

ART

'Dark' Screenings and Performances Question What It Means to Be Human

'Dark Water' features paradigm-challenging work by Fani Parali, Takeshi Murata, Shana Moulton, and more.

By **Gabriela Acha** | Sep 13 2016, 1:35pm

Tai Shani, Dark Continent: Mnemesoid, 2016. Photo by Kyle Zeto, courtesy the artist

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The concrete walls of **Dilston Grove Church** act as thresholds, separating external reality from the point of maximum entropy of **Dark Water**. Narratives around technology, science fiction and gender are assembled by artist **Tai Shani** and **A---Z** (Anne Duffau), inviting to a deep immersion through the evening.

Dark Water is a series of live performances and video-works, depicting a glam, retro-futurist idea of a speculative posthuman condition, in which dual organisms like human-machine, woman-man, world-universe merge, testing limits. Fictional avatars, alter egos and inter-exchangeable identities show up in the works of **Fani Parali**, **Takeshi Murata** or **Shana Moulton**, whereas reappropriation and transmutation are remarkable in the works of **Dara Birnbaum**, **The Man Who Had Failed**, and **Brice Dellsperger**.

In **Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman (1978-79)**, the TV series' sexual charge is evidenced through looping extracts of its protagonist running, spinning and saving: a 'détournement' of the original material into an analysis of those liminal stages between the real and the fantastic more-than-human.

A sleek, animé imagery, interlaced with some appropriated **Prelinger archival footage**, composes the video work **Ocean Prince (2016)**. The melancholic main character is accompanied by gloomy piano music in his existential search. Dreams and discoveries bring him to dystopian scenarios, futuristic buildings floating in space and a mystical talking head offering him different life choices.

Brice Dellsperger delivers his own personal interpretation of **Brian de Palma's film Body Double**. Dellsperger's work of the same name depicts two male individuals dressed as women, lip-synching one of the movie scenes. The voices reveal the original scene actors' gender and this voluntary confusion questions gender identity through the swap of traditional, perhaps obsolete, roles.



Fani Parali, *Let Them In*, 2016. Photo by Kyle Zeto, courtesy the artist

Another lip-synch act is performed by masked actors John Smith and Maxi More in a Greek tragedy-like scenario, orchestrated by artist **Fani Parali**. The actors go across modules of a room divider, painted with pastel birds and oceanic motifs and their female and male voices are exchanged, which sums up to the oneiric atmosphere of ***Let Them In (2015)***.

Shana Moulton's hyperbolic self, Cynthia, is an alter-ego obsessed with consumerism and looking for spirituality within the banality of every-day commodities. In her video work *Undiscovered Drawer* (2013), Cynthia's writing desk, decorated with an Assyrian sphinx image, unfolds infinite drawers containing magic keys, pillboxes and a face-massage device, as she is looking for a magic key, which teleports her to a joyful delirium.

Gemma Brockis' naked body appears on one side of the dark stage, performing **Tai Shani**'s piece *Dark Continent: Mnemesoid* (2016), named after the term Freud invented to refer to the unknown realm of female sexuality. A mysterious apparatus standing on a tripod containing the script, a camera and a microphone, hides Brockis' face, which appears instead as a fragmented floating entity on a screen at the other side of the stage. The surreal 30-minute speech is an exploration of feminine introspection and radical alterity, describing sensually, yet roughly, a hypothetical city and the sexual encounters between its hermaphrodite inhabitants.



Plastique Fantastique, Bitcoin Faerie, 2016. Photo by Kyle Zeto, courtesy the artist

Right after the deadly encounter between a virtual rocker wolf and an angry elderly man in **Takeshi Murata's** *OM Rider* (2016), the evening closes by **Plastique Fantastique's** electro-ritual, mixing stroboscopic lights and internet imagery, while worshipping blockchain technology and throwing glitter towards the symbolically sacrificed **Simon O'Sullivan**, in the name of the *Bitcoin Faerie* (2016).

Dark Water's aesthetics feel miscellaneous and depict a humanist, romantic idea of the cyborg. The selection of works, intentionally selected by **Shani** and **A---Z**, show some shared aspects such as gender fluid identities, mysticism and sexuality, while transcending status quos through verbal, sonic and visual formulations.

Dark Water, an evening of performances and screenings curated by **Tai Shani** and **A---Z** (Anne Duffau), took place on September 1st at **Dilston Grove, part of**

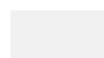
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