



Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe Scenario in the Shade

Totalinstallationen *Scenario in the Shade* er et arkitektonisk og scenografisk værk, baseret på den undergrunds- og ungdomskultur, der finder sted i San San, en byregion af tæt forbundne nabobyer langs den californiske kyst. Idéen om San San stammer fra *The Year 2000*, som futuristen Herman Kahn m.fl. udgav i 1967. Heri forestillede Kahn sig, at byerne langs den amerikanske vestkyst, fra San Diego til San Francisco vokser sammen og danner ét enkelt, gigantisk bykompleks. Han kaldte dette område San San. Freeman & Lowe har taget denne forestilling til sig i deres kunst, og gennem arkitektoniske ruiner, scenografiske stilleben, improviserede tilholdssteder samt en filmtrilogi skaber de en forunderlig og urovækkende parallelverden, der giver en rumlig indsigt ind i seks ungdomskulturer i San San: *The Shade*, *The Fort*, *King Gordon*, *Phansigar Gokudo*, *Disco Creeps* og *Bamboo Union*.

Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowes installation *Scenario in the Shade* består af tilholdssteder for seks forskellige bandemiljøer i San San, California:

The Shade

The Shade opstod i de forladte 1800-talsvillaer i Bel Air som et samlingssted for intellektuelle *drop-outs*. Over en længere periode formulerede gruppen et ret tåget sammendrag af det 20. århundredes avantgarde teorier med særlig fokus på at gøre modstand mod San Sams medie-elite og deres teknokratiske dominans. The Shadens erklærede målsætning er at frisætte det urbane menneske fra forbrugskulturens jerngreb. Rent visuelt kan deres stil beskrives som europæisk-golfklub-normcore: størstedelen af medlemmerne har deres tøj fra de loppemarkeder og auktioner, der blev afholdt, da de rige forlod områdets pragtvillaer. Medlemmerne af The Shade forveksles ofte med lurvede rigmandsbørn, der lever på de sidste dampe fra et imperium, der er ved at forsvinde helt. Skæbnens ironi vil, at netop den medieverden, som The Shade er så indædte modstandere af, tager deres særlige visuelle stil til sig og omdanner den til boheme-mode; en trend, der kan sælges til teenagerne verden over. De fleste af dem, der imiterer stilten, bor i Mellemøsten.

The Fort

The Fort er en blanding af Rastafari-motorcykelbander, teknohippier og drop-outs fra dyre privatskoler, der lever sammen i skure langs stranden. Deres leder er Framer Kintator, et japansk hittebarn og skakmester. Gruppen er kendt for deres avancerede brug af teknik. De tilsyneladende tilfældigt sammenstykkede skure i slummen er i realiteten ofte fuldt fungerende og meget komplekse computersystemer. The Fort har hacket en række kunstige intelligentsystemer og omdannet dem til åbne netværk, der spiller en væsentlig rolle i diverse skyggeøkonomier. Gruppen er den førende importør af syntetisk narkotika fra Asien, som de sælger i en række kædebutikker ved navn 'High-Five Health Hut'. Gruppens vidstrakte udbredelse op langs hele kystlinjen af San San har gjort The Fort til den reelle styrende magt over underklassen.

King Gordon

King Gordon er et løst konsortium af gadebørn, der har taget marokkansk mode til sig via de afrikanske immigranter, der bor i højhusene i området Mercury City. De har overtaget magten i adskillige etager i de boligblokke, der tidligere husede lavindkomstgrupper, og har omdannet dem til en eftertragtet sortbørn, hvor der handles med elektronik, medier, stoffer og sex. Disse markeder, der går under navnene Wat-Nat, The Drink og Firecracker Sunset, er blevet populære turistattraktioner, der især lokker folk til med en overflod af billige kryogen-medicinalvarer, som alle og enhver kan købe her: det kræver bare et kodeord og en af sælgeren godkendt blockchain-valuta.

Phansigar Gokudo

Phansingar Gokudo er en indisk-japansk hybridbande, der er kendt for at bære farverigt tøj med motiver af eksotiske dyr og seksualiserede menneskekroppe. De er mestre i kampsport og eksperter i avancerede former for strangulering. De holder af at danse barfodet til rytmisk 'drone'-musik i deres forstadsvillaer i området Pacific Palisades. De har udviklet et vidtstrakt fiktivt univers bestående af avatarer og andre alter egoer i animé-stil, som de bruger i komplekse rollespil, der ofte trækker på gaming- og VR-teknologi. Sammen med The Shade har Phansigar Gokudo oprettet et underjordisk medienetværk kaldet The Nap, som videreforsmider alternative kulturelle produkter såsom Ragga-crank og Liquid Telenovelas.

Disco Creeps

Disco Creeps er en subkultur, der har sit udspring i det sydlige Californiens indkøbscentre. Her mødes en metamfetamin-drevet surferkultur med psykedelisk forbrugsform i en særlig stil, der er gennemsyret af varefetishisme. Gruppen er åbenlyst indblandet i salget af psykoaktive stoffer, der sælges i form af hyperdekorerede kager og bootleg-underholdning. De arbejder p.t. med at manipulere lysbølgeterapi af den slags, man finder i store shoppingcentre og med at bruge den i kombination med *musique concrete* for at fremkalde asociale trancelignende tilstande. Disco Creeps går også under navnet Bright White Underground. Skønhedsplejeprodukter såsom fugtighedscreme og skrubbecreme er tidens hotteste accessories og benyttes ofte i overdrevne mængder.

Bamboo Union

Bamboo Union er en østeuropæisk gruppering, der både smugler og fremstiller stoffer. De fokuserer primært på at importere psykoaktive planter, som de skaffer fra jungler verden over. I deres hemmelige, klart oplyste laboratorier benytter de sig af primitive former for genmodificering til at omdanne de eksotiske plantearter til hybridformer, der kombinerer det mineralske og det biologiske og dermed opnår et 'kaleidoskopisk medicinsk potentiale'. De har på det seneste udvidet deres praksis til også at omfatte falske designervarer. Bamboo Unions særlige musikstil er en blanding af heavy metal og EDM. De klæder sig ofte i ægte designertøj, i mix'n match look. De bruger store mængder parfume. Om aftenen indtager de en blanding af meget stærk opioid-baseret hostesaft, rødbedesæft og rørsukker.

Interview
Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe

Hvad sker der bag den mobile toiletdør?

Når man går igennem den mobile toiletdør står man i en primitiv 1800-talslejlighed af den slags, hvor der kun er indlagt koldt vand – og ingen varme. Lejligheden er tilholdssted for en gruppe, der kaldes The Shade. Gruppen holder til i kælderregionerne i de victorianeske pragtvillaer i det engang vældig dyre Bel Air-område i Los Angeles. Efterhånden som velhaverne flyttede længere ind i landet blev kvarteret gradvist overtaget af forskellige ungdomskulter, New Age-terapigrupper, støjrockbands og ældre ægtepar med sygepassere. The Shade-grupperingen kunne kendes på deres *drop-out* intellektualisme, der legede med revolutionære ideer, som sjældent blev omsat til handling. På trods af deres uophørlige teoretisering og mangel på egentlig action formåede de at knytte bånd til flere af de andre ungdomsbander og subkulturer i hele San San-regionen. På et tidspunkt forsøgte de endda at skabe en slags forening, der kunne forene grupperne og gøre dem til en samlet modstandsstyrke. De kaldte denne organisation The Shade – deraf deres navn. De er også gået under navnene *Mod Mock Goth* og *International Werewolf*. Den nye forening eksisterede dog kun kortvarigt, for de fleste bander i San San foretrak deres egen interne, lokale magtstrukturer og gad ikke forholde sig til en masse folk udefra. Så man medlemmer af The Shade på gaden, kunne man tro det var Ph.d.-studerende i kvantemekanik på speed; de var som regel klædt i brugte, slidte jakkesæt og småle slips og så lidt nussede og krøllede ud, som om de havde tilbragt flere dage i et underjordisk rum – hvilket de sandsynligvis også havde.

Fra det første rum bevæger man sig så videre i en labyrinth af forskellige rum, der hver især ligner et tilholdssted for én af de mange forskellige ungdomskulturer i San San. Netop nogen af de grupper, som The Shade forgæves forsøgte at forene. Rumrene viser alt fra technohippierne i The Fort og deres slum-agtige tilholdssteder til de såkaldte Disco Creeps, en gruppe teenagerne der er fanatisk optagede af forbrug og hænger ud i butiksarkaderne ved stranden.

Kontrasterne og detaljerigdommen i de forskellige rum kan give en oplevelse af at befinde sig midt i en fortælling – træder vi som beskuere ind i en særlig historie?

Scenario in The Shade fortæller ikke en historie i nogen traditionel forstand. Hele tilgangen til at opbygge disse miljøer er meget materielt orienteret. Vi forsøger at arrangere og adressere de forskellige objekter, fornemmeleser og spørgsmål, der hører en specifik civilisation til. I den forstand er vores installation ikke så forskellig fra det at bevæge sig gennem et museum, hvor hvert rum omhandler en bestemt periode. Museer har traditionelt set fokuseret på de ting, der bedst udtrykker et givent samfund på et givent tidspunkt, hvad enten det er egyptisk keramik fra oldtiden, rustninger fra oplysningstidens Europa eller et soveværelse fra Ming-dynastiet. Vi arrangerer værket sådan at materialet fremstår som om det virkelig hører til inden for en bestemt arkitektonisk/rumlig kontekst. De fortællinger, der opstår, afhænger fuldstændigt af publikums tilgang til detaljerne, og der er sikkert lige så mange fortællinger, som der er besøgende. Der findes ikke én overordnet, endegyldig fortælling; kun en række ledetråde eller brikker til puslespillet.

Når I udvikler jeres mennesketomme installationer, har I så bestemte medvirkende, figurer, manuskripter eller andre former for rollebesætninger i tankerne?

Der findes helt bestemt en intern baggrundsfortælling, der former værkets tilblivelse. Til både *Scenario in The Shade* og den tredelte San San film, som også vises, har vi arbejdet med en fiktiv forestilling om Californien, hvor hele området fra San Diego og San Francisco er vokset sammen til én stor megaby, der kaldes San San. For os er det ikke så meget en futuristisk science-fiction-verden, men en verden, der ligger parallelt med den virkelighed, vi tror vi befinder os i. Opbygningen af denne verden begynder med det skrevne ord, men den omfatter også en lang række materialer: inspirationsbilleder, relevante historiske referencer og masser af fundne og genbrugte byggematerialer. Til syvende og sidst opstår verden ud af de lange, udvidede diskussioner, der i virkeligheden er vores samarbejdes allervigtigste medie.

Installationen fremstår som en blanding mellem en scenografi og et klassisk stilleben, der til slut i udstillingsforløbet munder ud i en filmtrilogi- eller et 'bevægeligt stilleben'. Hvad er jeres visuelle udgangspunkt?

For hvert eneste miljø, vi opbygger, forestiller vi os en specifik genre eller en særlig brugsform, der gør sig gældende for netop det rum. Det dikterer hele rummets udtryk, da vi ønsker en oprigtighed frem for ren stilisme. Så hvis vi for eksempel ønsker at vise en korridor i et industrielt miljø, skaffer vi eller fremstiller genstande, der passer til netop det specifikke visuelle udtryk. Og det vil være et ganske andet billede end det, man ville bruge til at skabe en teenagers badeværelse, for nu at tage et andet eksempel. I filmen brugte vi samme indfaldsvinkel som i installationerne, nemlig en samling af uafhængige *mise en scènes*. Men hvad filmen angår, stræbte vi efter at få den til at føles som en mellemtid mellem en etnografisk dokumentarfilm og en kosmetikreklame, hvilket påvirker både det, vi filmede og måden det blev filmet på; belysningen af genstandene og miljøerne, kameraets bevægelser osv. Hvis man kan tale om ét enkelt visuelt udgangspunkt – hvilket er vanskeligt med disse værker, eftersom diversitet netop er kernen – men hvis man kan, så må vi betegne det som en slags retro-futurisme. Man kunne også sige, at vi går efter visuelle tegn, der skaber en form for forskydning i tiden, således at de besøgende skubbes og trækkes i flere forskellige retninger og ender med at befinde sig i en slags tågetilstand, hvad tid og rum angår.

Hvorfor gør I så stor brug af køkkener, kogegrej og tilberedning?

Alt det med madlavning, kogegrej og tilberedning stammer tilbage fra det første projekt, vi lavede sammen, nemlig *Hello Meth Lab in The Sun* fra 2008. Man kan sige, at temaet for den udstilling kan beskrives som 'alkymi i en moderne sammenhæng', hvilket manifesterede sig på forskellige måder i udstillingen; almindelige husholdningskemikalier blev omdannet til kraftige narkotiske stoffer i meth-laboratoriet, grønsager af egenavl blev til holistiske gryderetter i alternative kollektiver, mens storindustrien manipulerer råmaterialer til skabelsen af alle de teknologiske verdens vidunder. Hvis alkymi handler om at omskabe almindelige stoffer til noget magisk eller dyrebart, så er tilberedningsprocesser metoden til denne transformation. Man kunne endda havevært, at al skulptur – hvilket vores installationer ultimativt er – er en form for alkymi i den mest traditionelle forstand: et materiale, f.eks. marmor, formas, så det kommer til at ligne kød og blod. I *Scenario in The Shade* genskaber vi et antal steder, hvor en række alkymistiske processer har fundet sted.

Interview af Anne Mikél Jensen



Illustrated
with 75 pages
of photographs

George Carpozi, Jr.

Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe *Scenario in the Shade*

The installation *Scenario in the Shade* is an architectural and cinematic scenario based on the youth subcultures of the San San, an urban corridor that exists along the coast of California. The world of San San originates from an idea put forth by futurist Herman Kahn in the 1967 book *The Year 2000*. Kahn speculated that the coastal area between San Diego and San Francisco would grow into one giant metropolis. He called this region San San. Freeman & Lowe have taken this veritable fiction into their art practice and built a parallel world that is articulated through a variety of objects, ephemera, architectural ruins, scenographic still life and a trilogy of films which all together creates a puzzling and uncanny parallel world and brings about a spatial articulation of the habitus of six youth subcultures of the San San: The Shade, The Fort, King Gordon, Phansigar Gokudo, Disco Creeps and Bamboo Union.

Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe's installation *Scenario in the Shade* consists of habitats for six different gangs in San San, California:

The Shade

The Shade formed in the abandoned Victorian housing of the San San neighborhood of Bel Air as a community of intellectual drop-outs. Over time they formulated a foggy, patchwork of 20th century avant-garde theories fixated on the opposition to the technocratic domination of the San San media elite. Their objective was to liberate the consciousness of the urban subject from the grip of commodity culture. Their style is defined as a kind of euro-golf-club-norm-core due to most of their clothing being gleaned from the estate sales of the abandoned west side mansions. They are often mistaken for derelict trust-fund youth sustaining off the fumes of a fading empire. In an odd twist of fate, the media world, that they so vehemently opposed, appropriated their signature look and transformed it into a commodifiable bohemian trend that was repackaged and sold to teens around the world. Most of their imitators are in the middle east.

The Fort

The Fort is a mix of Rastafarian motorcycle gangs, crafty techno-hippies and private school dropouts that live in vast beachside shantytowns. Their leader is Japanese orphan and chess champion Framer Kintaro. They are known for an advanced technological inventiveness. The makeshift homes of the shantytowns are often fully functioning complex computer systems. The artificial intelligence mechanisms of abandoned smart structures have been hacked and reworked into open source networks that are central to their shadow economies. They are the chief importers of Asian synthetic narcotics that are sold in a chain of retail fronts called the "High-Five Health Hut". The spread of their network along the San San coast has made them the de facto governing force for the underclass.

King Gordon

King Gordon is a loose consortium of street kids who have adopted Moroccan fashion as a signature look from the African immigrants living in the Mercury City high rises. They have attained control of several floors of the derelict buildings from which they have converted the former low-income domestic apartments into a sprawling black market of electronics, media, drugs and sex. The markets, which are colloquially known as "Wat-Nat", "The Drink" and "Firecracker Sunset", have become hot tourist destinations because of the cheap and plentiful cryogenic pharmaceuticals that can be obtained with little more than a code word and an acceptable blockchain-reinforced currency.

Phansigar Gokudo

Phansigar Gokudo is an Indian-Japanese hybrid gang known for a uniform of garish textiles depicting exotic animals and sexualized bodies. They are masters of martial arts as well as advanced forms of strangulation. They like to dance barefoot to rhythmic drone music in their suburban mansions in the Pacific Palisades. They have developed a vast fictional universe of avatars and anime alter-egos and engage in complex role-playing activities often assisted by gaming and VR technology. They, in conjunction with the Shade, started an underground media network called "The Nap" which disseminates alternative cultural products like "Ragga-crank" and "Liquid Telenovelas".

Disco Creeps

Disco Creeps is a subculture originating from the shopping arcades of southern California. Methamphetamine surf culture mixes with psychedelic, retail formalism to make a signature style steeped in the currents of commodity fetish. They are openly involved in the sale of psychoactive compounds which are merchandised through elaborate pastries and bootleg entertainment. Currently they are manipulating light wave therapy used in big-box shopping environments in combination with musique concrete as a means to induce trance-like, dissociated states. Disco Creeps is also known as the "Bright White Underground". Beauty products such as moisturizer and exfoliants have become the accessory du jour and are often worn in excessive quantities.

Bamboo Union

Bamboo Union is an eastern European smuggling and manufacturing union that has been primarily focused on the import of psychoactive plants poached from jungles around the world. In well-lit, clandestine labs they employ crude methods of genetic modification to convert the exotic species into mineral/biological hybrids that have "kaleidoscopic medicinal" potential. They have recently expanded to counterfeit designer merchandise. Their signature music is a twisted hybrid of Heavy Metal EDM. They tend to dress in real, yet clashing, designer clothing. They wear too much perfume. In the evenings they consume a mixture of opioid grade cough syrup, beet juice and cane sugar.

Interview
Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe

What is happening behind the Porta-potty?

The first room you enter through the porta-potty is what would appear to be a Victorian cold-water flat. This is the dwelling of a group who have become known as The Shade. They resided in the carved-up basements of Victorian mansions in the once expensive neighborhood of Bel Air. As the affluent moved further inland the neighborhood became populated by vague youth cults, new age therapy groups, noise bands and old couples being followed around by their nurses. The Shade were known for a style of drop-out intellectualism that flirted with a variety of revolutionary ideas but rarely found any real-world application. Despite their incessant theorization and minimal action, they did manage to make connections with many of the other young gangs and subcultures throughout the San San region. At one point they even tried to organize a union that would unify gang activity into a single opposition force. They called the organization The Shade hence the official origin of their name. They had also been known as "Mod Mock Goth" and "International Werewolf". But this organization was short lived as most of the San San gangs were preferential to their internal, local power structures and didn't want to deal with a bunch of people from other regions. If you saw members of The Shade in public it would be easy to mistake them for say a quantum mechanics post-graduate on designer amphetamines. They were usually dressed in second-hand, threadbare suits with thin ties and had the unkept look of someone who had been up for days in a subterranean room – which was likely the case.

From this you will spiral out into a warren of rooms that approximate the habitats of a smattering youth microcultures from the San San. Some of the very same groups the Shade unsuccessfully tried to unite. This ranges from the shanty dwellings of The Fort, a techno-centric gang of mountain mods to the Disco Creeps, a commodity obsessed group of teens that hangout in the beachside shopping arcades.

The contrasts and details in the various rooms could bring about the feeling of being part of a narrative. In what way are we, the audience, trespassing a story?

Scenario in the Shade is not telling a story in any traditional sense. The approach to the construction of these environments is very materialist in nature. We are setting out to arrange the objects, ephemera and general matter of a civilisation. In that way it is not so dissimilar from going through an exhibit of period rooms in a museum of antiquities. Museums have been traditionally focused on the stuff that would best articulate the condition of a society at any given time whether it is the crockery of ancient Egyptians, the Armor of Enlightenment Europe or a bedroom from the Ming dynasty. We arrange the work in such a way as to have the material seem as though it is existing within an architectural/spatial context. The narrative that emerges is entirely dependent on the visitors' engagement with the details and will likely be different for everyone. There is no master narrative just a collection of clues or puzzle pieces.

When developing your installations – are you considering who would hang out here. In other words – are you working with protagonists, manuscripts or other kinds of role plays in the development phase?

There is definitely an internal background narrative that informs the construction of the work. For *Scenario in the Shade* as with the films in the San San Trilogy we have been working with a fictional conception of California. One in which the area from San Diego to San Francisco has merged into a single metropolis known as San San. We imagine this world to be not so much a futuristic, speculative world but one that is running parallel to the reality that we believe to reside in. In order to construct this world, it starts with writing but also involves a broad collection of materials such as reference images, related historical narratives and lots of architectural salvage. Ultimately the construction of the world is born out of long, extended discussions which is really the principle medium of the collaboration.

The installation appears as a combination of scenography and classic still life – which ends in a film trilogy or 'moving still life' - at the end of the exhibition trail. What is your visual point of departure?

With each environment that is being constructed we are imagining a specific genre, type or use for that space. This ultimately dictates the look of the room as we are going for verisimilitude over stylization. So, if it is an industrial hallway we will source or create the visual world that would be indigenous to that specific space. This would be an entirely different visual language from creating a teenager's bathroom for instance. With the film we took the same approach as we do to the installations which is a disjunctive collection of *mise en scènes*. But with the film we were trying to make it feel like a cross between an ethnographic film and a cosmetics commercial which informed both what was shot and how it was shot; how we lit the objects and environments and how we moved the camera and so on. If there were to be a singular visual point-of-departure – which is difficult in these works as diversity is crucial to the core experience – but if there were it would probably be a kind of retro-futurism. Another way of putting that is that we are going for visual signifiers that create a kind of time-slip so that visitors are pushed and pulled in a variety of directions so as to end up in a state of spatio-temporal haze.

What's up with all the cooking?

The cooking comes from the first project we did together called *Hello Meth Lab in The Sun* in 2008. Broadly speaking the theme for this show could be deemed "Alchemy in a modern context". In the show this was manifested in a variety of ways – the transformation of household chemicals into a powerful psychoactive drug in the meth lab, the use of homegrown vegetables to make a holistic stew in the drop-out commune or the mass, industrial manipulation of raw material to create the marvels of the technological world. If Alchemy is the elevation of a base material into something magical or precious it would seem that cooking is the method to that transformation. It could even be said that sculpture – which is ultimately what these environments are – is a form of alchemy in the most traditional sense: a base material like marble is shaped so that it takes on the appearance of flesh and bone. In *Scenario in the Shade* it could be said that we are again, in part restaging the sites of a variety of alchemical processes.

Interview by Anne Mikél Jensen