

Cooper Jacoby: *Disgorgers*
Presented by Swiss Institute at LUMA Westbau
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The ‘gargoyle’, a grotesque architectural feature, takes its name from the old French *gargouille*, meaning ‘throat’ or ‘gullet’. The ‘throat’ in question is a drainage spout used to project rainwater away from the sides of buildings, preventing it from eroding their sides. In other words, the gargoyle’s mouth and throat are not meant for swallowing, but for expelling, for disgorging material. Many traditional gargoyle forms are drawn from pagan and mythological symbols, domesticated in Europe by the Christianity around the period of the Black Death as avatars of unexplainable social or biological terror. Now most commonly associated with religious buildings from the European Middle Ages, these depictions of evil, fearsome, repulsive or comedic creatures made their way into the designs of institutional buildings and other seats of power such as universities, banks and libraries during the Gothic revival.

Drawing from the hybridized forms of gargoyles and other grotesques, American artist Cooper Jacoby has created a series of sculptures derived from homesteading and off-the-grid appliances such as a stove, a water heater, a composteur and radiators that are affixed with mouths based on gargoyles from these later ‘civic’ buildings. For *Disgorgers*, these sculptures are tied together in an installation with a systemic logic of crisis, emergency and exhaustion, and emit a range of vapors, temperatures and sounds from their chorus of mouths.

The two gallery spaces oscillate between states of emergency and the suspension of regular activity. In the first area, sculptures play a collection of recorded telephone hold music, while light fixtures are modified to overheat expired fluorescent bulbs, causing the mercury calcified at their ends to glow like candles and flicker in a state of perpetual limbo. This is contrasted with sets of emergency operations in the second room that kick into action when systems fail. A backup generator powers the machinic gargoyle sculptures and highlights a tenuous relationship to infrastructure and totemic fears of its absence.

Expanding upon the success of Swiss Institute’s ONE FOR ALL series, which offered emerging artists a first institutional exhibition in the US, *Disgorgers* is the first institutional exhibition of Cooper Jacoby’s work in Switzerland.

Cooper Jacoby (b. 1989, Princeton, New Jersey) lives and works in Los Angeles. Solo exhibitions include *Matte Wetter, 45cbm* at Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in 2016. Jacoby has participated in group shows at KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen; and White Flag Projects, St. Louis.

Swiss Institute is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution in New York dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions and programs. During the reconstruction and refurbishment of Swiss Institute's new building in Manhattan's East Village, the institution is staging projects and exhibitions beyond a fixed gallery space and beyond its usual home in New York.

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