



Clockwise from top left: Stewart Uoo, Hayley Pisaturo, and Marie Karlberg at Xtapussy LIXXTAPUSSY party, New York, January 26, 2013. Video projections, Xtapussy LIXXTAPUSSY party, New York, January 26, 2013. Stewart Uoo, SHADOW, Hayley Pisaturo, and Marie Karlberg at Xtapussy APOCALIPSTOPUSSY party, December 14, 2012. Flyer for

Xtapussy ANOREXXTAPUSSY party, June 15, 2012. Artwork by Patrick Dyer. Marie Karlberg and Stewart Uoo at the 8th Annual Paper Nightlife Awards party, Webster Hall, New York, October 10, 2012. Photo: Quentin Belt. Still from House of Ladosha's 2012 video *B.M.F.*, directed by Antonio Blair. Doshu Devastation (Antonio Blair).



THERE'S NO SAFETY IN NUMBERS, REALLY—and maybe that's why the fluid, frequent collaborations between Antonio Blair, Marie Karlberg, and Stewart Uoo seem hazardous, or at least fraught. Irreducible to any one individual practice but never cohering as a group or even a network, moving in and out of galleries and showrooms and basements and screens, their activities hover somewhere around art and fashion, but they can't be explained by those industries, either.

The New York-based Karlberg and Uoo joined with stylist Hayley Pisaturo to start the party Xtapussy in 2012, an event that merges music, video projections, and decor in a decadent *Gesamtsexwerk*. Karlberg often performs live and in videos in various post-goth-rave-punk-Teutonic looks; Blair assumes the alter (and subaltern) ego of Dosha Devastation, a member of the drag-rap-runway collective House of Ladosha (with Adam Radakovich and others), an epicene admixture of Bushwick Bill, Gina Lollobrigida, and Aubrey Beardsley. Uoo's immersive video-game works and painstakingly delicate drawings traffic among his own performative and partygoing characters. And both Blair and Karlberg have worked with Uoo, in turn, on various installations and sculptures. The latter take the form of stylized fragments of mannequins, half-dressed and undone,

encrusted with press-on nails and razor wire and synthetic dreads, recalling Isa Genzken's brilliant figurative sculptures.

Yet these pieces are nowhere near as whole or as composed; they are flayed, often arrayed horizontally rather than upright, etiolated and destroyed. They use the shape-shifting yet inanimate chemical ferrofluid (a coy nod to other contemporary sculptures that skirt technology and dematerialization). They are extremities. And they remind us that inert matter is just as persistent as immaterial screens. In other words, these aren't figures, much less bodies. They don't register as people or, conversely, their absence. Instead, they map the precise point at which bodies disintegrate—which has nothing to do with anthropomorphism or even reification and everything to do with artifice.

The most recent of these objects, part of the series "No Sex, No City," 2013, are on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in the dual show (with artist Jana Euler) "Outside Inside Sensibility," curated by Jay Sanders. But always exceeding such frameworks, the sculptures point to a messier and more irruptive set of relations. They are antiportraits, as if acheiropoietic: images not made by human hands.

—Michelle Kuo

1000 WORDS

Antonio Blair, Marie Karlberg, and Stewart Uoo

TALK ABOUT THEIR RECENT COLLABORATIONS

MARIE KARLBERG: When we started Xtapussy, we were trying to set it apart from other parties in New York at the time. A huge diversity of people that we had gotten to know from living in the city would come. We would ask friends, mostly artists, to make installations for the first floor, so that it would always look different.

STEWART UOO: We also invited people to present video projections. We urged everyone to make new work that was suited to the environment; others simply brought found video clips. The visuals functioned as a stimulant.

ANTONIO BLAIR: The fun thing about the people who came was that they all had such strong visual references, which came together in their looks—the "face" they were giving everyone. It was just part of the way that everyone has their own web page or profile, their own brand online. And then to see these

people IRL was a thing. The images of the party would then go back online.

MK: The first floor, which was huge, had a bar at the back and three projectors, plus art installed hanging from the ceiling and on the walls. And then the DJ booth was in the basement, which was great for sound. If upstairs was Apollonian, downstairs would be Dionysian: You could first have a conversation, a drink, view the projections; then move to the basement, entering a black hole with light effects, in a trance of pleasure.

SU: Every party had a loose theme and the overarching purpose was to celebrate Xtapussy: ecstasy and pussy, female power. We always wanted people to feel like they could and should dress up. Hayley Pisaturo (our other collaborator) is a professional stylist and was a major part of that: A lot of the looks related to variants of realness, to role-playing and

plays on pedestrian fashion. We were all looking at each other like people inhabiting other people, like a mimicry of what it is to pass for something else.

Dressing up and dressing others: It's the craft of styling that I'm not getting paid to do. [*laughter*]

MK: It's true. We put so much time into our outfits, even the flyers.

SU: That's why there have been so many times I have tried to convince Marie to be a stylist.

MK: I think I'm just a performer.

AB: Styling is everything: It's what I do for the House of Ladosha music videos, from the clothes to the editing.

MK: And that attitude, of almost making the trade of being a commercial stylist into something else, is pretty interesting. Because there are a lot of people that come straight out of art school and just make work following a certain pattern, in order to be appreciated or

“Every persona, every branding mechanism, has so many precedents, and yet we’re over that precedence. We already know that identity matters, that it’s nowhere—it’s like breathing.”

—Stewart Uoo

View of Jana Euler and Stewart Uoo, “Outside Inside Sensibility,” 2013, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. From left: Stewart Uoo, *No Sex, No City: Samantha*, 2013; Stewart Uoo, *No Sex, No City: Miranda*, 2013; Stewart Uoo, *No Sex, No City: Charlotte II*, 2013; Stewart Uoo, *No Sex, No City: Miranda II*, 2013. All from the series “No Sex, No City,” 2013. Photo: Chandra Gilick.



accepted by institutions or by an older generation.

And I think this is the most important thing when it comes to Stewart’s work or my work or Antonio’s work: We are actually all simultaneously doing something based outside that culture and those traditions. We want to create different ways of dealing with art—and pleasure.

SU: When certain groups that have already been established, part of a school of thought, move to a place like New York or Berlin, it’s as if the younger artists there then feel like they have to position themselves within that legacy. I think that artists who try to subscribe to these art histories often feel they have a flag to wave or something to conquer—they are literally on a crusade.

MK: It’s a reaction. I don’t want to follow a pattern that’s been produced by important artists in the past, but actually try to somehow respond to our own generation.

SU: But to speak of “our generation” is almost—it has a degree of authority. I think we’re coming from a place that’s more about comfort level, about the environments and social settings within which we can feel a certain degree of ease or unease in navigating our intuitions and emotions. That’s partly why I love Yvonne Rainer’s autobiography, *Feelings Are Facts*. The title says it all.

AB: Exactly.

SU: And one of the things that Rainer says changed her perspective was hearing Martha Graham say, “When you accept yourself as a woman, you will have turn-out,” in reference to the proper ballet term for leg rotation, when you “turn out.” In my head it relates to another mantra—when you’re “turnt up.” “You are

turnt up, girl!” That double meaning is amazing to me.

AB: From having turn-out to being turnt up, that’s a foundation for inhabiting a female energy, for “carrying.”

SU: Identity is seen as passé. Aren’t we all post-human? But I think living a story and telling it is very important. Every persona, every branding mechanism, has so many precedents, and yet we’re over that precedence—we’ve accepted it, we celebrate it. We already know that identity matters, that it’s nowhere—it’s like breathing.

MK: It’s like you’re trying to create art out of a certain—

SU: Selfhood.

MK: Yes. There is a need for something. Just like with Xtapussy, there was a need for a party, there was a need for your work, *your* self, because it didn’t already exist.

AB: The rage. There is a rage, a struggle with living, as if everyone should be pissed and living is letting it out.

SU: And everyone loves distribution. That’s why everyone is living online. You want to disseminate or distribute a sensibility—you need to present the product, the concept.

I understand that I have to produce a certain type of identity in that format—the format being a public platform, a gallery space, or an institutional venue. It’s another place to put your brand. When I was working on this Whitney show, I remember thinking, “All right, here is an opportunity.” You get trained to be site-specific. You have a new site, so deal with it, right?

A lot of the characters in my videos and drawings have already been manufactured and used—in movies,

manga, video-game franchises. The fan-fiction drawings give me an opportunity to stage another persona; they borrow these really intimate fantasy narratives that I find browsing through user-generated content and replay those scenes in painstaking watercolor. And the videos use stock characters, but they also imply the intimate, first-person position of the gamer—who is also the viewer—and layer them with confessional voice-overs. So each character inhabits the avatar-viewer, a character cycling through different selves, like dying over and over again. For the Whitney project, there are a few sets of four mannequins each, a part of my “No Sex No City” series [2013]. I’ll be sharing the gallery with Jana [Euler], who is showing just one new large painting, and so I didn’t want to stifle the situation. I want it to be a bit harmonious.

AB: On the one hand it’s a polished aesthetic, very put together, but then the mannequins are also obviously falling apart. A postapocalyptic, destroyed thing.

SU: Before, I didn’t want to explicitly say what their narratives were. But I think I can say now, obviously, that I’m trying to create these archetypes of women that are based on the four characters in *Sex and the City*.

AB: So we thought: Only Carrie gets big bows. No one else gets bows. Only Carrie gets flowers. And tutus. And Charlotte can’t wear a beret because only Carrie would wear a beret.

SU: Exactly. They’re based on a set of archetypes that you see everywhere now. And my fascination comes from a grotesque place, right? So do most fashion sensibilities.

The original mannequin bust for the molds hap-



Above, from left: Stewart Uoo, *No Sex, No City: Samantha* (detail), 2013, polyurethane resin, epoxy, ink, pigment, acrylic paint, wires, cables, clothing, accessories, ferrofluid, razor wire, steel, feathers, human and synthetic hair, makeup, glitter, synthetic eyelashes, maggot cocoons, flies, dust, mixed media, 84 x 30 x 30". Stewart Uoo, *No Sex, No City: Samantha II* (detail), 2013, polyurethane resin, epoxy, ink, pigment, acrylic paint, wires, cables, clothing, accessories, ferrofluid, razor wire, steel, feathers, human and synthetic hair, makeup, glitter, synthetic eyelashes, maggot cocoons, flies, dust, mixed media, 20 x 24 x 70". Stewart Uoo, *No Sex, No City: Charlotte* (detail), 2013, polyurethane resin, epoxy, ink, pigment, acrylic paint, wires, cables, clothing, accessories, ferrofluid, razor wire, steel, feathers, human and synthetic hair, makeup, glitter, synthetic eyelashes, maggot cocoons, flies, dust, mixed media, 84 x 30 x 30". All from the series "No Sex No City," 2013. Photos: Chandra Glick.



Stewart Uoo, *Confessions (9 Women)*, 2012, HD video, color, sound, 6 minutes 32 seconds.



pened to be based on a display form at Patricia Fields's store—Fields was the famous stylist for *Sex in the City*, and her boutique was similar to retail stores now like Opening Ceremony, which cycles stock and trends incredibly quickly. Looking at the display form, I realized I wanted to focus on an accessories list, on hair and makeup rather than clothes—styling based on accessories. The mannequins don't have breasts. They're covered by their hands. Is she cold, is she clothed? I thought these were beautiful questions.

I leave most of the materials on my roof in Brooklyn for really long periods of time, so that they're vintage and distressed. I was interested in those sorts of treatments—how they collapse into fetish values with apparel and specifically American denim. So we were distressing shopping bags, the mannequins, everything. I wanted to age them because the narrative was that they were found in a futuristic trash heap where things are still alive, where all objects are imbued with some kind of ghostly presence.

AB: Working with Stewart on the mannequins was like trying to dress an alien. I've always wanted to design for other types of bodies, for the "incorrect" body, and I almost got kicked out of school for refusing to design for super-duper skinny girls. I wanted my shapes to be very voluptuous, with big hips.

SU: I thought more about denim and I thought about Lana Del Rey's recent album. And I was fascinated by her look, a freaky American with a strong penchant for Ralph Lauren, Polo-type Americana, and how everyone was eating it up. But it's also awkward and ghostly and very meme-worthy: again, a certain degree of grotesquerie. At one point Jay [Sanders] had proposed the option of an outdoor space, and I thought, "I could throw platforms of denim out there to get rained on and then do something with the denim." But that was a gnarly idea. And we ended up working in the first-floor interior space. So I decided to present white denim flooring, because it's just a white, flawless space. It acts as a surface on which you can literally track which art objects get the most attention. But then I'll also take that fabric after the show, and a designer friend or two will create couture pieces out of the material.

That's so cheesy to me and kind of funny, like turning out Rudolf Stingel's carpets and Celotex walls. To play with the materials used by that generation of artists exploring institutional critique and reflexivity—which then become a kind of fashion. What I really want to generate is a look book. I want Antonio and Juliana [Huxtable Ladosha] to be in it. It's dirty white denim and I want them crying. That's the vision I want. I don't consider this an art object. □