

L'OFFICIEL ART

WINTER 2020



LILY
COLLINS

*Through the Lens
of Sam Taylor-Johnson*

(L)

The FOLLY & the Reason

Folly-making is a longstanding tradition of *the* absurd, and yet, *with* the horrors of this past year, escapist fantasy has never been so needed. As Adam Charlap Hyman ponders *the* history of *the* architectural landmarks, 14 contemporary artists share what follies mean to them *in* this original portfolio.

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Portfolio curated by KAT HERRIMAN

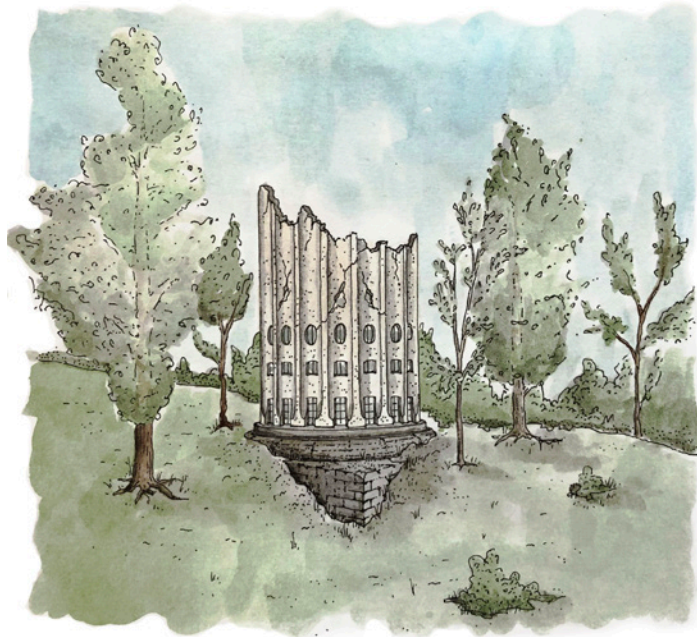
After decorating his way through the Second World War, the Spanish silver-mining heir Carlos de Beistegui turned his attention to the adornment of his garden at the Château de Groussay, just over 30 miles west of Paris in Montfort-l'Amaury. His creative partners of choice, the architect Emilio Terry and the artist Alexandre Serebriakoff, had been extremely busy throughout Hitler's occupation dreaming up the wildly creative interiors of the château in a style Terry coined "Louis XVII," for the French king who never reigned. By 1949, the trio had completed the Temple de l'Amour, the first of what would amount to seven small structures on the grounds: follies. In the center of a circular limestone colonnade and sheltered by a small copper dome, a statue of Venus stood idly on her plinth, seemingly unaware that beyond the Sienese-striped obelisks at Beistegui's stables, the raw imprint of war, continuing rations, a slow rebuilding process and a sea of loss and suffering stretched out across the country. That the word "folly" comes from the Old French *folie*, meaning "madness," I suppose is fitting for this picture. Why is it that so often the most beautiful things are created under the bleakest of circumstances?

I became interested in the follies of the Château de Groussay in college, after discovering the shockingly irreverent work Terry had done on the interiors of Beistegui's modernist apartment designed by the master architect Le Corbusier. I liked the way Terry used historical references to concoct fantasies for the present, collaging narratives, materials, and motifs in his own voice. It is amazing to consider that the architect created such a classicized world and thought in this practically postmodern way, decades before the movement was born, and expressed himself so completely. By the time I finally visited Groussay, Terry's designs had inspired in me a love for this type of personal architectural microcosm.

FOLLIES EXIST IN *the* TENSION BETWEEN REASON & *the* UNREASONABLE.

And so I went to the Royal Pavilion at Brighton to take close-up photos of the palm tree columns in its kitchen; the Palazzina Cinese in Sicily to observe the mechanism that lowers a table from the dining room into the kitchen on the floor below; the Gardens of Bomarzo to grasp the scale of the giant's gaping mouth that forms a doorway; and the grotto at the Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria to see its jib door leading to Ludwig II's bedroom. What I began to understand was that follies exist in the tension between reason and the unreasonable. They are the antidote to Enlightenment architectural principles, which exalt order and clarity in man's relationship to the landscape, and yet they have their own rigor and their own logic. The definition of the folly as pure ornament for the garden—useless and for the eye alone—is an outdated one. These miniaturized buildings, or sculptures of buildings, are vessels for everything their full-scale counterparts are not: the irrational, the ephemeral, the fake, the theatrical, the perverse, the absurd, the subconscious, and the darkness. As such, they are essential. I think of Claude Nicolas Ledoux's phallus-shaped brothel, or the sexualized depictions of meetings at little classical temples in paintings





of extraordinary Romantic gestures once punctuated by 21 follies, of which ten remain today. Once the residence for Monville, at the garden's center is La Colonne Détruite, an enormous structure that appears to be the crumbling base of a ruined column. Had the lost temple been complete, it would have been taller than the Lighthouse of Alexandria. The cracks creeping down the column's massive flutes are, in fact, windows, and the various internal levels are accessed via a staircase that spirals around a now-missing tree. Walking the gardens in 2013, I got a sense for the truly radical nature of Monville's project, a cipher for a new worldview celebrating secularism and reason and embracing ephemerality. I am sure the poetically reflexive nature of the place was not lost on him, and I like to imagine that when, as lore would have it, the Reign of Terror finally reached the walls of Le Désert and he pretended to be his own gardener, Monville would have envisioned with some small satisfaction his folly's future as a ruin of a ruin.

by François Boucher, or Clive tugging at Maurice's sweater in front of the Palladian pavilion at Wilbury Park in the Merchant Ivory film. These are places where pleasure verges on madness, where the cerebral approaches the carnal, where people find something deep within themselves that is raw and powerful.

While working on Groussay, Terry, Serebriakoff, and Beistegui became enamoured with an estate a roughly 30-minute drive away known as Le Désert de Retz. They were not the first. The place has captivated many visitors since it was built in the years leading up to the French Revolution, from Marie Antoinette to Thomas Jefferson, Colette, Salvador Dalí, and Jean Cocteau. Le Désert was the private garden of French aristocrat François Racine de Monville, and sprawls over 99 acres, organized in a series

This kind of uncanny loop in which something is "authentically fake" seems intrinsic to the idea of a folly. I am reminded of Carl Hagenbeck, the deeply flawed inventor of the modern zoo, famed for his convincing rock formations carved from...rock. Surrounded by moats, these little islands became the theatrical settings for animal life, observed by visitors across the water with few barriers besides distance, as if actually in the wild. Hagenbeck harnessed the colonial imagination of his patrons, transporting them to fictionalized exotic places that suggest the natural habitats of the animals on each island, which are grouped by species. Visiting his Giardino Zoologico in Rome in the heart of the Villa Borghese is a very different experience from wandering the aforementioned aristocratic dreamscapes outside of Paris, but the German merchant strikes me as the 19th-century inheritor of Monville, claiming the folly anew as marketing tool, colonial artifact, and entertainment for the bourgeoisie. There are giraffes grazing in front of a petite Mughal palace,



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zebras resting in the shade of their Yoruban clay-and-thatched house, and tigers roaming throughout a Khmer temple. These miniaturized architectures and landscapes captivated Victorian audiences, who made their way in droves seeking some tantalizing taste of the other and a fleeting affirmation of their own dominance, as humans over other animals and as Westerners in the world at large.

Sadly, I am not a gardener, but what I have gleaned from the gardens I have spent time in and the gardeners I have known is that the central conceptual feature of the practice is control. The smells, colors, compositions and juxtapositions, tensions and tenderness, life and death even, come as a result of the gardener's negotiation with nature. In this sense, the folly is the product of a hubristic bargain that man can improve upon wilderness and a violent methodology through which we create beautiful things. Think of Diana Mitford, in pseudo-exile after her husband Oswald Mosley's "misjudgement" as the head of the British Union of Fascists leading up to World War II, tending to her roses on the grounds of their converted Palladian folly in Orsay, the Temple de La Gloire. There is, of course, something both chilling and wholly appropriate that she, the wife of an authoritarian politician, should wind up residing in a supremely classicizing structure so compact that the Duchess of Windsor, upon visiting, is said to have remarked, "Oh, it's charming, but where do you live?"

While the grounds of Philip Johnson's Glass House are probably the closest America has to Le Désert de Retz, and his Rockefeller guest house on 52nd Street the closest New York has to Temple de la Gloire, searching for follies in my city has led me to a different kind of landscape. This garden of sorts starts at roughly the 16th floor and ends beneath about ten thousand gallons of water. To see it whole it must be

linked together the way that Neddy Merrill links together the pools of his Westchester neighborhood to form the "Lucinda River" in John Cheever's short story "The Swimmer." The water towers, roofs, and terraces of the parkside buildings on Fifth Avenue and Central Park West constitute, in my mind, New York's finest folly garden, defined most excitingly by the contributions of Emery Roth and Rosario Candela. Harnessing the potential of the setback, as required by zoning codes of the 1920s, these architects adorned their otherwise inexpressive and austere buildings with flying buttresses, urns, cupolas, domes, and follies, to obscure the water towers and other utilities that always find themselves on the roofs of that most New York invention, the residential skyscraper. To explore the terraces on these buildings is to wander through a different world than the street below: a meandering network of hidden gardens and follies in the sky, sublimely petite against the vastness of the view.

Is it possible that the developers of American Revivalist suburbs—wresting the idea of the folly from the domain of the rich and planting it in the aspirational heart of the prewar middle class; miniaturizing the Tudor manse, the Spanish colonial estate, and the medieval castle—were working with the same medium, ultimately, as Marie Antoinette building her Hermitage? Or as Edward James pouring the concrete for Las Pozas in the rainforest? Or as Niki de Saint Phalle hand-cutting the fragments of tile for her Tarot Garden in Capalbio, Italy? Or as Karl Lagerfeld planning an enormous bouclé jacket from which his models emerge onto the catwalk? Or as Not Vital constructing one of his houses "to



watch the sunset" on each continent? In the end, perhaps the only thing I know about follies for certain is that they are found when the expansiveness of desire far exceeds the size of the structure.

ABOVE—"The roof of 780 Park Avenue by Rosario Candela," 2020, by Adam Charlap Hyman (throughout)
 OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP—"La Colonne Détruite at Désert de Retz," 2020
 OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM—"Diana Mitford's Temple de la Gloire," 2020
 PREVIOUS PAGE—"The Tartar tent at Château de Groussay," 2020



HERNAN BAS

"Blind date at the Monster Park (Garden of Bomarzo)," 2020

Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul, and London



KERN SAMUEL

"A hard head makes a soft ass," 2020

"I was thinking of the folly as something simultaneously real and imaginary—something that is its own thing and a reference to something else."



JORGE PARDO
"Cactus Garden," Unrealized Public Project, 2015/2020



KANDIS WILLIAMS
"A field: banana republics poetic in plutocracy and monopoly," 2020



GELITIN
"Arc de Triomphe," 2003/2020

Courtesy of artist and Massimo De Carlo Gallery.



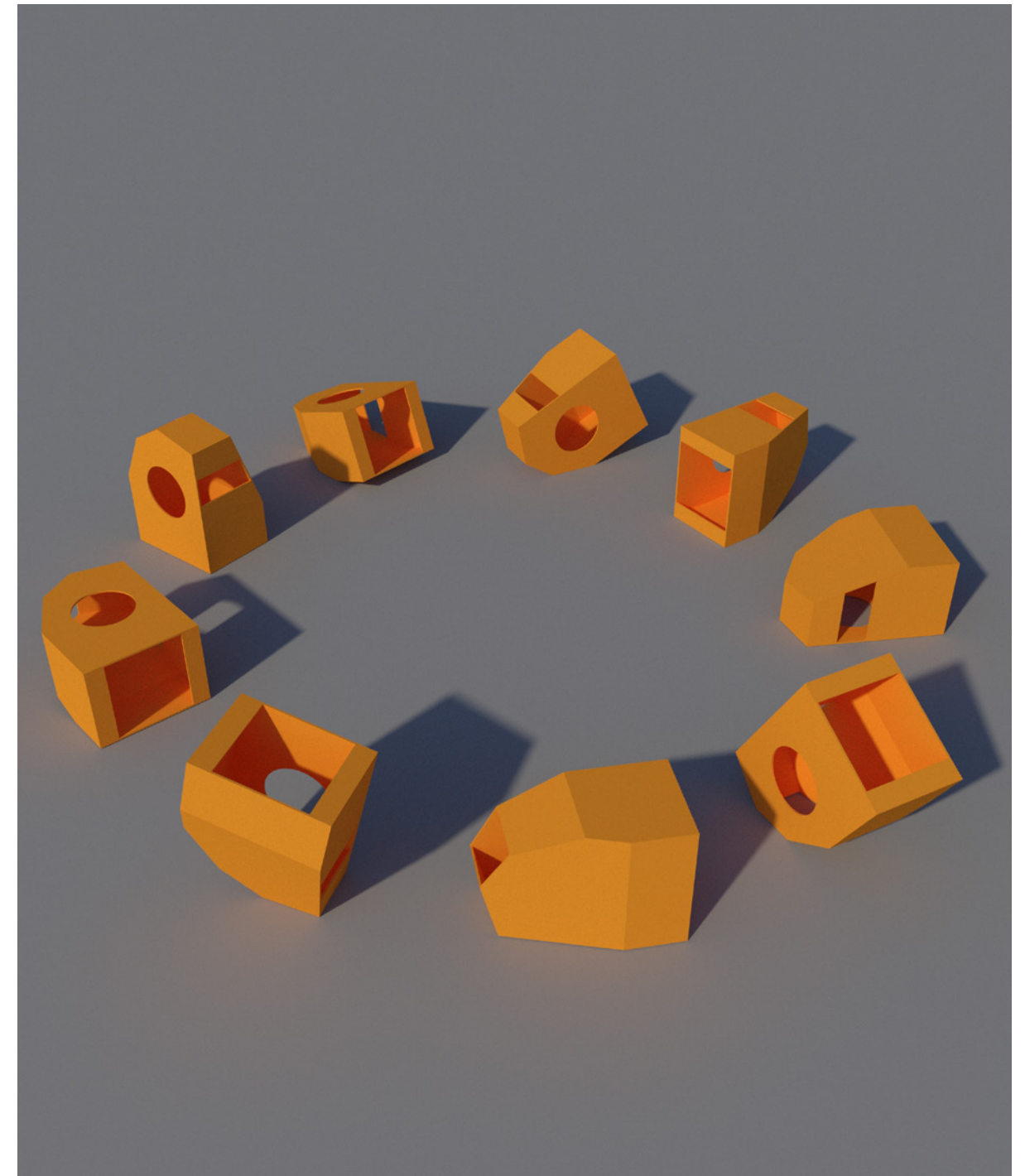
Courtesy the artist and Sprüth Magers

ANDREA ZITTEL
"Panels and Portals #2," 2020



CYNTHIA TALMADGE
 "Wishing Well," 2020

Courtesy of the artist. Assisted by Matthew Brennan.



JAMES CASEBERE
 "Nine Pavilions," 2020

"These nine identical, asymmetrical, geometric pavilions are each placed on a different side and designed to be shown together in a commons; a campus courtyard, public garden, or square, etc., and in a variety of possible configurations. They would be 13.5' x 7.5 x 10' and made of cross laminated timber, enabling use and occupation for isolation, contemplation, or dialogue."



KATHARINA GROSSE
"Penelope's Hut," 2020

© Katharina Grosse and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2020



© Tatiana Trouvé, Photo credit: Florian Kleinemann. Courtesy the artist and Gagostian.

TATIANA TROUVÉ
"Untitled," 2020



ERWIN WURM
"Henry David Thoreau's cabin," 2020

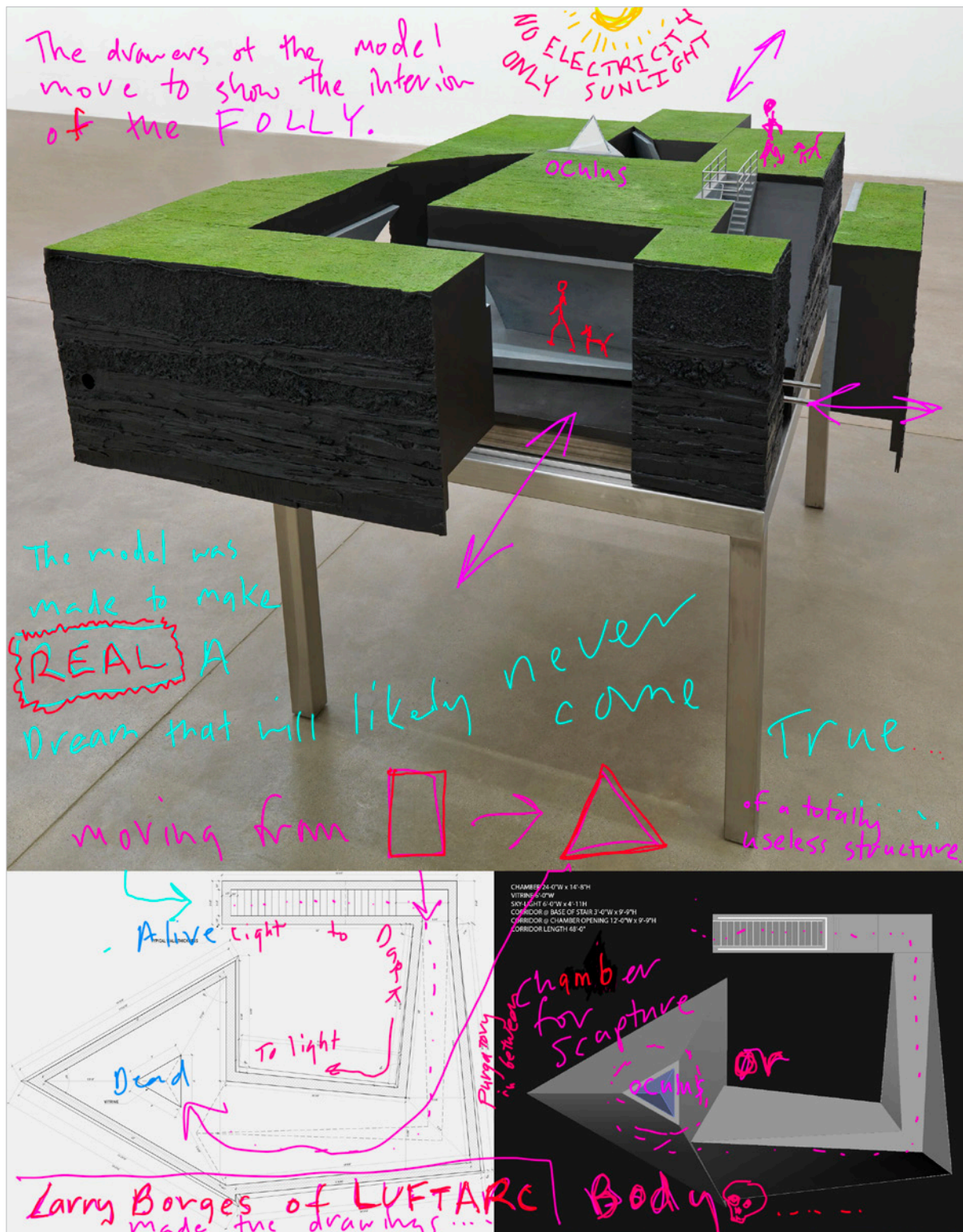
Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul, and London

© Sterling Ruby, Courtesy Gagosian



STERLING RUBY
"Studio Folly," 2020

"This is a concept proposal to use one of the open outdoor structures at my studio as a temporary voting booth folly. When multiplied and stacked atop themselves, a fabric awning bearing the American flag is transformed from a shade shield into a privacy barrier, and a security camera becomes the all-seeing eye."



MATTHEW DAY JACKSON
 "Untitled," 2020

Courtesy of the artist



CAMILLE HENROT
 "Untitled," 2013