



David Rappeneau, *Untitled* (2015). Acrylic, ballpoint pen, fluorescent marker, pencil, charcoal pencil on paper.

# Queer Thoughts

by Loreta Lamargese

Living up to its name, Queer Thoughts is a shapeshifting and amorphous enterprise. While naming is a political act, one that more often than not can fix and govern, this particular nomination opens rather closes, plays with contradictions, and is “recurrent, eddying, troublant” to quote Eve Sedgwick. There is nothing particularly fixed or comfortable in the gallery’s programming, with artists ranging from Mindy Rose Schwartz—the former professor of the proprietors at the School for the Art Institute of Chicago, for whom they have pleaded their spirited affection and admiration—to the jadedly cool and cachéd David Rappeneau, whose biographical details are restricted to the artist’s name and location in France. And if we are initially overwhelmed by the indeterminacy of the gallery, according to their website Queer Thoughts promotes a post-identity agenda, pointing us again away from any particular temporality or determined recognition—its moniker, QT, refers us to the miniscule and the containable, the short and sweet.

In August 2015, Queer Thoughts, co-directed by Sam Lipp and Luis Miguel Bendaña, relocated from its apartment-gallery closet-cum-gallery in Chicago to Manhattan. More specifically the gallery re-opened on Broadway in a space most would consider small, but relativity plays a generous hand here—because the gallery is twice the size of its precursor, its roominess seems predetermined. Context is everything, and for two dealer/artists (with a dash that both separates and binds these two roles) with a penchant for the theatrical, Broadway is a perfectly suited new post.

The first solo exhibition presented in their New York space saw artist Puppies Puppies burrow into the Lord of the Rings franchise only to have Gollum himself emerge for a performance staged in the gallery’s backroom. This latter personage is a complicated spin-off from the original CGI character. Puppies’ Gollum encapsulates a spectator’s perspective, an ability to recognize a fourth wall with its potential to be bro-

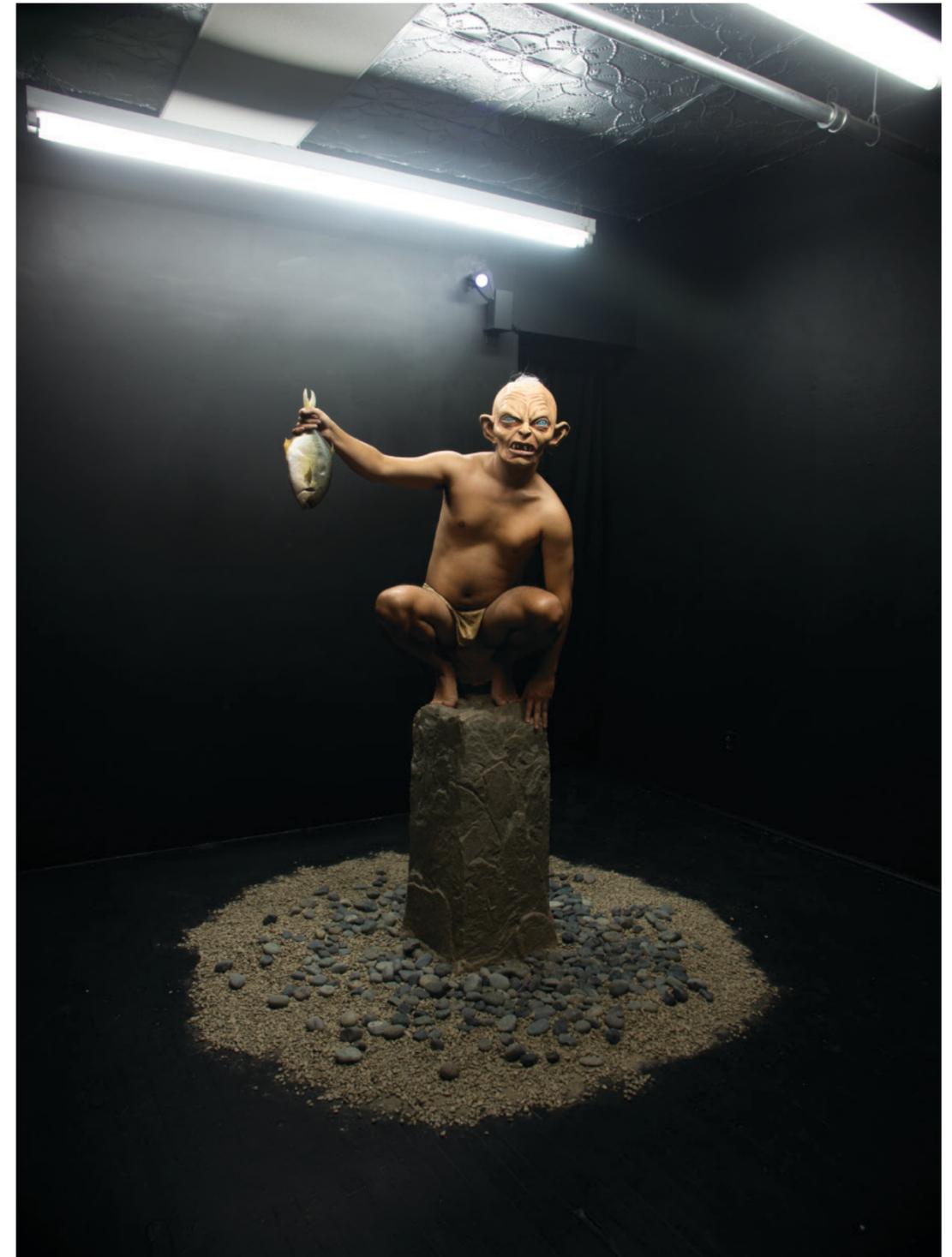
ken, and finally an omnipotent degree of knowledge for the story within which they are placed. Before entering the exhibition, the viewer was invited to rid themselves of outside contaminants via an automated Purell hand sanitizer, strategically located in the gallery's hallway (a 2012 sculpture by the artist, edition of 65). Encountering the humanoid Gollum for the first time, this visitor became an actant in the show's choreography, adding another layer that pressed outside-world forces onto the already impaled diegetic world of the film.

Despite the theatrics at play in their programming, Bendaña assures me over the phone: "If we could hide, we would." This comment brings me back to our first encounter in their gallery space on Broadway. It was obvious to me then, as is it now, that hiding was an impossible feat; the only separation between the intimate gallery space and the backroom-office is a shared wall. Nevertheless, Bendaña and Lipp relentlessly point us to sites where one could hide: to peripheries and towards marginality. The artists on their re-occurring roster unearth narratives that expand networks toward the inclusion of overlooked annals: David Rappeneau painstakingly drafts scenes of youths marooned in sleek private enclosures consuming illicit substances; Darja Bajagic collects the obscene relics of the darkweb; Mindy Rose Schwartz creates keychain-like trinkets of the forgotten and sitting in drawers of childhood bedrooms variety.

Like its titular framing, Queer Thoughts proposes aesthetic, political, or physical confines simply in order to transgress them. To say that Queer Thoughts is now located in Manhattan is not to say that it is local; the gallery may be rooted in a specific location, but its sensibility is not localized. Its walls are porous and expand and contract to include curated exhibitions at Arcadia Missa in London, Galerie Éric Hussenot in Paris, and most recently an exhibition at Palacio Nacional in Managua under the umbrella of the Nicaraguan Biennial. Unlike blue-chip mega gallery brands, Queer Thoughts is not dispersed to cover more ground. Instead, it is in a constant amorphous state— an open script adaptable in and for different locales. Despite the indeterminacy of its location, Queer Thoughts embraces the notion that environments are not neutral. Manhattan is arguably the art world's



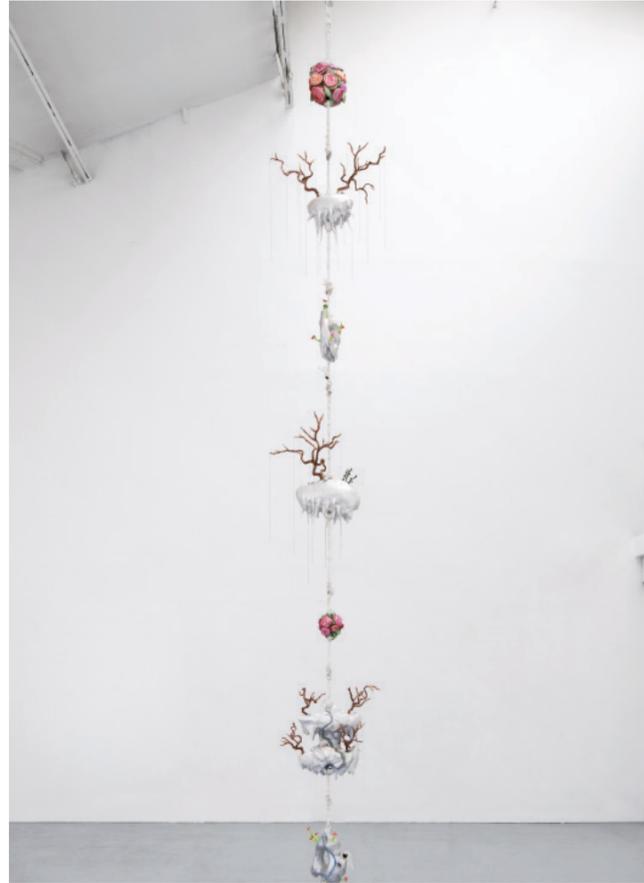
Mindy Rose Schwartz  
**After Falling Out of their Nest, Baby Birds  
 Land on the Face of a Cliff. Weary and  
 Confused, Their Lives Hang in the Balance**  
 (2005) Wood, foam, plaster, wire, rope.



Puppies Puppies, **Gollum Performance** (2014).  
 Performer in Gollum mask and loincloth,  
 holding a dead fish.



David Rappeneau, **Untitled** (2016).  
Acrylic paint, ballpoint pen, pencil, and charcoal  
pencil on paper.



Mindy Rose Schwartz  
**Pushing Up the Daisies** (2006). Mixed  
media.

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center— a grid checkered-off with other young galleries that possess pre-existing connections to their own publics and artists. It is carefully plotted with associations and for this reason, as a new-comer, Queer Thoughts treads water differently than they did in what may now seem like the expansive void of their Chicago apartment gallery.

Their latest, foray into Nicaragua, where Bendaña's family is from, brings about its own set of unique forces that accumulate around Bendaña and Lipp's interjections. The gallery reflexively inhabits the complex economy of Nicaragua, with its conflicting imperatives: "the dreams [for] urbanization and industry to prosper in an impoverished nation, versus the preservation of an untouched volcanic landscape.". Faced with an expanded stage that contains its own political and artistic ecology, Lipp and Bendaña have layered on contradictions and complications, presenting an eclectic group including Lucie Stahl, Carlos Reyes, Donna Huanca, and the dealers themselves. This

last inclusion refutes a hierarchy intrinsic to most galleries and instead levels a platform whereby dealer and artist (with welcomed discomfort) comeingle.

In the spirit of irresolution that has come to define Queer Thoughts, the gallery has yet to consolidate its future plans. Scrupulousness here affords the gallery an infinite malleability— a refusal to cohere that translates into a rejection of stagnation. I can't help but think of the gallery as an active force with its own impetus to which other variables (artists, outside spaces, etc.) attach themselves, gaining momentum by sheer force. With a sense of liberty that belies the prevailing market forces, which rely on strategy and the coalescence of fashion, Queer Thoughts is now in the difficult position to try to dissolve its unstable richness onto commercial viability. While we cannot foresee what such a marriage will look like, we can be assured that it is in these impossible thresholds that QT revels and plays best. Alternative endings are a prerequisite to all open scripts.