

## *Love Hours: rites and curses*

Stanya Kahn

September 27 - November 22, 2025

“Je bâtis a roches mon langage.”

I build my language with rocks.

—Éduard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Gattopardo is thrilled to present a solo exhibition by Stanya Kahn. *Love Hours: rites and curses* features new works made between 2023-2025. A two-room installation that includes a new 4-minute animation (with sound,) paintings and ceramic, resin and wood sculptures.

“With its labor-intensive materiality, *Love Hours* is a heavily embodied space and also ephemeral: spectral grief-haunts are invoked as well as those that might ferry curses and spells. Exhausted by the unrelenting clamor of the West (in all its violences—psychic, semiotic, physical,) exasperated with language under the duress of witnessing and organizing against non-stop (and ongoing) genocide, new colonial boomerangs, recurring imperial ruptures, and personal trials—I started making objects, images and sound with an urgency and density of care related to my own sense of teetering at the edge of abyss, beside myself as in Kristeva: shattered sitting next to a corpse. Separate from organizing (I don’t claim that art can effect political change,) this process became an approach to creation and labor not only as self-soothing but as ritual, as a way to put energy into forms, symbol systems and poetics, into uncanny quotations of the ancient and modern, the elevated and common, the decorative and utilitarian, moving through vernacular histories like a ghost trying to enchant objects in a desperate attempt to send signals, wild semaphores at the end. *Love Hours: rites and curses* became a conceptual work, to be presented and accessed viscerally, in excruciatingly bad times, without didactics.

Repetition, layering, multi-step by-hand processes, cycling motifs and shapes (skulls, birds, houses, jars, animals, the sea)—became methods that could maybe eschew auteur-ship in favor of remaining at human scale. Working to the limits of production as sole studio hand, the container of the self came undone in certain processes. Time and labor became love hours—toward relation (as in Glissant), not transaction (as in Kelley.) With a direct nod of course to beloved artist Mike Kelley—in his polymathic genius, steadfast work ethic and notion of labors of love—the title here undoes the cynical economy of Kelley’s famous piece. Where he saw guilt embedded in the love hours of crafted gifts (love that “could never be repaid,”) I experienced this toil as undoubtedly debt-free, the work having already paid the maker in the process. The end form, or gift, is an installation site as respite, repository, funerary parlor, incantation, altar. A fountain can be a film, a vessel can be a hollow for abyss, a painting can be a ghost, a cartoon can be a mirror, a pile of pots can be a polemic. In place of world-building in actual space, the work became making-as-psychic-modeling, an ode to resistance, and a keening, but with the hands.



*Atopolis* (after Whitten for Glissant), is an animated compression of referents, its narrative abbreviated to essentials, a poem. Literally “moving pictures,” it is edited like a dream but unfolds like pages in a book. Its marks are more hieroglyphic than Pixar, with a flattened pictorial space “more medieval than Renaissance,” as noted (preferentially) by artist Amy Sillman, on seeing a first draft. *Atopolis*—named for Jack Whitten’s tile painting of the same name, his largest ever, dedicated to the decolonial Antillean philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant—is made from my paintings, undersea footage and original sound compositions. Drawn from imagination—improvising in visions of abyss, bombardment, underworlds, the vertiginous disorientation of displacement, loss, and the presence of the dead—*Atopolis* is also inspired by Eduard Glissant’s theories of the right to opacity, trembling, relation, and of the “chaos monde.”

‘The aesthetics of the chaos-monde...embraces all the elements and forms of expression of this totality within us; it is totality’s act and its fluidity, totality’s reflection and agent in motion...The poetics of Relation (which is, therefore, part of the aesthetics of the chaos-monde) senses, assumes, opens, gathers, scatters, continues, and transforms the thought of these elements, these forms, and this motion. Deconstruct these facts, declare them void, replace them, reinvent their music: totality’s imagination is inexhaustible and always, in every form, wholly legitimate—that is, free of all legitimacy.’

—Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Gattopardo’s Alex Nazari put it this way: “Instead of trafficking in the void itself, I see your exhibition and Whitten’s painting as doing the psychic labor of giving poetic form to conditions shaped by loss. I think this is a really important, decolonizing distinction.”

No artwork can rise to the crisis at hand. I can only give my energy, my most rigorous dedication, and return to the streets. For the stone-throwers. Free Palestine.”

—Stanya Kahn

Stanya Kahn is an interdisciplinary artist working in film/video, drawing, painting, sculpture/installation, sound and writing. Dialectics, the uncanny, pathos and humor drive a practice dedicated to crossroads and undersides, of power and the unseen, absurdity and distress, fiction and document, language and the body, relations between the state and the commons, narrative time and the synchronic time of impulse.

Her work is currently on view in the California Biennial at the Orange County Museum of Art and at Southwillard Gallery in LA. Recent solo exhibitions and screenings include: Wexner Center for the Arts, OH; MoMA/PS1, NY; New Museum/NY; Institute for Contemporary Art/Los Angeles; British Film Institute/London Film Festival; Rotterdam International Film Festival; Vielmetter Los Angeles; Marlborough Chelsea/NY; Weiss Berlin; The Pit/LA; Cornerhouse/Manchester, UK. Select group exhibitions include: Yokohama Triennial (2024);



Stoschek Foundation; Wesleyan Art Gallery, CT; Walker Art Center, MN; CAM/St. Louis; Gwanju Biennial ('18); Hammer Museum, LA; New Museum, NY; MOCA/SD; Fernley Astrup/Norway; Transmediale, Berlin; California Biennial ('10). Kahn's collaborative work with Harry Dodge has shown at Elizabeth Dee Gallery/NY, the Whitney Biennial (08), Sundance Film Festival, MOCA/LA, MoMA/NY, ZKM/Karlsruhe, among others. Kahn was a 2012 Guggenheim Fellow in Film/Video and a 2023 Anonymous Was a Woman awardee, among others. She was a contributing writer and actor in the feature film *By Hook or By Crook* and stars in the 2024 film *Room Temperature* by Dennis Cooper and Zach Farley. Her writings and drawings appear in *Die Laughing* (2nd Cannons), *Moving Image* (MIT Press), *It's Cool, I'm Good* (Cornerhouse), and *Abstract Video* (UC Press) among others. Her work is in the collections of the Hammer Museum, MoMA/NY, LACMA, the Walker Art Museum among others.

