Summer of Love

It's 50 years since the socio-political phenomenon, that was the Summer of Love, bloomed in San Francisco. In acknowledgment of this fact, the Schwarz Foundation and curator Katerina Gregos organised a group show, called *Summer of Love*, on the Greek island of Samos. On the evening of the exhibition's opening **Fagot Koroviev** engaged Gregos, and five of the participating artists, in a discussion which centred on the writings of American philosopher Michael Hardt and his understanding of the term 'love'.



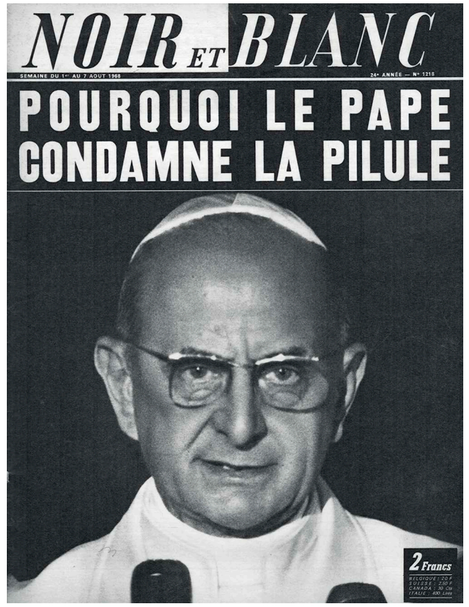
Fagot Koroviev: What do you mean by the word love? To the priest the ideal of love might be *agape,* and to the pornographer, love might be *eros*. Is it not true that the *word* love has become so diluted, in common parlance, as to be rendered completely powerless?

Johan Grimonprez; ***(Belgian multimedia artist, filmmaker, and curator):*** There is already a troubled relationship between the word love and the word power. Why do you insist on entangling them further? To the philosopher Hannah Arendt, it is troubling to marry love and power, or love and politics, at all; because, she would say, if you have an unquestioning love of the party, you have created fascism – she was specifically thinking about Nazi Germany of course. Michael Hardt too talks about how, in the context of power, the very concept of love has been corrupted.

Fagot Koroviev: So you draw a distinction between the *true form* of love, as you perceive it, and the fleeting shadows it casts in our everyday experience?

Johan Grimonprez: It's trickier than that. Love is often reduced to generic ideas, whereas politics is alway specific and complex. The soldier, returning from Afghanistan, who is filmed embracing his loved ones live on CNN, to promote the war on the homefront, is a quite different context from that of a Pakistani girl who is seen mourning her grandmother, killed in a US drone attack. They are both, in essence, expressions of love; it is the specifics of their political contexts that distinguishes them.

Katerina Gregos; (*Greek curator, writer and lecturer based in Brussels)**:*** It's impossible for the word to become powerless. Love is a





feeling that is shared by the majority of human beings. The real questions are *what* do they love and also whether love itself is *valued* in our broader society. Perhaps it has just lost its currency, in that we have chosen to value reason, exchange and technology over love; so it has become marginalised in the public domain. Michael Hardt wants to bring it back as an idea not just in the interpersonal, and for the family, but for society as a whole.

Mikhail Karikis; ***(Greek/British artist based in London and Lisbon):*** Michael Hardt talks about corrupted love too – fundamentalism being an example of that – 'love of the same is a love which can lead to the extermination of the other.' The fact that in the last few years, we have been experiencing a resurgence in mainstream 'politics of hate' means, by definition, love as a concept is very relevant in the public realm.

Marge Monko; ***(Estonian multidisciplinary artist):*** Love is an experience and can (potentially) have a transformative power. Even if unreciprocated, it can help us towards understanding the complexity of life, and other human beings. In 2016, I curated a show in Tallinn Art Hall called *Every Letter is a Love Letter*, in reference to Chris Kraus' book *I love Dick*. Through the experience of being rejected, Kraus finds her own voice and 'writes herself into the world', so to speak.

Fagot Koroviev: What was love then, in the context 1967 San Francisco?

Katerina Gregos: There was a certain näivete, I believe. It never really moved beyond a collective awareness into direct action, so it stayed in the domain of 'the symbolic' because of a lack of organisation. The people that participated in the movement originated from very different backgrounds: there were some who were political activists, and some who were content to hug trees and smoke dope. But the foundations were laid for what was to come in 1968. The notion I am specifically interested in exploring, with this exhibition, is what Michael Hardt refers to as 'the commons'. And what happened in the summer of '67 was in fact a manifestation of a collective idea of 'commonality.'

Johan Grimonprez: For the politically oppressed in 1967, it was not only the Summer of Love but also a 'summer of war', (think of Vietnam). And 50 years later, when we think of Syria, the situation is not dissimilar. The flipside of the Summer of Love is the refugee crisis we are currently experiencing,



which the island of Samos, of course, is very much involved in. The elephant in the room is the military-industrial complex fuelling these conflicts; (I look at this in detail in my film *Shadow World* (2016)). But referring specifically to the idea of 'the common(s)', there is privatisation on the one side, and on the other, a new vision of what we share as a world community; it is this more generous vision that is lagging behind somewhat. The worst example of this general process of privatisation, is the privatisation of war; and with it the privatisation of our political imagination, which has been bankrupted by the corporate kleptocracy. (How come Washington has a ratio of three defence lobbyists to every one member of Congress?) Supposedly 'common' tax funds are poured into the defence industry; should they not instead be used to build the world that we all share, instead of further fuelling conflicts? We need to define a new participatory politics and in so doing to explore seriously what 'the commons' has to offer.

Fagot Koroviev: So we are enjoying a beer and quiet chat on the idyllic Greek island of Samos, which is separated from the coast of Turkey by just over a kilometre of crystal-clear water. Where we sit is, in effect, the pinch point for the largest refugee crisis since WWII. According to The Guardian, over 160,000 migrants – 80% of whom are Syrian – have entered Greece by crossing the water from Turkey, so far this year. And in the same amount of time, 2,300 of those migrants have died making the crossing. What relevance does love have in this situation?

Katerina Gregos: When the refugee crisis began, the Greek population reacted in a way that surprised us all. Even though our own economy, our welfare systems, our health care and education systems were in tatters, a large proportion of the population banded together to help the refugees. And despite being a small place, which one might expect to be naturally suspicious and closed in its thinking, on Samos and other Greek islands, Europe witnessed a radical embracing of difference. There was a woman, right here on the island, who was cooking 4500 meals a day for the refugees. Indeed, the solidarity networks on these islands that

First spread, left and current spread, left:
Night Soil – Economy of Love, 2015, **Melanie Bonajo**, HD Video, colour, sound, 32' 47", courtesy the artist and AKINCI, Amsterdam

First spread, right:
Lucy in the Sky (detail), 2017, **Marge Monko**, photo, wall paper, pigment prints, custom cut acrylic glass, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist

Current spread, right:
Summer of War, 2017, **Marko Mäetamm**, acrylic on paper, 80 x 80cm, courtesy of the artist

Third spread, left:
Shadow World, (film still), 2016, **Johan Grimonprez**, original source: Kiss-o-Drome

Third spread, right:
Shadow World, (film still), 2016, **Johan Grimonprez**, original source: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

Fourth spread, left top:
Lessespian Mutants (detail), 2017, **Uriel Orlow**, wallpaper, dimensions variable, courtesy the artist

Fourth spread, left bottom and right:
The Bitterlake Chronicles, 2011, **Uriel Orlow**, archival pigment print, dimensions variable, courtesy the artist

Fifth spread, left:
Children of Unquiet, 2013-14, **Mikhail Karikis**, video still, courtesy the artist

are, as you say, very much on the front line, were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016. If that was not a manifestation of love, as Michael Hardt describes it, I don't know what is.

Fagot Koroviev: So is there a spiritual dimension to this love? From the islanders' point of view in particular, does it not come directly out of the Orthodox Christian tradition?

Katerina Gregos: No, it comes out of a general sense of empathy and identification; and out of a particularly traumatic episode of recent Greek history: the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-22. As a result of this, 1.5 million Greeks, who were living in Turkey (largely in Asia Minor), were forcibly displaced to Greece ending up as refugees themselves; they landed on the same islands where Syrians are landing today. People still remember the 'Asia Minor Catastrophe', and have elderly relatives who experienced it. So, Greeks are no strangers to the status of being refugees; In addition to this, Greece itself is very much a diasporic nation.

Fagot Koroviev: So why do we do this art stuff then? What power, if any, does the realm of the aesthetic possess?

Johan Grimonprez: You talk a lot about power...

Fagot Koroviev: ...I do, I do, you're right...

Katerina Gregos: Agency is a better word...

Uriel Orlow; ***(multi-disciplinary artist working in London and Zurich):*** And you're using the word aesthetic too, but art is to do with representation. The agency carried by art comes from difference of representation (and the representation of difference). For we are constantly at the mercy of representations that are normative; and we perpetuate master narratives, in the realm of history and of politics. At a time when narratives are increasingly homogenised through the media – social or otherwise – it is especially important to nurture alternative ways of seeing.

Johan Grimonprez: The artist Marta Benavides, whom we interviewed in *Shadow World*, was one of the few women involved in the peace talks that lead to political solutions to the armed conflict in El Salvador in the 1980s; she was working in refugee camps there at the time. Benavides











was subsequently forced into exile, but now works as a peace worker in her home country again (El Salvador is still one of the most dangerous places on earth). She places community-building at the centre of her own creative practice by transforming conflict areas into garden communities. She describes her gardening "… as *companheirismo* (communion), to grow gifts to bring to the global table talk with my sisters"; and so she creates 'practical commons', that are shared by conflicting parties. "Peace is not built; peace is something within us," she claims. "What we need to build are the processes to manifest it."

Fagot Koroviev: So Marko, if what has been suggested is true, this exhibition, on the tiny island of Samos, is initiating dialogues that are of critical significance to society, as a whole. But you chose to communicate through the medium of painting – a vehicle that is more intensely personal than it is ecumenical, in its capacity to communicate. How can this mode of presentation be an appropriate vehicle for such a dialogue?

Marko Mäetamm; *(Estonian multi-media artist):* As artists, we build our own bespoke channels of communication, and some of those might be intensely personal. Sometimes 'off the shelf' visual language is simply not up to the job. We are all individual people, that is how we approach any issue that we face. To me there is nothing more important than the personal. If I claim to see from someone else's perspective, then I am talking bollocks.

Fagot Koroviev: But you are not just being personal, you are being absurd. How can anything of universal significance be expressed through that which is comic?

Marko Mäetamm: I am not intentionally being comic; I am simply expressing that which I observe to be true. The more direct and straightforward an approach to a subject is, the more absurd it becomes by definition!

Katerina Gregos: We are brought back to the question: 'what does art *do*?' It cannot change the world, but it can change the way we *think* about the world, and perhaps therefore inform our choices. We are living in a time when knowledge is becoming increasingly privatised and politics is becoming increasingly polarised. Master narratives are being posited as the only truth, whilst other stories, other narratives, subjectivities and perspectives are suppressed. But every time I work with an artist, a new world opens up to me. What I thought was a given is challenged and I am obliged to think differently.

Mikhail Karikis: One of the narratives we receive from mainstream media is that we have reached a dead end, and yet we now expect politicians to come up with new solutions to the predicament we find ourselves in. This is precisely why art is important. It nourishes and develops the realm of the imaginary. All politicians should study art, at least for a time. More than ever, now is the time when we need alternative visions for the future.

Johan Grimonprez: That is true, every time I make a work I change personally.

Fagot Koroviev: Katerina writes in her catalogue essay: "Hardt advocates love 'as a proliferation of differences, not the destruction of differences. Not merging into unity, but a constructing of constellations among differences…'" To conflate this statement then with all the extraordinary claims we have just heard made for art, we can safely conclude the world's problems will harmlessly dissipate in a marijuana haze, if we spend less time doing practical stuff, and more time making art.

Johan Grimonprez: Your question, (is it even a question?) infers an overly simplistic reading of both love and of art. One of Laurent Berlant's critiques of Hardt's 'politics of love' is that the intimate space must still be preserved, because it is a space in which there is the possibility of something vulnerable occurring, and this should be protected from the larger political context. To her, love dances between the revolutionary and the ordinary. Love can also be destructive; the situation therefore is in no way as straightforward as you imply.

Fagot Koroviev: So you are saying grace, forgiveness and redemption are necessary components of love?

Johan Grimonprez: It is tricky to talk about things in those general terms when the relation to the other is *always* historical and precise. Maybe a political concept of love asks too little or too much to ground a political theory. There is the danger of being caught in an idealised vision that does not do justice to its complexities and contradictions. The Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish notes: "I write about love to expose the conditions that don't allow him to write about love."

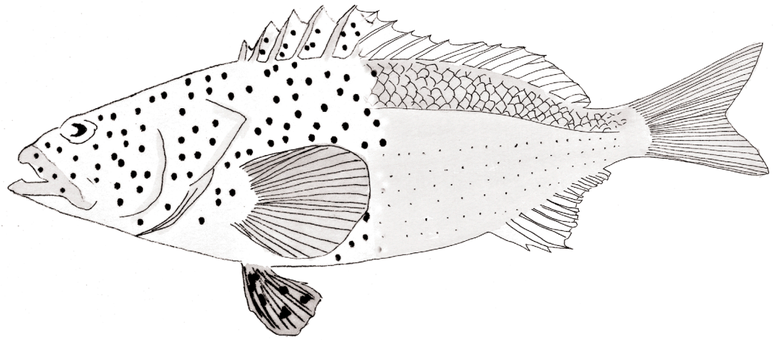
Uriel Orlow: Johan, love suggests a move away from ontology towards ethics – it's not about what *is* but how we *relate* to what is. Art too is about relating to the world; we don't make art for ourselves after all. The quote from Hardt demonstrates this, in that we are taken beyond asking: 'what are you?' and 'what am I?' to the relationship that is formed between us. It's almost doing away with ontology entirely.

Johan Grimonprez: Agreed, I don't think we are necessarily saying different things. To quote Marta Benavides again, "…instead of telling stories, [we must] create conditions [so] that we can *be* the story. A new way of storytelling creates a new way of being; [a way] of being together that has the power to overcome the stories of 'havingness' and [of] greed."

It's the practice of 'commoning', the verb, the action rather than the noun 'common'. It's the difference between 'havingness' and 'beingness.' 'Beingness' is not static, or a separate 'thereness.' It's not a thing detached from 'what is' and 'what we are', it's intrinsically inclusive, and hence forces the asking of ethical questions. It's the move from a 'havingness' economy, as part of the privatisation of the world, towards 'beingness' as part of a community.

Next to Michael Hardt we also interviewed cognitive scientist Raymond Tallis for the film *Shadow World*, to expand on the question: why can't we tickle ourselves? He explained that tickling is about surprise and about feeling the unpredictability of other people, and the sense of their otherness. Only the other can tickle you. So when tickling oneself there cannot be this element of surprise, this profound sense of the otherness of other people. It is an ontological realisation of the other: 'you tickle, therefore I am.' Tallis alluded to the fact that Descartes' *cogito* argument is not actually the whole story. What is this 'I' contained in 'I think, therefore I am?' This standalone 'I' is deprived of its social context, Tallis reasons. The mind is not isolated, but shared and communal. We tend to think of human consciousness as something trapped inside our heads, but consciousness – as with language, and as demonstrated through empathy – is profoundly relational. Awareness of ourselves only emerges in a social context. The mind is not a 'thing,' but rather is 'being'; it is a relationship. If one were really to do Descartes' insight justice, Tallis reasons, we could translate it as, "we dialogue, therefore we are." Or in other words: "you are, therefore I am."

Katerina Gregos: What Hardt is saying is particularly relevant now, in our contemporary urban environments, as we increasingly find ourselves co-existing with 'the Other;' the



different; and the ‘foreign.’ Our societies in the past were much more homogenised. His political idea of love is, in fact, about learning to live together in difference.

Fagot Koroviev: The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, does he figure in all this?

Uriel Orlow: Yes, of course; he is the one who proposed this shift from ontology to ethics, and acknowledged that ‘the other’ cannot be assimilated, and we have to live with that. Love is the embracing of this absolute difference.

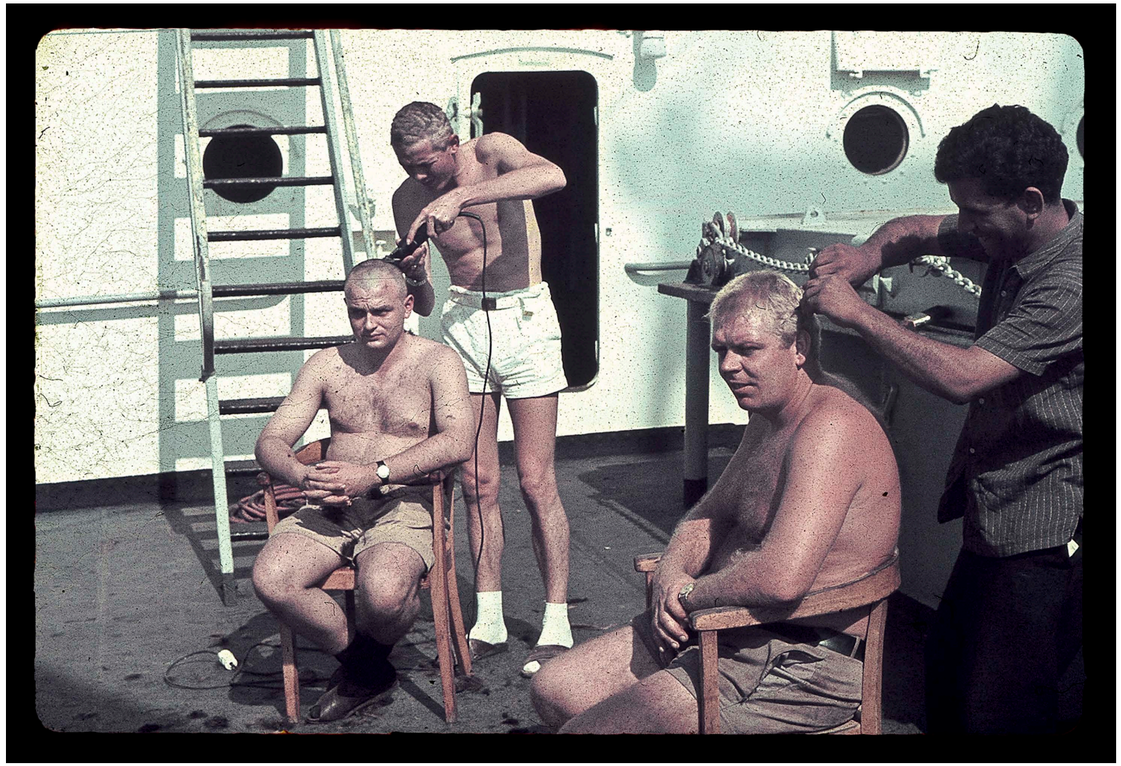
Fagot Koroviev: Johan, in your work *Every Day Words Disappear,* (2016) you have conflated an interview you conducted with Michael Hardt, with excerpts from Jean Luc Godard’s 1965 film *Alphaville*. What is achieved by placing these narratives alongside each other?

Johan Grimonprez: *Alphaville* is science fiction, set in the Paris suburbs in the '60s. The film posits a state in which concepts and language relating to love and affection are banned under the penalty of death. The protagonist is a secret agent, Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine) who, upon infiltrating the city, falls in love with Natacha von Braun (Anna Karina.) In the film, Karina attempts to say, "I love you", but she does not possess the language or the concepts to do so. I was considering that there might be an analogy with our experience now, in that we live in a world that our taxes – that should be used to contribute to the world we share – are stolen from us and spent on weapons. Our experience of the world is so heavily privatised, that even our imaginations are not our own, and so we no longer even possess the language to define a shared world or to talk about community. It was particularly relevant, I thought, that the authoritarian computer that runs the place Alphaville in the film, is finally defeated by a poet.

Fagot Koroviev: Marge, in the work you have created specifically for this show, *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds (The More I Make Love, the More I Want To Make Revolution)* (2017), you present a constructed collage, in which an aspirational image of liberated hipsters is overlaid with a graphic, relating the years in which the contraceptive pill has been legalised in various countries. Can you expand on this idea of the pill being a socio-political thermometer in the West? And what is the relationship between aspiration and contraception?

Marge Monko: The background image of hipsters, as you put it, is a cigarette ad from Playboy magazine. There are many connections between sex, female empowerment, and cigarettes, that I wanted to draw attention to. I am interested in these





kinds of advertising images because they create desire; they are a fantasy space. On the other hand, the graphic timeline shows us how dependent the reproductive rights – and therefore also our desires – are on socio-political circumstances.

Fagot Koroviev: Contraception is a matter of survival for women in the developing world; is this something your work's concerned with?

Marge Monko: Absolutely! And as we’ve seen, reproductive rights have to be fought for over and over again, also in the Western countries. Unfortunately, we can’t take it for granted.

Fagot Koroviev: Uriel, can you talk us through your extensive research for your presentation *The Short and the Long of it* (2010-2017)? It concerns the fate of the 14 cargo ships caught in the Suez Canal, for almost eight years, after the outbreak of the Six Day War in 1967. There seems to be a sense that the mutual crisis these crews faced resulted in their entrenched ideological differences dissolving.

Uriel Orlow: I first became hooked on an image of an unusual postage stamp I came across. This stamp claimed sovereignty for a region called the Bitter Lake on the Suez Canal – which it clearly could not claim; I found it intriguing. So, to start with, I spent three months in Egypt trying to find out more about the Six Day War (from when the stamp originated) and the ships and the crews caught up in it. I ended up talking to locals who remembered it first hand, because I couldn’t find any official information about the ships in the history books; there wa lots on the Six Day War in 1967, but the ships themselves were not even a footnote.

The research became increasingly granular as other questions arose, specifically about the Suez Canal – that it is illegal to photograph it or film it, for instance. The canal should not exist as an image; but as an artist, images are all I have. Eventually, by going through lists from the shipping companies, I managed to track down some of the sailors, and once I had contacted them directly it all became more focused.

I started to gather material to create an archive, which then I made use of as an artist, to construct the work out of. I did not want just to produce some kind of documentation of the event and reinsert it somehow into the official narrative from which it was originally omitted. What was interesting to me, was that, because the subject was excluded from history, it was up for grabs; I could do what I wanted with it. So I just presented fragments in such a way as to leave room for the viewer to put things together for themselves.

Interestingly, there were ships there from both sides of the so-



called Iron Curtain; the Six Day War itself was, in some ways, a proxy for the Cold War, with the US backing Israel and the USSR backing the Arab states. The ships became 'fate communities', communities where people, who otherwise may have nothing in common, except the situation at hand, are forced together by circumstance. The same phenomenon occurs in school classrooms. The situation undermines the idea of what Benedict Anderson terms as 'imagined communities' where we create a sense of belonging through national symbols and histories. The people on the ships had in common that they had to figure out how to live, how to pass time together; and it is that necessity that prevailed over ideological difference *inferred*.

What was particularly interesting was how creativity came out of that situation too: they made postage stamps, they organised their own Olympic Games between the ships in '68, and they built sailing boats to hold regattas.

Fagot Koroviev: So what is wrong with having a historical master narrative? Don't communities need to agree on the stories that bind them together?

Uriel Orlow: Well whose master narrative is it that we should settle on do you think? Who decides what is included and excluded from the final narrative and what happens to the narratives that are subsequently marginalised and forgotten? As Walter Benjamin said in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History,* it is always the narrative of the victor that prevails; so we don't have the stories of those who lost, or of those living on the ground, living

out the minutiae of history. What's interesting to me, about the Bitter Lake narrative, is that although it might seem irrelevant in the master narrative of the Six Day War, it reveals so much about it.

Katerina Gregos: History is usually written with a capital 'H'. Master narratives are decisive, hegemonic and based on exclusion; they are often constructed directly out of conflict, imperialism and colonialism. Groups that are implicated in these processes often have a sense of shared trauma which is suppressed; it is never allowed to surface. One example is when Turkey invaded and occupied the Northern part of Cyprus in 1974, leading to the island being divided, in a very artificial way, with Greek Cypriots on one side and Turkish Cypriots on the other – though they had been living together for years. What was lost in the mêlée of nationalistic rhetoric that followed was an outlet through which the collective trauma, from both sides of the divided island, could be shared.

Fagot Koroviev: Mikhail, you have generated a socially engaged space within the exhibition, somewhere where visitors can talk, read from the library you have started and to listen to music from 1967. However pertinent such activities might be, for the few that are able to visit this remote cultural outpost, the necessarily modest scale of the installation means that any outcome can surely only be symbolic. How can socially engaged activities, like this one, be implemented on a broader scale?

Mikhail Karikis: My dear Fagot, creating projects within broader communities is what I do, and have been doing, for a long time! In fact, the subject of love came up in a project I started in 2012 called *Children of Unquiet;* I responded to Hardt and Negri's chapter on love with a film, and then Hardt formed a response to my film with words. This project came out of the shared trauma of a group of children experiencing the fallout from mass unemployment in their community. Firstly I felt ashamed that it was my generation that was leaving the children with this legacy; and so my sincere question was what I could give back to them through my practice. Discovering Hardt and Negri's approach to love in their book *Common Wealth* was first of all empowering to me, and therefore I felt it was important to pass that alternative narrative on to them; it is a model for economics that is not based on the maximisation of private profit – the system that had so devastated the society in which they live – but offered a different solution, an alternative to the economic fundamentalism that we constantly hear preached.

Fagot Koroviev: Uriel, you have created a mural/wall paper for the Samos show which pictures the 'Lessepsian migration' of marine species up the Suez Canal to the warmer, more saline waters of the Mediterranean. Can you talk a little bit about the significance of this migration of marine species?

Uriel Orlow: The language that is used to describe this process of migration is quite anthropomorphic; we talk about an influx of foreign species in the Eastern Mediterranean, taking over the habitat of the locals. (It sounds familiar, does it not?) I wanted to counter that with a bio-political alternative, in which the different species fall in love and mate to create new species.

Katerina Gregos: Can we conclude by going back to your opening question? Has the word love lost its agency? Srećko Horvat, in his book *The Radicality of Love* says we need to rehabilitate the idea of love, not only in the public domain but in the domain of the intellectual. Some of the motivation for putting on this exhibition is that I find there is a lack of intelligent, non-saccharine discourse on the subject. We need to do away with this strange prejudice; what sets apart the critically engaged intellectuals like Vijay Prashad and Michael Hardt, who we see speaking in Johan's film *Shadow World,* is that they demonstrate emotional intelligence; they speak from the heart about love, but in an intellectually astute manner. We lack this kind of intellectual discourse about love.

Johan Grimonprez: As Arthur Rimbaud notes in *A Season in Hell*: "L'amour est à réinventer," – "love has to be reinvented."**—CCQ**

Summer of Love, *curated by Katerina Gregos, is showing at Art Space Pythagorion, Samos until 15 October 2017, and includes artists: Melanie Bonajo, Johan Grimonprez, International Institute of Social History, Tomomi Itakura, Marko Mäetamm, Mikhail Karikis, Nicolas Kozakis & Raoul Vaneigem, Uriel Orlow and Marge Monko. schwarzfoundation.com*