

Meiro Koizumi
Battlelands
 2017 video
 installation view



of those who have experienced war, that for them it is the noise of quotidian life – the rumbling of a truck engine, the chattering of crowds – that menaces.

With its profound emphasis on the psychological dimension of partaking in war's violence, *Battlelands* finds continuity with Koizumi's earlier work concerning Japan's military history. His 'Double Projection' video works from 2013 and 2014 similarly explore a war figure, the Second World War Kamikazi pilot, through the to-camera recollection of survivors. However, *Battlelands* departs from his earlier work not only in engaging non-Japanese civilians – notably a first for the artist – but also in excising the narrators' faces. The late Harun Farocki (Interview podcast on *AM*'s website), after trawling through troves of war scenes in mainstream films for his work *War Tropes*, 2011, had recognised the centrality of the face as trauma's site of signification: 'There is no war movie', he noted, 'in which the horrors of war did not appear in a moment of epiphany on the faces of the characters: freezing in action, eyes wide open, not wanting to see, but cannot stop looking.' With its first-person point of view, *Battlelands* inverts this tradition; in so doing, it shifts emphasis from representation to phenomenology in order to pose the question: how does trauma reorient the body to the world?

Also included in the exhibition in a somberly lit adjacent room was a sculpture from 2015 titled *Sleeping Boy*. It comprised numerous copies of diminutive arms, legs and heads, formed of clay and plaster in the likeness of the artist's young son, which were arranged into a cluster on the ground. Heads lay adjacent to legs and feet, demolishing symbolic hierarchy in emphasis of materiality. Deeply personal, this work reflects a facet of the artist's practice very different to *Battleland's* collaborative and social production. Here, the repeating sculptural forms evoke compulsion and preoccupation, and equally routine and dedication, plumbing the artist's own paternal anxieties about the fragile mutability of the human body, a counterpoint to the video's psychological portraits of a generation altered by foreign wars. ■

Amy Luo is a writer living in London.

Cady Noland

MMK Frankfurt 27 October to 31 March

The initial work you see in MMK's airy entrance hall is *Publyck Sculpture*, 1994, three tyre swings suspended with chains hanging from aluminium over wooden posts. The structure is gleaming and precise, the pristine tyres still have their original manufacturer label on them and you see the subtle wood grain over the surface of the metal. It's a kind of post-minimalist gallows for American ideology and consumerism and it works as a condensed example for the rest of Cady Noland's practice: the public, violence, gaze, objectification ... it's all in there. Frankfurt's MMK is a postmodern wedge-like building designed by Hans Hollein in 1991 and its interior is full of complex shapes, awkward hallways, unexpected side rooms, curves and triangles that direct your attention in different ways with pauses and surprise encounters. The installation of the show feels generous, confident and also playful as Noland makes use of every aspect of the building. Some works are left incidentally placed (set aside, nearly hidden within corridors, are metal baskets of lights, metal bars, beer cans, motor oil) in often subtle or minor positions that let works be discovered, giving them a personal presence. In one corridor near the main stairs is a print collaboration with Diana Balton, *Eat Yer Fuckin Face Off!!*, easily missed 6ft above eye level. MMK's sometimes confusing structure and incidental side rooms also add another layer of intimacy to these encounters; you veer off the main corridor and find yourself alone in a tiny room with a plinth and shining bullets, police badges and crusted Coke cans suspended in clear Plexiglas. Apparently the exhibition was arranged over several weeks in New York (Noland is known for her fear of flying) between Noland and MMK's new director, Susanne Pfeffer, using museum models and maquettes and installed by exchanging constant photos (according to Pfeffer) but you don't feel the distance. The installation isn't a staid, by-the-numbers institutional retrospective, rather it has the care and subtlety (along with Noland's brutally consistent

approach and practice represented in general) of being one massive solo show.

The exhibition includes 80 works that cover the period from 1984 to 1999 (when she stopped producing new material), though based on the caption information some works have been remade or edited (dated as 2018) and there are a few other dates, such as 2005 and 2008, suggesting new and unseen works. Also set within the show (though not listed in the catalogue) are a selection of works borrowed from MMK's collection that include work's by Micheal Asher, Joseph Beuys, Bill Bollinger, Kenneth Noland, Claes Oldenburg (Interview AM171), Steven Parrino, Charlotte Posenenske, Sturtevant (Interview AM334), Andy Warhol and Franz West. These appear thematically organised alongside Noland's works; for instance, Bollinger's 1968 *Pipe* lies on the floor close to Noland's own metal tubes and scaffolding poles (used throughout her practice), while a Warhol silkscreen from his 'Death and Disaster' series is shown near Noland's silkscreen works.

At first, the associated works feel forced, like appendages that Noland's art certainly doesn't need and it can be difficult to understand what the necessity is of placing such like-for-like works in close proximity (other than staging MMK's own collection). But the intervention also reads as a broader artistic move by Noland, either to undermine her own agency or just to shift the conversation from simple historical representation (placing a practice historically for its use of materials or surface image concerns) into one about criticality that emphasises her own use of materials in contrast, and the sort of iconography she manages to establish with it. In an interview with Mark Kremer and Camiel van Winkel – one of the rare occasions she has publicly spoken about her work – Noland says: 'I don't like the notion of objects being glued on top of one another, where you don't see if and how they are connected. I make an issue of the way things are connected.' Noland also talks about her interest in using objects on their own terms and it's her use of them that makes a coherent language through her connections. The other works are related on such a basic thematic or material level that it makes Noland's own material language and connections clear. Putting her work into play and comparison with other historical works that use similar subjects, imagery or materials frees it up to operate in a different mode where she constructs an iconography of American ideology and violence.

In *Deep Social Space*, 1989, the arrangements of objects could not seem more American: steel, beer, saddles, cigarettes, flags, white bread, potato chips, bandages, grills, handcuffs. The material list reads like a core sample of contemporary America – strong infrastructure, violence, consumerism and bandaging. So the question of audience comes up in this exhibition; set within Germany nearly two decades after some of the last works were shown, they



are twice removed by time and location from the original social matrix, and yet the exhibition still feels relevant. Much of the work was made while the Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher regimes were dismantling the welfare state, and the boundary-marking bars, the stockade pieces (Noland is quoted as stating that stockades or pillories were 'the first public sculptures in colonial America'), celebrity screenprints and the tax-code tables appear to represent the zoning, enclosure, exclusion, punishment, public humiliation, public spectatorship, management, privatisation and the violence in ideology associated with the period. Yet these all feel transferrable to our current moment and somehow this makes sense in Frankfurt (Europe's second largest financial centre after London) and in Germany – a leading proponent of austerity measures. There is also the pleasure and striking oddness of the show

Cady Nola
*Percussion and
Cartridge Revolver*
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appearing now, in Frankfurt. You can feel the violence, humour, irreverence and serious cutting-to-the-core social matter. Noland is quoted as saying: 'I try sometimes to construct a mirror of that: weird stuff that doesn't fit together, floating in a sea of palliative Gestalt images.' That mirror is somehow sharper here and now. ■

Tim Steer is a curator and writer based in London.

Haroon Mirza: reality is somehow what we expect it to be

Ikon Birmingham

30 November to 24 February

In Lahore, the sound of metallic drumming fills the evening air as street chefs wielding sharp blades prepare the popular Taka Tak curry by rhythmically mincing offal on a hotplate. The onomatopoeic dish lends its name to the first work in this exhibition, which focuses on the past ten years of Haroon Mirza's multifaceted practice. A video showing the titular meal being cooked is displayed on an old television while nearby a Qur'an box overflows with pulsating fairy lights. On an adjacent turntable, a wooden statuette of a Sufi drummer spins like a whirling dervish as throbbing electronic sounds mingle with the chef's captivating rhythms. Stemming from an interest in the ambivalent status of music in Islamic tradition, Mirza's *Taka Tak*, 2008, foregrounds some of his work's key themes: the boundaries between noise and music, the interplay of sound, light and movement, collisions of technology and tradition, and the nature of human perception. These are pursued with a spirit of enquiry, enterprise and invention, resulting in an expansive body of intriguing works that are

at once experimental, playful and nearly always noisy.

Exemplifying Mirza's fascination with perception is *The National Apavillion of Then and Now*, 2011, a disorienting walk-in installation first shown at the 54th Venice Biennale. The dark, triangular room is an anechoic chamber lined with sound-absorbing foam. Inside, as a suspended halo of white LEDs grows slowly brighter, an electronic buzzing increases in volume until the small space is abruptly plunged into silent darkness, engendering an acute awareness of one's bodily presence. Elsewhere, altered perceptions of another kind are addressed in the artist's elegant electro-etchings of psychoactive fungi. These prints are created by placing various strains of psilocybe mushrooms on to copper plates and passing electrical current through them. Alkaloids present in the fungi oxidise on the copper, leaving results not unlike William Henry Fox Talbot's photogenic drawings of the 1830s but produced with electricity rather than light. The hallucinatory images, with titles such as *Constellations*, 2016, and *Supernovaii (Crab Nebula)*, 2016, evoke mystical and esoteric traditions as much as botanical taxonomy and celestial phenomena.

Collaboration and appropriation have become increasingly apparent in Mirza's practice and other artists' works are regularly shown alongside his own. At Ikon, two drawings are included from the late Channa Horowitz's 'Sonakinatography' series: complex scores involving columns of numbers and multi-coloured squares that represent time and motion. Mirza interprets these works in his cacophonous sound and light installation *A Chamber for Horowitz: Sonakinatography Transcriptions in Surround Sound*, 2015. Here, the electrical signals powering choreographed banks of coloured LEDs are amplified to intense proportions. It's a noisy, aggressive affair but not entirely unpleasant. Elsewhere, work by Jeremy Deller and Guy Sherwin is incorporated into the boisterous three-part installation *An_Infinato*, 2009, in which video footage of flying bats taken from Deller's *Memory Bucket*, 2003, collides



Haroon Mirza
installation view