green Shoes Arts, a charity that engages the residents of East London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in artistic activities. The project had participants consider the idea of a raft as a support structure and respond using poetry, music and storytelling. The film splices the participants' musings on rafts in relation to their experiences of the pandemic, intercut between recordings of songs performed at London's Cadogan Hall. The music is beautifully performed by singers including Robyn Haddon, Declan Rowe John, and Kayden Fearon with accompaniment from London Contemporary Orchestra. The participants' additions can feel quite sentimental at first, but over time they become gripping reminders of how difficult and life-changing the pandemic was. Moreover, these excerpts underscore that there was only one way we could have kept afloat at the time and eventually come out the other end: together.



Installation view of Jesse Darling's works at the Turner Prize 2023, Tower of London. Foreground: *Corpus (Fortress)*, 2022. Concrete, rebar, wood, polystyrene, steel cable, barbed wire, bistro curtain, 317 x 212 x 46 cm. Courtesy the artist and Arcadia Missa. Background: sculptures from the series *Come On England!*, 2023, pedestrian barriers, welded steel, tea towels, wheels, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist, Arcadia Missa, Galerie Mollot, and Sultana. Photo: Angus Mill

To enter the two galleries housing Darling's and Walker's works, visitors must first pass under a barbed wire arch constructed by Darling and envisioned as a checkpoint. Here the idea of "us and them", the included and excluded, begins: community turned ugly. Beneath the barbed wire hangs a sheer, white, embroidered net curtain. The materials Darling uses to designate this threshold don't feel right together – the wire connects the public, the outdoor and the punitive, while the curtain alludes to a space that is domestic, private, gentle. Yet, both are used at the peripheries of home, whether a house or a country.

After crossing through and entering the gallery, there are two lines of metal barricades that border a set path forward into the space that widen and eventually dissolve, doing away with the order and control suggested by the checkpoint behind them. What fills Darling's gallery feels like the ruins of a nationalistic ideology of exclusion. There is bunting with ragged and faded Union Jacks, binders stuffed with concrete – seemingly official, but essentially nonsensical – and a railing that has punched through a wall and mapped a writhing path mid-air before spilling out on the floor. The enactment of Brexit in 2020 and its ongoing impacts, for individual households in the UK and the country's population as a whole, makes this work cut particularly deep. In one corner, two barricades, each with elongated metal rods at their bases, are positioned in the corner. They look as if they have sprouted legs and are trying to climb the walls to escape. There is an anthropomorphic element in several of Darling's works: these barricades have become animated with feelings and desires. The mechanisms which facilitate exclusion and inclusion in communities, domestic or public, are not objective. As neutral as binders, barricades and banners may appear, when pushed to deliver the extremes of nationalistic self-preservation, they self-destruct, revealing a logic that is absurd, human or sometimes a mix of both.



From left: Barbara Walker, *Burden of Proof 3*, 2022, mixed media with graphite, conte, charcoal and pastel on paper, 162 x 122 x 5 cm (framed). Courtesy the artist and Cristea Roberts Gallery; Barbara Walker, *Burden of Proof 4*, 2022, mixed media with graphite, conte, charcoal and pastel on paper, 162 x 122 x 5 cm (framed). Courtesy Sharjah Art Foundation Collection; Barbara Walker, *Burden of Proof 5*, 2022, mixed media with graphite, conte, charcoal and pastel on paper, 162 x 122 x 5 cm (framed). Courtesy the artist and Cristea Roberts Gallery. Photo: Angus Mill

The clash between nation and humanity continues in Walker's exhibition. Moving past Darling's second checkpoint and through a short corridor connecting the two galleries, a mural depicting five large-scale charcoal portraits towers in the distance. All the portraits in Walker's show, which includes these wall drawings along with works on paper, depict people impacted by the Windrush scandal, which surfaced in 2017. It involved the wrongful deportation and denial of legal rights to UK nationals who had migrated from Caribbean Commonwealth countries prior to 1973 because they did not have paperwork to show their British citizenship, which was assumed at the time of their arrival because they were citizens of British territories. The works on paper feature drawings of the documents that allowed the subjects of the portraits to challenge, and ultimately overturn, the government's assertion that they were foreigners with no right to reside in the UK. These large portraits remind viewers that Walker's subjects are larger than, more than these events. However, as the smaller portraits on paper show, the experience has become embedded in who they are. The documents are either the background of the portraits, or they overlap, bisecting faces in some instances, rather than placed beside her subjects. Although government bureaucracy, and the administration of delineating who does and does not have rights to be part of the national community, can seem complex and opaque, its design and impacts are human. Her work straightforwardly emphasises the severity of what can happen when this is forgotten.

Community has the power to both bind and divide; all four artists seem to agree on that. The events that their work references speak to issues that involve most people, if not directly then indirectly through the many communities to which we belong. Whether joyful or unpleasant, there is solace in knowing that we are not alone. Perhaps this is the essence of our current normal. Regardless who wins, for better or worse, we're in this together.

Salena Barry is a writer living and working in London, UK. She is a 2022 Jerwood Writer in Residence.

'Turner prize: pandemic problems and Windrush scandal among shortlist'

by Harriet Sherwood

The Guardian, 27 April 2022

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Turner prize: pandemic problems and Windrush scandal among shortlist

The work of artists Jesse Darling, Ghislaine Leung, Rory Pilgrim and Barbara Walker will be exhibited at Towner Eastbourne before winner is announced in December



📺 'Interrogates past and present issues of racial identity, exclusion and power' ... Barbara Walker's *Burden of Proof*. Photograph: Danko Stjepanovic

An artist who reflects on the challenges of the Covid pandemic and another who explores the impact of the Windrush scandal are among four shortlisted for this year's prestigious Turner prize, with the winner announced in December.

The work of Jesse Darling, Ghislaine Leung, Rory Pilgrim and Barbara Walker will be exhibited at the Towner Eastbourne from 28 September before the jury's final choice.

Alex Farquharson, the director of Tate Britain and the chair of the Turner prize jury, said it was a "fantastic shortlist" for a prize that "offers the public a snapshot of British artistic talent today".

He added: "These artists each explore the contrasts and contradictions of life, combining conceptual and political concerns with warmth, playfulness, sincerity and tenderness and often celebrating individual identity and community strength."



📷 Evoking the precariousness of power structures ... Jesse Darling's No Medals No Ribbons installation at Modern Art Oxford. Photograph: Ben Westoby/Modern Art Oxford

Darling, an artist based in London and Berlin, uses sculptures and installations to “evoke the vulnerability of the human body and the precariousness of power structures”, the Tate said in its announcement.

The jury was struck by the artist’s ability to manipulate materials “in ways that skilfully express the messy reality of life” and expose “the world’s underlying fragility”.

Darling was nominated for solo exhibitions *No Medals No Ribbons* at Modern Art Oxford and *Enclosures* at Camden Art Centre.

Leung, a Swedish-born artist who lives and works in London, was particularly commended by the jury for the “warm, humorous and transcendental qualities that lay behind the sleek aesthetic and conceptual nature” of her work.



📷 'Warm, humorous and transcendental qualities' ... Ghislaine Leung's installation at Simian, Copenhagen. Photograph: GRAYSC/Courtesy the artist and Simian, Copenhagen; and Maxwell Graham, New York

She was nominated for her solo exhibition *Fountains at Simian*, Copenhagen, in which a baby monitor, child safety gates, inflatable structures and toys were used to challenge the way art is produced and circulated. "We're not used to [seeing] baby monitors. You think everything's been done, not that art is a game, but it is about new approaches," said Farquharson.

Pilgrim blends stories, poems, music and film created in collaboration with communities in the east London borough of Barking and Dagenham "to reflect on times of change and struggle during the pandemic".

He was nominated for *Rafts* at the Serpentine and Barking town hall and a live performance of the work at the Cadogan Hall in London. The project was a "standout example of social practice", according to the jury.

Walker's work "interrogates past and present issues of racial identity, exclusion and power". She was nominated for her presentation *Burden of Proof* at the Sharjah Biennial 15 in the UAE, which explores the impact of the Windrush scandal.

The jury was impressed with Walker's use of "portraits of monumental scale to tell stories of a similarly monumental nature, while maintaining a profound tenderness and intimacy".

Farquharson said: "Part of her practice involves drawing directly on walls, and those drawings that literally take time, immense skill, [are] washed off at the end, in a practice that reflects ... how people can be marginalised on account of their identity and injustice."

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📷 Reflecting on times of change and struggle during the pandemic ... Rory Pilgrim's Rafts at the Serpentine Gallery. Photograph: George Darrell/Courtesy andriessse-eyck galerie

The Turner prize, one of the best known prizes for visual arts, aims to promote public debate on new developments in contemporary British art. Last year it was won by Veronica Ryan, who created the UK's first permanent artwork to honour the Windrush generation and at 66 was the oldest artist yet to be awarded the prize.

Each year, the winner receives £25,000 with the runners up getting £10,000 each.

Joe Hill, the director and chief executive of Towner Eastbourne, said the shortlist consisted of “an incredibly strong set of exhibiting artists, who ask us to look at some of the most pertinent issues of today, and who will collectively bring a sense of place and community to our galleries, through their diverse range of practices, from film and performance to drawing and sculpture.”

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The members of this year's jury are Martin Clark, director of Camden Art Centre; Cédric Fauq, chief curator of Capc musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux; Melanie Keen, director of Wellcome Collection; and Helen Nisbet, artistic director of Art Night.