

Whitney
Biennial

2019

3



Olga Balama, installation view of *None of the beauty of the landscape can reach her pupils anymore*, High Art, Paris, France, 2017

Morgan Bassichis, *Me, but Also Everybody? (Part II)*, 2017, Performance view, Greater New York, MoMA PS, Queens, NY, 2015.
Study Sessions; Morgan Bassichis, 2018, Performance view, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 2018

4



3



Waiting room, Lviv, Ukraine, 2018



Materials stored in the artist's apartment, 2018



Process image, 2017



Untitled work in progress, 2010



House on the Rock, Iowa County, WI, 2009

OLGA BALEMA

3

OLGA BALEMA

Olga Balema constructs objects and installations from the found, the readymade, and the fabricated, moving fluently through various genres and stylistic points with a material intelligence that encompasses references to art history, cinema, literature, and personal narratives. Consistent

throughout, however, is her interest in discomfort. Balema creates a quality of tension evoked by her deliberate misuse of materials, frequently channeled through the structuring and arranging of architectural space.

Geometric shapes, bright colors, and drooping, puffy, or flaccid structures are recurrent protagonists in Balema's work, sometimes making literal reappearances: at her 2015 exhibition *Cannibals* at Croy Nielsen in Berlin, a series of works called *Threat to civilization* (2015) — irregular, tumescent PVC bags filled with water — contained bent steel rods, cannibalized fragments of former sculptures that rusted throughout the course of the show and turned the clear water ruddy and clouded. For her 2017 exhibition at High Art in Paris, *None of the beauty of the landscape can reach her pupils anymore*, Balema covered the delicate plaster flourishes of the gallery's elegant white walls with rows of panels upholstered in quilted or snakeskin pleather and fabric patterned like wood grain, all in a riot of colors that seemed to rebel against the room's decorous ornamentation. The shiny smoothness of the panels, each about the size of a place mat, was rudely ruptured by the occasional tear from which a small dowel poked out, like a cigarette from a pair of lips.

At Art Basel Hong Kong in 2018, Balema channeled her penchant for modulating interiors into a holistic approach to the temporary architecture of the gallery booth by creating a flimsy, unstable-seeming installation of seven paintings and sculptures that sagged and slouched from the impermanent walls. A vertical triptych titled *Visions from a floating world* (2018) appeared to have slid down toward the floor on the ribbons that anchored it high above, its three sections misaligned. Meandering, messy grids ramble across the paintings, a nod to both Balema's inclination to give abstract traditions new material realities and her underlying tendency to manifest the joy, freedom, and psychosis of making art. *JPF*