



SUNDAY SCHOOL #6
OLIVER LEE TERRY
RELAX

For the sixth exhibition in DAM PROJECTS' Sunday School series, New York-based artist **Oliver Lee Terry** presented '**RELAX**' curated by Daniella Rose King. Exploring tropes of animism, ecology and technology, '**RELAX**' constitutes an appraisal of western attitudes towards nature and the environment and how technology and borrowed ideologies have been employed to negotiate this relationship. The exhibition took place on Sunday 31 May at A_SPACE, 38 Pentonville Road, London N1 9HF.

DAM PROJECTS is a curatorial collective founded by Daniella Rose King, Amanprit Sandhu and Morgan Quaintance. Inclusive and anti-elitist, the collective use temporary exhibitions and events to support emerging, underexposed and unorthodox artists, art scenes, discourses and debates.

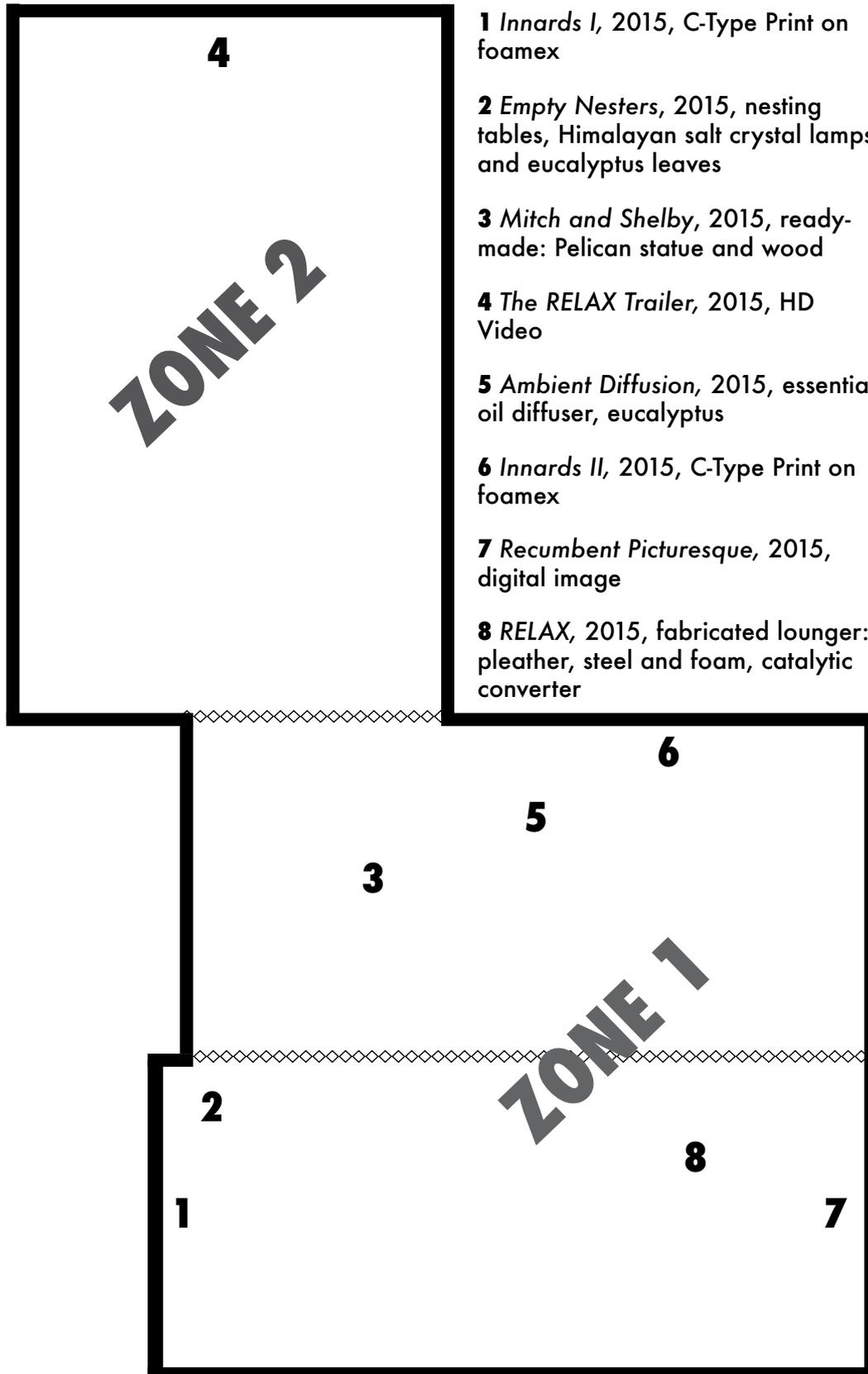
Sunday School consists of 12 one-day exhibitions running from November 2014 – November 2015. Featuring 6 solo shows from recent UK art school graduates and 6 exhibitions looking at emerging international art scenes.

CONTENTS

p.4... Exhibition layout

p.5... Artist's biog & statement

p.6... The artist interviewed
by his father



BIOGRAPHY

OLIVER LEE TERRY is an artist based in New York City. His work focuses on the ambiguity of valuation by playfully critiquing the overlapping and oppositional meanings of value within both mainstream culture and contemporary art industries. Through an interrogation of fine art's complicity in the visual forms of contemporary culture, emerges an ambivalent sentiment between the critique and celebration of the seductive forces of materialism and the tropes of contemporary art. In 2014 he graduated from Goldsmiths University of London (MFA).

oliverleeterry.com

ARTIST STATEMENT

Relax... A reclining figure, plucked from its dutiful post as purifier, reducer of immaterial bane, sinks into itself, harmonizing and accepting its duty of reductive heroism. Palladium, rhodium and platinum are formed in a honeycomb structure to compose the core, the heart of this figure; a vessel through which exhausted energy with all its miasmatic toxicity passes and transforms. The alchemical structure of this mineral filtration is required by legislative action to place restrictive measures on the toxic gasses produced by combustion. This heroic act performed by our reclining figure pumps its product into the ambience that is nature, our environment; the picturesque sublime; the romantic scenery and the romantic being, recumbent.

Objects meant to directly affect the air, the ether,
the invisible ambient nature of our surrounding environment.

Objects used to purify, to filter and to ionize.

Things that bring us closer to the purity of nature.

Objects who act in an ecology, to shift the byproduct of energy
production into something else, something less.

Things meant to transform the ambient quality of the romanticized picturesque.

Objects that live.

INTERVIEW

Below is an excerpt of a text message (SMS) conversation between Oliver Lee Terry and his father, Karlton Terry about animism and the life of the catalytic converter as the central figure of the body of work. More specifically they talk about the 3D animation in the film that is the technoanimist manifestation of the Catalytic Converter itself.

The conversation picks up after Oliver sends his dad a short clip of the 3D animation:

Karlton Terry

I saw it, it's really awesome. But it does come in very fast and whips around a lot. I'm trying to get a feel for what that means to me. For some reason I expected it to come in slower and not be quite so mobile and moving around like a dolphin or kind of like an organic biological being. I thought it would come in more slowly and pretty much stay in one position like it was curious about its surroundings, and be more intimidating.

[...]

Like is it trying to get in on what the pelicans are doing? What is its relationship to the ocean? What is its relationship to the waves?

It kind of looks like God threw it in and it's trying to find stabilization in the atmosphere in the Earth's gravity

The question is, when the catalytic converter arrives, it comes in on the shot of the pelicans feeding. Does it stay on screen after that shot or does it go away when that shot is over?

Oliver Lee Terry

Hey! I think you're asking some really important questions! I also feel like it moves too fast. I kind of like the rotation and the way it settles into its spot.

KT

I know, I kind of have to ask myself: "how biological is this creature or is it even a creature you know, does it want to have a relationship or does it just find itself having been synthesized suddenly in a context?"

OLT

It is animated and anamorphic but that doesn't change how it works; it is a solid object with no joints or muscles

KT

Or are you actually saying that here is nature and here is what a synthesized object (representing humankind and its mechanical world) looks like in contrast to the natural world? So think about it (you) human being, think about your consumption and materialism and your needs - do they resonate with the natural world?

OLT

No, Not contrast

What I'm saying is they are both nature and they are both natural

KT

If this is true then the catalytic converter wants to be less anthropomorphic and therefore more unusually or surrealistically juxtaposed to the natural world (even though it is part of it, or of it, or to the lounge chair that it's going to be sitting on)

OLT

Essentially meaning there is no nature at all, only ecology. And the beach and the pelicans are on the same plane and demand the same ontological consideration as the converter and the materials and gasses that pass through it

KT

I think that the catalytic converter should remain on screen until the end of the shot rather than disappearing in the middle of that shot, and then it probably shouldn't be in the next shot right?

OLT

It has to assert itself as itself, as animated and as alive as we can make it look
It fades out with the shot

KT

Yesyes yes yes I agree.

OLT

I want it to move through trying to mimic the birds and kind of move fluidly through the air, then turn and mimic the neck of the stork. It's like a form of failed mimesis, that has to maintain a kind of dumb failed grace that is almost righteous somehow.

KT

Ah, I see. I guess my question would be then, how conscious is it that it wants to mimic the birds? (or is it you, as the artist, that wants it to mimic the birds?) and how does it choose birds to mimic rather than the waves or the beach or whatever else is in its environment?

OLT

It's trying to insert itself into the picturesque and find its place in the ether of the 'environment'. So in a way it's a more rounded out mimesis that is centered on the kitsch representation of natural beauty. Because the birds can be seen as protagonists in the narrative, the converter clings to the idea of the heroic epic and so it sees itself as most affiliated with the flying birds that move through their environment seemingly freely, yet by the divine design of the ecosystem.

[...]

It's both motivated by the system of the heroic propagandist agenda but also by the aesthetic creator who is moving through a set of spectacular standards of filmic seduction in editing and mimesis, but also serial metonymy

KT

For some reason I always thought the catalytic converter would come in with a bit more caution and humility and shyness whilst at the same time having a very heavy and ominous presence. The way you've done it it's got a lot of confidence and panache in its entrance as well as a lot of playfulness so I was just trying to understand its personality

OLT

Yeah it's the hero of an Object Western.
Why would it be shy?

KT

I got it now

OLT

It's a manmade object and a solution so of course it's essentially going to be boisterous and brash but you want to like it anyway
Like the harmonica man in Once Upon a Time in the West

KT

Can I put a mustache and a saddle on it in my mind for a couple of hours?

OLT

It carries a certain magic but it's not guiltless in its divinity

OLT

It was always meant to have humor about the "heroic"

KT

Right

OLT

Mixed feelings about the object hero and wanting to like it more than your ethics will allow in a certain way

KT

Gotcha

[...]

Squeechy feeling

OLT

What is squeechy?

KT

Squeechy: Those mixed feelings like wanting to like it more than your ethics allow

OLT

Yeah. Squeechy

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