

# FIGURE/S:

## drawing after Bellmer

10 SEPTEMBER – 31 OCTOBER 2021

*FIGURE/S: drawing after Bellmer* explores the body as a site of oppression, liberation and troubling pleasures through the work of modern and contemporary artists. It takes as its starting point the radical and transgressive drawings of Hans Bellmer (1902–1975), which have had a powerful influence, sometimes subterranean, on many artists across the world in both high and popular culture, from French Surrealism to Japanese manga.

Curated by Michael Newman and Kate Macfarlane, the exhibition explores the mixed responses to the ideas and art of Bellmer through work by nineteen modern and contemporary artists from Japan, UK, Lebanon, Nigeria, Germany, France and US. It is divided into four sections which interconnect and invite fluidity of meaning and interpretation.

Bellmer grew up with the rise of National Socialism in Germany, with its antagonism towards ‘degenerate’ bodies and celebration of the ideal human form. Through the production of hundreds of drawings and the two dolls he constructed in the early 1930s, which he photographed in disturbing and scandalous scenarios, Bellmer defigured and refigured the body in pursuit of unimagined sensations. He perceived and investigated that the whole of the body, and everything in its orbit, has a part to play in the life of the imagination.

Bellmer likened the body to a sentence that can be dismantled and recomposed, an interest shared with Unica Zürn (1916–1970), the artist, poet and writer who had a relationship with Bellmer from 1953 until her suicide in 1970. For drawings ‘after’ Bellmer, starting with Zürn, the phallogocentric focus of his enquiry is superseded by

approaches that challenge, cut and split the subject to embrace multiplicity and transgress distinctions between male/female, human/animal, living/dead, real/virtual.

The word ‘figure’ has various meanings, most commonly referring to a body, but also to a written character, a number, a pattern, or a diagram. Capitalised, ‘FIGURE’ suggests the autonomy of each letter and its capacity to be rearranged as anagram. The slash of ‘FIGURE/S’ connotes the line of drawing, and the cut of collage. The use of figures in the title also refers to the German word *Figuren*, (meaning puppets, or dolls), used by the Nazis to refer to victims of the Holocaust, as related by Claude Lanzmann in *Shoah: The Complete Text of the Acclaimed Holocaust Film* (1985). Bellmer’s defigurations and refigurations of the body are simultaneously a mimicry of and resistance to the dehumanisation performed by fascism and racism; he was working in France when torture was being practiced on brown, black, and Muslim bodies by French military and security services in Algeria. *FIGURE/S* raises the troubling question of the role of the body’s pleasures in relation to both oppressors and oppressed, domination and insurrection, revisiting Bellmer’s reworking of sadism and masochism and the body between life and death, flesh and figure as a starting point for new approaches.

HANS BELLMER, HUGUETTE CALAND, PAUL CHAN, NEIL GALL, MATHEW HALE, RICHARD HAMILTON, REBECCA JAGOE, SHARON KIVLAND, KUMI MACHIDA, FUYUKO MATSUI, JADE MONTSERRAT, JOHN MURPHY, JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE, PAUL NOBLE, WURA-NATASHA OGUNJI, CHLOE PIENE, AURA SATZ, MARIANNA SIMNETT, TABAIMO, UNICA ZÜRN

# DRAWING ROOM

# Anagram, writing and the cut

*‘the body resembles a sentence  
that seems to invite us to  
dismantle it into its component  
letters, so that its true meanings  
may be revealed anew through an  
endless stream of anagrams’.*

Hans Bellmer <sup>(1)</sup>

Bellmer's construction of the two dolls of a girl-woman, *Die Puppe* (1933) and *La Poupée* (1935), enabled him to consider each part of the body as an autonomous unit – like individual letters or words – that could be recomposed to create new, as yet unthought of images and desires. Once the body was allied so closely to the structure of language, it could be cut and reassembled to adopt any form.

Anagrams extract letters from words to create new words and new meaning or unmeaning. Unica Zürn's use of the form, in juxtaposition or combination with drawings, was a key component of her creative process. Like Zürn, Jade Montserrat combines writing and drawing as a means to break the rules of language; her poetic use of language is a subtle reminder of bodily responses to the affects of colonialism and racism.

As well as line, hatching, shading and rubbing, drawing may be conceived as cutting. Cutting is also a way in which collage becomes a form of drawing, where the image is separated from its matrix and transferred to form a new one, and is used in different ways by John Murphy and Mathew Hale.

The notion of automatism - the idea of creating imagery by chance rather than through conscious control, so central to Surrealism - was crucial for Bellmer and for Zürn. In 1941 Bellmer began writing *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious* which he finally completed in 1954. Central themes include the doll or puppet, the androgyne, and an investigation of the phenomena of transfer of sensation from one part of the body to another.



**Hans Bellmer** (b. Kattowitz (then part of the German Empire) 1902, d. Paris 1975)  
*Les Mariés (The Married Ones)*, 1941

Gouache on paper  
32.5 x 24.9 cm | 55.5 x 47.5 cm (framed)  
Collection Olivier Varenne, Geneva  
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2021

In 1941 Bellmer was interned at Les Milles, near Aix-en-Provence, as an enemy of the state. During over nine months of imprisonment, Bellmer made many drawings and met fellow internee Max Ernst, from whom he learnt the technique of *decalcomania*, used in this work and many others at this time. He has laid a sheet of paper onto a painted surface which when lifted leaves behind accidental marks, then developed into the figure of woman in striped stockings. A stray eye is discernable under her arm and from a distance the worked central area coalesces into two interlocking heads.



**Hans Bellmer**  
*Erotic Drawing*, 1942

Pen and brown ink and brown wash over graphite sketch with brown ink spattering on paper, 34 x 28 cm  
British Museum, 2012,7080.1  
Bequeathed by Richard Hamilton  
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2021  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

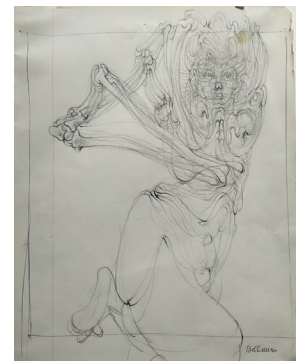
This work uses autonomous ink wash combined with Bellmer's sinuous and controlled lines that reconfigure the body, multiplying and duplicating limbs. This drawing came into the possession of Richard Hamilton around 1960, when he was commissioned to edit and design a monograph on Bellmer, and he lived with it until his death in 2011.



**Unica Zürn** (b. Berlin 1916, d. Paris 1970)  
*Guten Abend mein Unglück wie geht es Dir? Ich kegle in Dir um das unentwegte Beugen (Good Evening Bad luck, How Are You? I Control In You the Constant Bending)*, c.1958

Ink on paper, 34.6 x 26.7 cm | 51.8 x 41.6 cm (framed)  
Torn drawing reassembled by Hans Bellmer  
Courtesy Ubu Gallery, New York  
© Verlag Brinkmann & Bose Berlin, Germany

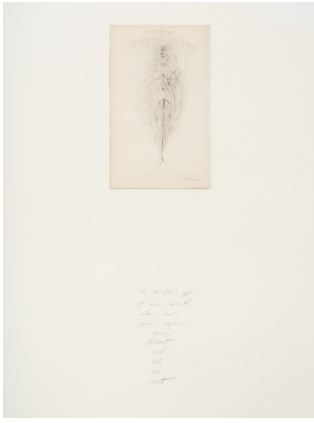
This work is characteristic of drawings in which Zürn repeated a set of marks – circles and spirals – many inspired by the formation of feathers and of claws – and a flattening of form and merging of human and nonhuman characteristics. The anagram (as in the title) is incorporated in the drawing and written in sepia ink. Zürn's process combined paranoia and creativity and after her stay at St Anne's psychiatric hospital in Paris, she destroyed many of her works; this is one that Bellmer reassembled.



**Hans Bellmer**  
*Woman with Skeleton*, ca. 1958/59

Ballpoint pen and pencil drawing on squared paper  
21 x 16.5 cm | 31.8 x 26 cm (framed)  
Private Collection London  
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2021

Bellmer made many drawings on graph paper, harking back to his training in engineering drawing, and an indication of his forensic approach to representation. The thigh and foot suggest volume, a form of perspectival drawing, yet the repeated lines that describe multiplied and displaced limbs are more topological and investigate the ball-joint as a mechanism.



**John Murphy** (b.London 1945)  
*The painter's eye, at once mouth, skin, ear, penis, vagina, throat, and all the rest, 2016*  
 Reproduction and pencil on paper, 108 x 73 cm

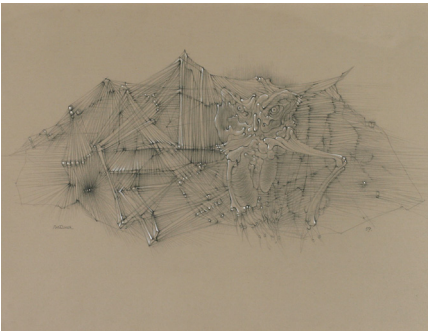
ALSO EXHIBITED:

*Mariole-Marionette, 2016*  
 Engraving, watercolour, pencil on paper, 108 x 73 cm

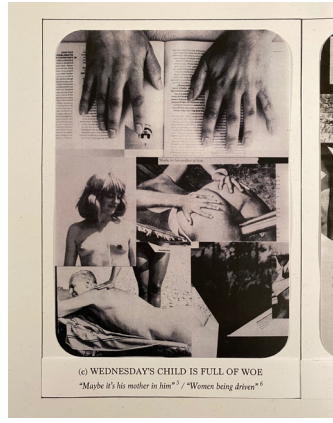
*Fig 30, 2021*  
 Invitation card, book, 25 x 42 cm

All works courtesy the artist

This image is a reproduction of a print of a Bellmer drawing; the hermaphrodite figure was used as the frontispiece to a novel by Monique Appel, *Qui livre son mystère meurt sans joie* (*The one who cedes their mystery dies without joy*). The hand-written text, which is also the title, is adapted from Julia Kristeva's novel *Possessions*; the quotation continues 'for a painter's eye covers first the five senses, then the incalculable rest of the body, with a thin film that makes visible what cannot be seen.' The narrator is considering painters who depicted decapitations, contemplating, in the novel, the decapitated body of her murdered friend Gloria. Both image and text are cut from their contexts and the viewer is left to create new connections in the space in-between.



**Hans Bellmer**  
*Untitled (Pelvis-Eyes-Ears), 1959*  
 Pencil & white gouache on tinted paper  
 33 x 48.9cm | 58.4 x 74.6 cm (framed)  
 Courtesy Ubu Gallery, New York  
 © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2021



**Mathew Hale** (b.Swindon 1962, lives Berlin & Los Angeles)  
*There Can Be No Drawing After Bellmer, 2020-21 (Detail)*

Final layout as scanned for publication in *FIGURE/S, Drawing After Bellmer*, MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2021  
 Collage, 9 sheets, each 29.7 x 21 cm  
 Courtesy the artist

The title of this work refers to Theodor Adorno's claim that 'After Auschwitz no poems are possible, except on the foundation of Auschwitz itself'. For Adorno, Auschwitz was the culmination of both the Enlightenment and the factory system, hence Hale's allusions to the working day and the 'wanking week' which subverts all of the above with non-reproductive enjoyment. The images that Hale collages allude to the Nazi ideal of the naturist body and includes one of the few photographs that was smuggled out of Auschwitz, of naked women running towards the gas chamber. The sequence is accompanied by lines from the 'Monday's Child' fortune-telling rhyme, in addition to citations concerning Eichmann, Jean-Luc Godard and Nabokov's *Lolita*, which involve the intersection of art and fascism.

Bellmer made many drawings using parallel lines, an adaption of axonometric engineering drawing which enables visualisation of an object from many different angles. Here the object – the body – is broken up and fuses with forces in the environment. He has worked across the page creating a space in which inside and outside are continuous, with the nodes or joints painted in white gouache which stand out on the tinted paper.



**Jade Montserrat** (b.London 1981, lives Scarborough)  
*Her body, painful to the touch, swept forward, 2016*

Pencil crayon and Verithik crayon on paper, 25.8 x 18cm

ALSO EXHIBITED:

*Her body marked out bitter to the bite, 2016*

Watercolour and felt tip pen on paper, 25.8cm x 18cm

*The body intertwined boldly displayed, 2016*

Ink, gouache, pencil crayon and graphite on paper, 25.8cm x 18cm

*She scaled her body an obligatory tour, 2016*

Watercolour and ink on paper, 25.8cm x 18cm

*Put fences round her body, to assist her shallow breath, 2016*

Watercolour, gouache and pencil on paper, 30.8cm x 22.8cm

*The body punished for the mind's wrongdoing, 2016*

Ink and watercolour on paper, 30.8cm x 22.8cm

*No Need for Clothing, 2017*

Artist book/performance prop.

All works courtesy of the artist

*Audio recording of No Need for Clothing, 2017,*

Performance at Cooper Gallery, DJCAD, University of Dundee

Montserrat produced over 300 related drawings from 2015-2017, agitated palimpsests that attest to a bodily condition informed by the artist's life experiences of racism and colonialism. The words - fragments of memory, traces of conversation, borrowed words - are voids, built through the accretion of murky colours.

# Technical and forensic drawing, time and the change of state

*'When I was drawing I would avoid any internal thinking other than my own. I tried to unify as far as possible quite a free graphic automatism with a materialism that was excessive in detail and surface. By now I avoided any sleights of hand and hoped to deliver an "objective" and cold a method as possible, inspired by engineers' drawings...'.<sup>(2)</sup>*

Hans Bellmer <sup>(2)</sup>

Bellmer was formally trained in engineering, design and perspective and Northern European Renaissance classicists, such as Albrecht Dürer and Matthias Grünewald, made a deep impression on the young artist. He brought the precision that he exercised in his training and that he admired in these influences to his experiments with the human form. Aura Satz, Fuyuko Matsui and Tabaimo adopt a similarly meticulous, almost scientific approach to drawing. Bellmer's drawing has a forensic dimension which enabled him to combine transgression with a dispassionate rendition. Jean-Luc Moulène's drawings of heads made whilst watching a TV crime series are far from Bellmer's fetishistic precision; his approach combines subjectivity and automatism.

Bellmer's drawings make evident his interest in an erotics of the technical and the machine, an idea that attracted Richard Hamilton, as in his drawings of utilities and cars, and finds a literary parallel in J G Ballard's novels *Crash* and *Atrocity Exhibition*.



## Hans Bellmer

### *Untitled, 1963*

Pencil and gouache on paper  
21 x 16 cm  
Collection Olivier Varenne, Geneva  
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2021

Bellmer used drawing to visualise the idea of proprioception, or the body's sense of itself in space; in *The Anatomy of the Image* Bellmer writes: 'the inner scheme of a young girl who sits and "dreams" while casually leaning over the table with her left shoulder raised and arm outstretched, concealing the instinctive caress of her chin between her shoulder and chest muscle, in such a way that the weight of her head added to that of her shoulder and her arm creates a pressure that is reflected by the counter-pressure of the table top...'<sup>(3)</sup>



## Fuyuko Matsui

### (b. Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, 1974, lives Morimachi, Shizuoka Prefecture) *Sketch, 2009*

Pencil on paper, 77 x 165.3 cm (framed)  
Collection the artist



## Aura Satz (b.Barcelona 1974, lives London)

### *She Recalibrates (Suzanne Ciani), 2018*

Pencil on black paper, framed with lenticular magnifying sheet. One of five exhibited.  
Photo by Thierry Bal.  
Courtesy Fridman Gallery, New York

ALSO EXHIBITED:

### *Expanded Listening, 2021*

A sonic exquisite corpse

These drawings are of hands of women who contributed to the development of electronic music. Satz is drawn to Bellmer because of his disruption of the structures of power and his interest in the transfer of sensations to different parts of the body. Satz explores that seeing, hearing and touch are not limited to particular organs, but can take place anywhere in the body, as does thinking and the ways in which sound changes seeing and seeing hearing. *Expanded Sound* invites visitors to explore this phenomena.

This is an underdrawing for *Joining the Conversion*, a series begun in 2004 that relates to *kusōzu*, a Buddhist practice of the Kamakura period (1185-1333) that entails drawing the nine stages of a decaying corpse, designed to curb the carnal drives of monks. This tradition focused on the base rotting of flesh, whilst this drawing of a female skeleton celebrates the beauty of what lies beneath the skin. The multiple stamps (traditionally marking ownership of an artwork) reference the multiplicity of the artist's experiences and personality.



**Jean-Luc Moulène** (b. Reims, France 1955, lives Paris)

*Tête experte* (1), 2007

Graphite on paper 64 x 51 x 3.5 cm

ALSO EXHIBITED:

*Tête experte* (2-9), 2007

Graphite on paper 51 x 64 x 3.5 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

© Jean-Luc Moulène / ADAGP Paris, 2021  
Photo – Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

Moulène made this series of drawings of heads whilst watching a TV crime series; a similar forensic, scene-of-a-crime aspect is suggested in Bellmer's doll photographs. They are far from Bellmer's fetishistic precision but seem to embody a subjective response to his subject; the laboured accretion of pencil strokes mark the duration of his viewing.



**Tabaimo** (b. Hyogo, Japan, 1975, lives Karuizawa, Japan)

*hifu...en* (2), 2008

Chinese ink on Japanese paper, recto/verso  
31.75 x 32.4 cm

ALSO EXHIBITED:

*hifu...en* (3) (*skin...circle*) (recto), 2008

Chinese ink on Japanese paper, 31.7 x 32.4 cm

*Flow-ver 03*, 2013

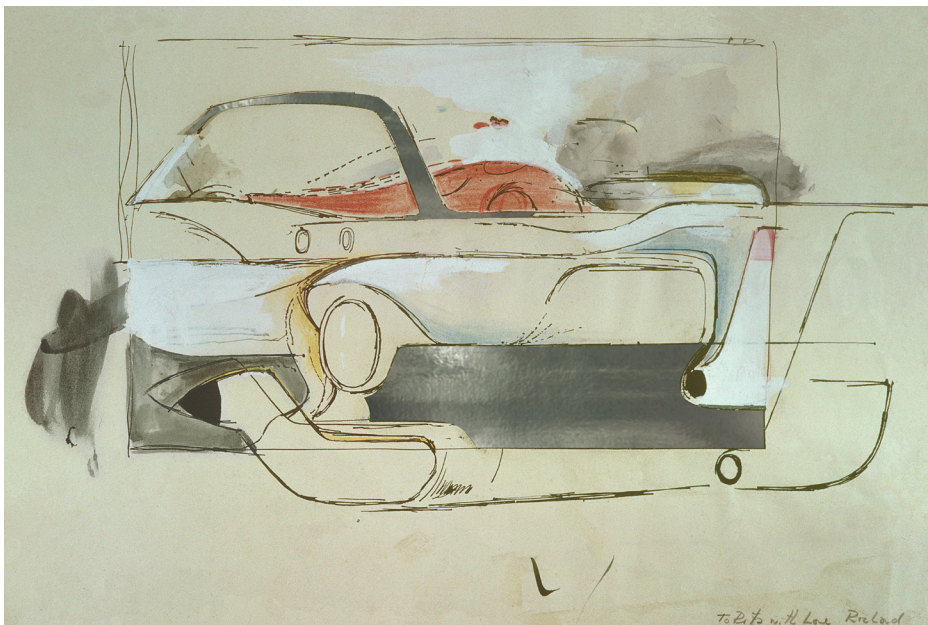
Ink, beeswax, crayon, colour pencil & pencil on Japanese paper, 81.3 x 35 x 1 cm

Above works courtesy Anne Mosseri-Marlio  
Galerie, Basel & James Cohan Gallery, New York

*Flow-ver 09*, 2015

Ink, beeswax crayon, color pencil and pencil on Japanese paper, 72 x 37.5 x 4.5 cm  
Courtesy Anne Mosseri-Marlio Galerie, Basel & Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo

Bellmer visited the Isenheim Alterpiece in Colmar in 1935 and was deeply affected by Matthias Grünewald's depiction of the hands of Christ and of Mary Magdalen; in Bellmer's drawings hands and feet are often separated from the rest of the body. Tabaimo's drawings seem to visualise the 'Japanese Illusion' - when fingers are crossed with hands back-to-back, we lose our ability to move a specific finger when asked - a concept explored by the psychiatrist Paul Schilder which influenced Bellmer's ideas around displacement of bodily sensation. <sup>(4)</sup> These works are informed by Tabaimo's experience of eczema and of living with nature, the patterns of which are mapped seamlessly onto the hands and feet. The double-sided nature of the work highlights the translucency of skin.



**Richard Hamilton** (b. London 1922, d. Northend 2011)

*Study for 'Hers is a lush situation'*, 1957

Ink, crayon, watercolour, gouache and metal foil on paper

23 x 37 cm | 37.9 x 51.5 cm (framed)

The Estate of Richard Hamilton

Like Bellmer, Hamilton studied technical drawing and perspective technique, both of which he used in works throughout his career to investigate how things work, how they can be deconstructed, how they can be reinvented, what and how we see. In the late 1950s Hamilton explored the role of sexuality in the design of American cars, some of the most fetishised consumer products of the time, taking features in Chrysler and General Motors advertisements and juxtaposing them with parts of women's bodies.

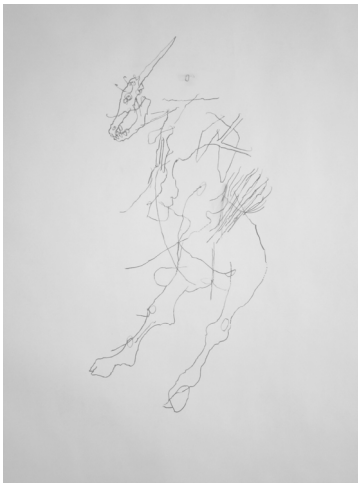
# Other than human, becoming object, doll, plant, animal

*‘I am talking about the possibilities of decomposing and then recomposing the body and its limbs ‘against’ nature’ ... to give them a place and coherence that is as unexpected as it is believable. I want it to be so surprising that reality will overtake ... the imaginable’.*

Hans Bellmer <sup>(5)</sup>

Bellmer’s work with the doll is extended in his drawing to connect the human with the non-human. The non-human might be an object, perhaps resembling one of Bellmer’s re-articulated dolls (Neil Gall, Kumi Machida) or mannequin (Rebecca Jagoe); it can also be animal (Unica Zürn, Chloe Piene, Marianna Simnett) or plant (Tabaimo). Or it can be that life extends to both humans and things, human becoming thing and thing human (Paul Noble). Drawing does more than represent, it serves as a mode of becoming other.

Bellmer’s drawing raises the question of what a body is, and what is the difference - or not - between a human body and an object. This goes beyond the idea of the fetish as an object-substitute for a body, to the question of limits, sameness and difference, as well as what Walter Benjamin called, in his *Arcades Project* (1927-40) ‘the sex appeal of the inorganic’.



**Chloe Piene** (b. US 1972, lives New York)  
*Goat Horse (Untitled Small Goat)*, 2010  
 Charcoal on vellum, 119 x 90 cm

ALSO EXHIBITED:

*Wendung (Turn)*, 2019  
 White charcoal on blue paper, 78 x 107 x 4.5 cm  
 Courtesy Barbara Thumm, Berlin

Piene has ridden horses naked and bareback in order to gain a direct understanding of their physiognomy and to explore the idea of becoming animal, of channeling their spirit. The artist likes the physical quality of drawing on vellum with charcoal, and her figures are open and weightless, expressive of a will to freedom shared by other artists in the exhibition. Bellmer has been a strong influence since her student days: ‘The so called ‘erotic’ content of his [Bellmer’s] drawing is not as interesting as the morphing, fusing, transformation from one part of the body to another – the anatomy is constantly shifting... Nothing is fixed – forensic meets the fantastic.’ <sup>(6)</sup>



**Marianna Simnett** (b.1986, lives Berlin)  
*Arachneophilia*, 2021

ALSO EXHIBITED:

*Ornithophilia*, 2021  
*Anolingus*, 2021  
 Watercolour on paper  
 each 40 x 50 cm

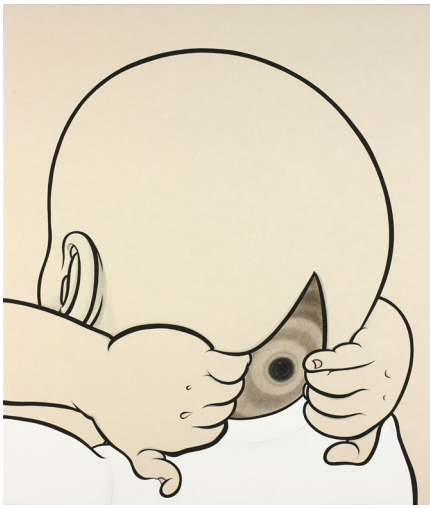
All works courtesy the artist

These new watercolours respond to the drawings of Bellmer and Zürn and explore Zoophilia, sexual fixation on non-human animals, and the relationship between species. An exploration of the body and the transgression of its boundaries - ‘threshold-upset’ – is Simnett’s principal interest and is informed by her research into fables, science and reality. Simnett’s bodies are fluid and entangled, the bleeding watercolour enacting a transformation of human, insect and bird forms.



**Rebecca Jagoe** (b.Ireland 1988, lives Wales)  
*Letters to Arm*, 2021  
 Pen, ink, collage & watercolour on Arches paper; Moire silk, appliqué paper, marbled latex  
 502 x 80 cm  
 Courtesy the artist

The text on this illustrated manuscript is a series of love letters to a blue plastic mannequin arm, which is based loosely on US serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer’s abduction of a shop dummy prior to his killing spree, and also on the Yasunari Kawabata short story *One Arm*. It’s part of Jagoe’s *Significant Others*, a series of romances to nonhuman others. Jagoe sees an allegiance between Dahmer’s desire for an impassive yet idealised lover and the tradition of courtly love and this informs the style of her text. The blue plastic arm ‘plays hard to get’, a form of desire that the artist associates with heteronormative romance that can become violent and monstrous. In her letters, the object is not humanised, but retains its autonomy, its objecthood.



**Kumi Machida** (b. Gunma, 1970, lives Tokyo and Copenhagen)  
*Lens*, 2017

Sumi (blue), sumi (brown), mineral pigments, pencil and colour pencil on Kochi paper  
53.5 x 45.5 cm  
Collection the artist  
Courtesy Nishimura Gallery, Tokyo

In Japan, virtual communication has for some time outstripped communication through contact, a phenomenon that Machida explores in her depictions of haunting biomorphic humans awakening from surreal dream-like states. The artist has adapted the technique of *nihonga* (Japanese painting), swapping paint strokes for tiny dots which are applied to washi paper. The body in *Lens* could be human or non-human, an animated robot perhaps, that seeks to see and to connect through a machine-like aperture.



**Sharon Kivland** (b. Germany, lives in Brittany & London)  
*Liquette ninque*, 2019

Series of eight drawings, watercolour on paper from antique French school exercise books.  
Each 26 x 30.5 cm (framed)  
Courtesy the artist

Kivland is interested in the way that the body is shaped through language. In this work, fashion models of yesteryear commune with snakes in their various mechanisms, from 'wave-like serpentine' to 'straight line, body extended'. The title is from Raymond Queneau's novel *Zazie dans le metro* (1959), a story about a young girl's first visit to Paris and is a play on words. *Zazie* explores colloquial language as opposed to 'standard' written French. The first word of the book is 'Doukipudonktan', a phonetic transcription of 'D'où qu'ils puent donc tant?' – 'Why do they stink so much?' and is an example of a *hapax legomenon*, defined as a word that appears just once in a work of literature.



**Unica Zürn**

*Untitled*, ca. 1963

Ink on paper  
50.2 x 65.1 cm  
Signed on recto  
Courtesy Ubu Gallery, New York  
© Verlag Brinkmann & Bose Berlin, Germany

Zürn's drawing and painting opens up a liquid, metamorphic space that erases the boundary between human and animal. Bodily definition is lost and Zürn's consciousness seems to morph with other beings, to flatten out, spread sensation, in contrast to the volume and defined erogenous zones that the body assumes in the majority of drawings by Bellmer. The octopus implies erotic sensation spread throughout the body, as in the famous Shunga design by Hokusai, *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife* (1814) which seems to depict a feminine jouissance.



**Neil Gall** (b. Aberdeen 1967, lives London)

*Hot on the Heels of Love*, 2020

Coloured pencil on paper, 101.9 x 83.5 cm

ALSO EXHIBITED:

*Separate Identities*, 2020

88.9 x 80 cm  
Coloured pencil on paper  
Private collection.

Both works courtesy the artist and Aurel Scheibler, Berlin

Gall draws from photographs of models – assemblages roughly put together from everyday objects such as ping-pong balls and packing tape – which he lights and photographs, an approach comparable to that adopted by Bellmer in making and photographing his dolls. The combination of transgression and dispassion typifies the drawings of Bellmer and of Gall and involves a temporality different to the act of violence, a meticulous slowness, which Gall enacts in the production of his drawings. As the artist builds his image over many weeks, using coloured pencils of many different hues, his original object is transformed into an uncanny being that seems to live and breathe, existing in an indeterminate space between the human and non-human.



### Unica Zürn

#### *Untitled*, 1957

Ink on moiré (silk)

34.9 x 27 cm

Signed "Unica" and "57" on recto / Stamped "COULEURS FINES, A. BOSSELUT, 14 Rue des Deux Ponts, PARIS" on verso

ALSO EXHIBITED:

#### *Untitled*, 1966

Ink on paper, 38.1 x 25.1 cm

Signed & dated on recto Numbered (stamped) "52" on verso

Both works courtesy Ubu Gallery, New York  
© Verlag Brinkmann & Bose Berlin, Germany

Typically, Zürn locates many eyes across the surface, so that instead of an objectifying (male) gaze at the body, multiple, uncanny and not necessarily human gazes return from the image. She recounted her process of making and her years of mental crisis in *The Man of Jasmine* in which she describes how she begins with no idea what she will draw: 'The pen "floats" tentatively above the white paper, until she discovers the spot for the first eye. Only once she is "being looked at" from the paper does she start to find her bearings and effortlessly add one motif to the next'.<sup>(7)</sup>

In *Untitled*, 1966, eyes proliferate, and whole figures, defined creatures and the face of and profile of Bellmer cohere out of Zürn's stream of consciousness mark-making. Quite likely made whilst she was a patient at Sainte-Anne psychiatric hospital in Paris, the negative space of the drawing seems to constrain the dispersal and liquification typical of other drawings. The milieu in which Zürn moved celebrated art brut, self-taught artists and Surrealism, and all of these tendencies found their way into her art and writing.



### Hans Bellmer

#### *Untitled (Reversible Drawing)*, 1953

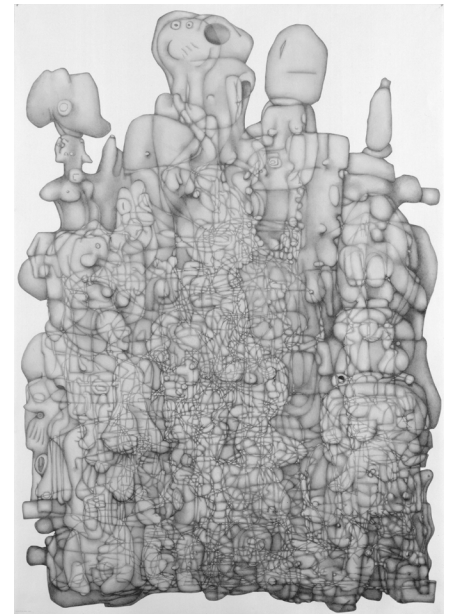
13.3 x 10.2 cm | 40.6 x 33 cm (framed)

Signed & dated on recto

Courtesy Ubu Gallery, New York

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In this drawing, made in the year Bellmer met Zürn, one part of the body is transposed onto another, suggesting the transfer of sensations from eyeballs, to limbs, to the pelvis, to ear lobes, and possibly a conjoining of figures. The drawing is at once 'dry', focussing on the bones or underlying armature of the body, and 'flowing', in that the parts appear in a state of transformation. The lines are at once defining and expansive, extending beyond the body into the environment, suggesting the connection between extreme enjoyment, fusion and the dissolution of the self, while maintaining an almost cruel formal precision. The joints of the limbs, principally the elbow which seems to extend into another body, resemble the 'ball joint' which allows Bellmer's Doll to be articulated with multiple limbs, and about which Bellmer wrote that it implies that 'a body isolated from all outside forces except gravity...is reversible.'<sup>(8)</sup>



### Paul Noble (b. Northumberland 1963, lives London)

#### *Volume 3*, 2005 – 2007

Pencil on paper, 100 x 70 cm

ALSO EXHIBITED:

#### *Volume 5*, 2006 – 2007

Pencil on paper, 100 x 70 cm

© Paul Noble

Both works courtesy the artist  
Photo: Prudence Cumin Associates.

These drawings are from a series of six in which Noble drew the entirety of Henry Moore's sculptures from the six-volume catalogue of the sculptor's work. The drawn sculptures appear as a mass of overlapping lines being, Noble says, 'bellmerised' as they overlay each other. Bellmer's photographs of Zürn bound with string - a headless body, trussed like meat - appeared on the cover of *Le Surréalisme même*, no. 4, 1958; an abstract morphology that Noble applied to the sculptures of Moore. The more Noble's drawings of sculptures overlap, the flatter they appear. Although the title, *Volume*, refers to the Moore catalogue, they also evoke the cumulative 'volume' of the sculptures that the drawings represent. Noble has said: 'His work [Moore's] is really everywhere. I wasn't a fan of his work and I was critical of his repeated presentations of the nuclear family. His attitudes seemed in tune with the government's desire to have women back in their place after the war. Aesthetically, I much prefer Moore's contemporary, Hans Bellmer, who has a much more disorienting response to the brutality of World War II.'<sup>(9)</sup>

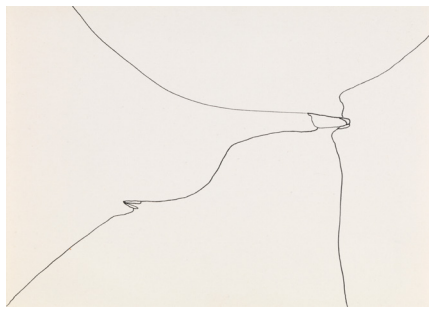
## Inside/outside the body, and jouissance

*'My drawings are really about ... how I can think of moving my body or another body or opening the body, exploring it, making it awkward and transforming it...'.*

Wura-Natasha Ogunji <sup>(10)</sup>

Bellmer suggested that a shared human instinct is to 'escape from the outline of the self' and in a similar line of enquiry we see Paul Chan, Marianna Simnett and Wura-Natasha Ogunji probing the limits of what or who is legible as human and searching for ways to escape the ordinary body, interests as ancient as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Bellmer's drawings open up the body so that the inside becomes another outside in which organs and limbs can be enfolded. The skin is no longer the separation or isolation of the inside. If the inside becomes outside then the outside could become an inside, a space for phantasmatic life including desire and jouissance. With Bellmer, this remains largely subject to the phallus, whereas in other artists that take a non-binary position, desire, jouissance and the gaze are not necessarily determined by sex. This opens up different relations between bodily sensation and viscous, fluid materialities, explored through drawing, often in relation to experimental writing.



**Huguet Caland** (Beirut 1931-2019)

*Flirt V*, 1972

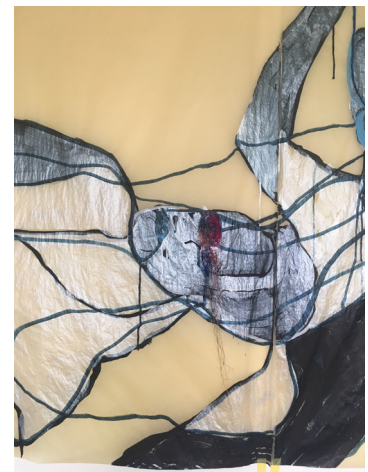
Ink on paper

Ten drawings, each 12 x 17cm or 17 x 12cm

Tate: Presented by the artist 2017

© Photo ©Tate

In Bellmer's drawings line often has a double function, joining and separating, a device exploited by Caland in this series of pared down linear drawings. The artist moved from Beirut to Paris in the late 1960s and her drawings and paintings express the jouissance of female erotic pleasure that characterised the sexual liberation of the period. At the American University of Beirut, Caland was taught a form of drawing in which the pencil traced an unbroken line from the top to the bottom of the paper, a practice that encouraged the dissolution of bodily form and an investigation of topological space. The interpenetrating lines of these drawings are blatantly sensual, in a delightfully non-binary manner, with the empty spaces creating active and mutable forms.



**Wura-Natasha Ogunji** (born St. Louis, Missouri 1970, lives Lagos)

*Buoyancy*, 2019 (detail)

Thread, ink and graphite on architectural tracing paper. Five panels each 120 x 61cm  
Courtesy the artist

Through drawings, video and performance, Ogunji explores physicality, endurance and gestures of the body. In this drawing, the limits of the figure are uncertain, and the thread clusters on the face suggest the viscera of the body. Ogunji is preoccupied with the prospect of a super-humanity, beyond reality, and uses drawing to articulate something for which the language doesn't yet exist - a formulation that reaches beyond the prosaic limits of the human body and its capacity for language.



**Paul Chan** (b. Hong Kong 1973, lives New York)

*Barely Legal 4*, 2009

ALSO EXHIBITED:

*Barely Legal 1*, 2009

*Don't laugh at Noah*, 2009

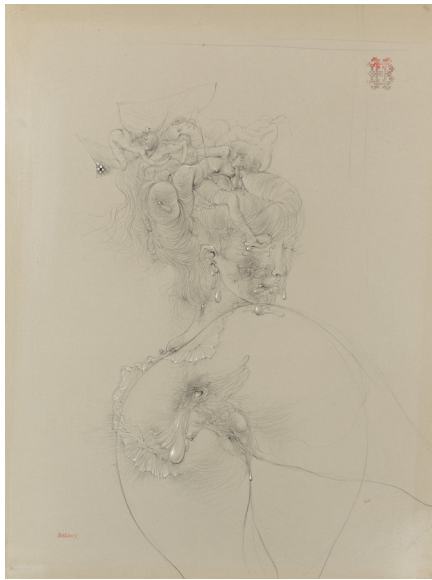
*A gap apart*, 2009

Ink on paper, each 43.2 x 35.6 cm

Emanuel Hoffmann Foundation, gift of the president 2010, on permanent loan to the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel.

Photo: Bisig & Bayer, Basel

Reduced to an outline the body is emptied out and, when truncated, doubled, or multiplied further, it loses all sense of sensate being, as in these four drawings by Chan from *Sade for Sade's Sake* (2007-2009). Photographs of detainees of Abu Ghraib prison, tortured by US military soldiers during the Iraq War, were released in the media in 2004 and triggered this body of work. The images reminded Chan of the illustrations in de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1785), and Chan began by making copies before reducing the body to schematic puppets in a series of ink drawings.



### Hans Bellmer

*Étude pour La Philosophie dans le boudoir de Sade, (Study for the philosophy in the bedroom of Sade), 1963*

Pencil with highlight of white gouache on gray Ingres paper  
59 x 45 cm  
Collection Olivier Varenne, Geneva  
© ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2021

The writings of the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) were celebrated by the Surrealists and had a crucial influence on Bellmer. This is study for one of several drawings Bellmer made for a 1969 edition of *The Philosophy of the Bedroom of Sade*, which consists of a series of dialogues retracing the sexual education of a girl of fifteen. Sade's writing was a violent rejection of institutions that he believed imposed senseless conventions to deny human freedom, including the restriction of the role of women in society. He railed against the Catholic Church in particular, framing women in terms of procreation alone, while at the same time showing in extremely disturbing ways the fantasmatic entwinement of violence, domination and the permutations of enjoyment. Female representatives of the avant-garde, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Susan Sontag, defended Sade's writing as much as their male counterparts, as he led the way in a consideration of the vicissitudes of female sexual pleasure. As Alyce Mahon explores in her recent book *The Marquis de Sade and the Avant-Garde* (2020), Sade's unflinching exploration of man's inhumanity to man became particularly relevant after WWII.

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1)</sup> *The Doll*, Hans Bellmer, translated by Malcolm Green, London: Atlas Press, 2005 [1963], p.133.
- <sup>2)</sup> *Hans Bellmer*, edited by Michael Semff and Anthony Spira, Hatje Cantz Verlag [2006], p.43.
- <sup>3)</sup> See note 1, p.106.
- <sup>4)</sup> See Sue Taylor, Hans Bellmer, *The Anatomy of Anxiety*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002, pp. 104-9.
- <sup>5)</sup> See note 2, p.35.
- <sup>6)</sup> Chloe Piene, Studio visit, via Zoom, 8 Jan. 2021.
- <sup>7)</sup> *The Man of Jasmine*, Unica Zürn, translated by Malcolm Green, London: Atlas Press [1994], p.37.
- <sup>8)</sup> See note 1, p.60.
- <sup>9)</sup> <https://artdecision.eu/paul-noble-a-cartography-of-the-self/> accessed 17 August 2021
- <sup>10)</sup> <https://contemporaryand.com/magazines/coexistence-is-just-a-question-of-imagination> accessed 17 August 2021

*FIGURE/S: drawing after Bellmer* is curated by Michael Newman (Professor of Art Writing, Goldsmiths, University of London) and Kate Macfarlane (Co-director, Drawing Room). An art historian and critic, Newman has written extensively on contemporary art, and has a long-standing interest in drawing; he has been researching Bellmer for over six years and teaching his work in relation to contemporary art.

*ON FIGURE/S: drawing after Bellmer* is a book published by MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE as a companion to the exhibition. Edited by Kate Macfarlane, Michael Newman, Sharon Kivland and Louis Mason, its 29 contributors include Paul Buck, Jade Montserrat, Bernard Noël, Francesco Urbano Ragazzi, Aura Satz and Sarah Wilson.

Our artist/curator Reading Lists, [Bibliography](#) and programme of [Events](#) enrich and expand discourse and research around the issues raised by the exhibition.

We sincerely thank: Michael Newman for his dedication and work on the exhibition over many years; the artists, in particular those who have made new work (Neil Gall, Mathew Hale, Rebecca Jagoe, John Murphy, Aura Satz, Marianna Simnett); the institutions and individuals who have generously loaned work; those who have provided assistance with loans; Sharon Kivland for her considerable contribution to the companion volume *ON FIGURE/S*; the Drawing Room team, in particular Jacqui McIntosh.

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