

Jacob Remin

Harvesting the Rare Earth

28.01 – 19.03 2017



Jacob Remin, *Harvesting the Rare Earth*, 2017. Installation view

OVERGADEN.

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Design: Anni's

Lines In the Ground

By Nathaniel Budzinski

Two biographical details intrigued me initially about the Danish artist Jacob Remin after I first met him: to begin with, that he studied engineering. And secondly, that he did not travel down the art academy path on his way to becoming an artist. These two interrelated and seemingly small details, I think, have specific and interesting outcomes in terms of the direction of his work, as well as how it interacts with its context. Let me try and explain:

If there is one rule that runs through contemporary art, it is that of the interdisciplinary practice. It is pretty much impossible these days to find any artist working at an international level who specialises in any one medium, format or genre in contemporary art. Consolidated in the 1960s with so-called conceptual art and notions of multimedia, a cross-border/hybridised/transversal artistic practice has ceased to be the exception, is even expected, and has outgrown its status as avant-garde oddity. Back in those mythic times, the hippie-inflected zeitgeist was all about breaking down the walls between disciplines, letting the air in and blowing the cobwebs away; allow life into the rarified-to-death regime of art.

But as "life" entered art, so did labour, even seemingly unrelated labour. Even if one is a professional gallery career artist who makes painting, one rarely just paints anymore. One also has a band, or is into venture capital, poetry, knitting, or some other pursuit – and the crux of that is that artists acutely suffer from a lack of clear boundaries between their work, educational background, and their hobbies. No matter the intention of diversion or leisure, attempts to keep "quality me time" guarded and preciously distinct from crude and deathly labour, it seems that all aspects of an artist's life will somehow find its way into their work.

The fact that Jacob Remin studied to be a design engineer at Technical University of Denmark as well as an MA at Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design is a small but important difference from having studied fine/contemporary art studio practice – both design and engineering being so close to the spirit of artistic practice, but of course, applied and focused through far more formalised expectations of function and productivity. This academic and practical training background runs as an important tone through Remin's work in a number of ways. Designers and engineers, like artists, tend to share enthusiasms and interests: material, touch, energy, movement, sound and light, rhythms and patterns. Designers and engineers, like artists, tend towards visions that lead from the micro to the macro; a personal enthusiasm turned into a world view. They create,

break, rethink, adjust systems, apply them across many platforms and contexts. Energies are corralled into systems of currents – alternately focused and diffused – running through Remin's work.

Harvesting the Rare Earth aggregates a number of interests and tendencies, with Remin collecting and reconfiguring a variety of energies and systems he has previously used in his work – but these are embodied in different materials, configured in other systems. For instance, pattern recognition and systems abound in Remin's *Material Meditation* from 2011: two screens tilted vertically to portrait format emanate the Apple Mac OSX screen saver, "Nature", showing a path leading into a misty forest of high trees. The screens sit atop two railway ties, patterns systemised into interfered likenesses, crossing from the hard to cut through real into an over-glossed commercial virtuality of nature.

Remin's *Tetraider #1* from 2013 also anticipates the feeling of *Harvesting The Rare Earth*: twelve glowing cold cathode tube lighting fixtures, drawn in the shape of pyramids, sit atop a cluster of metal poles in the middle of a windblown seaside triangular crop field. A car stereo is buried beneath this occultic grouping that resembles some ancient landing platform for alien visitors. The stereo emits low pitched and slowly oscillating rumblings as if readying itself for launch. Materials and lines of energy move from the Earth-bound bodily to the macro universal body. Lines again in 2015's *LCD Glitch Modules*: Eight old LCD screens are hung across fluorescent lighting, sending their electronic signals into the screens themselves, creating a dynamic random noise of graphical, linear patterns. A simple engineer's twist of materials and systems into a new system, creating new patterns.

Harvesting the Rare Earth contains worms in dirt and their sounds amplified, plasma screens and corporate branding, podiums emanating drones and a speech about how integral rare earth elements are to our electronic societies. Then a slow zoom out over the Agbogbloshie market outside Accra, Ghana – a notoriously polluted market and dumping ground for all types of electronic waste, allegedly much from more developed nations. And here is the crux of Remin's new system, aggregating together all the chthonic material energies from the deep earth, excavating them through lines of thought and lifting them up over the world as if to let them look back down at the scene below.

And this is the material knowledge that designers and engineers can understand intuitively about lines and systems: we are surrounded by delineations. Lines

draw out the world around us, they prescribe constraints and pathways, borders, intersections and crossing points. Most every human-built thing around us was a line in a mind before coming into the world. Lines in collective discussion and planning, inscribed on paper and as mapped out vectors on screens. These line-dreams become buildings, kitchens, cars, shoes, laptops, national borders and so on. As sight was once understood as inner light shining out into the world, thought-lines also emanate outwards: the structure of a tree from root to leaf is mind-warped into a demonstration of natural, linear hierarchies in the world, someone's life is on a path, a linear journey, as imagined or rendered into slick screen saver or broken LCD screen noise.

More broadly, this dynamic is echoed in the reaction to one pernicious art world myth of the absence of work – specifically with the artist having to maintain an ascetic poverty and hygienic distance from getting their hands dirty with mundane labour, rather spending their time wasting away in a garret while perfecting their art. An impossible ideal of an impossible art – artists never leave the material, they are earthbound and attached to their things, as well as romantics.

A transcendental mind-body system of lines, but made very real, into material through all our work. Our work that wanders from productive task to productive task, but is adjusted and even attenuated by sidelines and hobbies; wandering spirit systems clashing and lines of adjoined thoughts jumping onwards.

To return to the original point: this wandering spirit of multiple systems that we carry with us pervades almost all facets of our day-to-day lives. From the freelance creative picking up extra cash as a barista to supplement their internship to the mom or dad with three or more jobs on the go so they can cover their mortgage as well as have a holiday. We live under a state of interdisciplinarianism with our casualised labour and portfolio careers. But this latter dynamic between interdisciplinarianism and the imperative to produce inside set parameters also forces us to make real and then deal with the things we dream up. Like staring into a broken LCD screen, sifting through electronic waste searching to repurpose the rubbish.

In the case of Remin and his work, this is pulled up through his materials and how he systematises them, puts them into his line of thought: take up the material, dream up systems, make them real.

Nathaniel Budzinski is a writer and film maker

CV

Jacob Remin (b. 1977) is an artist, engineering graduate from the Technical University of Denmark (2008) and interaction designer from the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (2009). His recent exhibitions include the show *Cloud Computing* at DIAS (Digital Interactive Art Space, 2016) and *LCD glitch modules*, part of the Fokus 2015 Art Festival at Nikolaj Kunsthal.

EVENTS

Friday 24 February 1-5pm: CRISPR TECHNOLOGY & HYBRID ECOLOGIES. Overgaden invites you to a seminar on CRISPR gene technology where different speakers will discuss and elaborate on the rising development of the numerous ways that cells and data interact across species and systems. How does this affect our understanding of the relation between nature, human and technology? The audience is invited to participate in the following debate.

Sunday 12 March 3-5pm: TALK & PERFORMANCE. This afternoon, Jacob Remin and the composers Yann Coppier and Runar Magnusson will talk about the different compositions in *Harvesting the Rare Earth* and present the specific recording equipment and techniques involved in making the exhibition. After the presentation a special live performance based on the recorded audio material of the exhibition will take place.

THANK YOU

Jacob Remin would like to thank Agatha Friis, Asbjørn Skou, Erich Berger, Hans E. Madsen, Ibrahim Mahama, Krister Moltzen, Lotte Løvholm, Mads Vegas, Marie Boye Thomsen, Martin Malthe Borch, Nana Francisca, Peer Klausen, Peet Thomsen, Runar Magnusson, Rita Sikker Remin, Sidsel Christensen, Tobias Permin, Yann Coppier, Medicinsk Museion, Louis Poulsen and Softline.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Friday 7 April 2017 Overgaden presents exhibitions by Ismar Cirkinagic and Christian Schmidt-Rasmussen with J&K, Ulla Hvejsel, claus ejnar and Kristian Byskov.

This exhibition folder can be downloaded from: overgaden.org

The exhibition is supported by:



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Overgaden is supported by the Danish Arts Foundation's Committee for Visual Arts and the Obel Family Foundation.