

ENG

IDA IDAIDA

MARIA BONNIER DAHLIN
GRANT RECIPIENT 2020
DEC 2 → JAN 10

BONNIERS
KONSTHALL



“Humour is a way of creating something endurable, something within oneself that cannot be owned by others.”

- Ida Idaida

Cover:

Ida Idaida, *Truth is not delivered whole but received in parts a rotten corpse flesh slushed acid rain burn the scars* (2018). Installation view Konstakademien, Stockholm.
Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger.

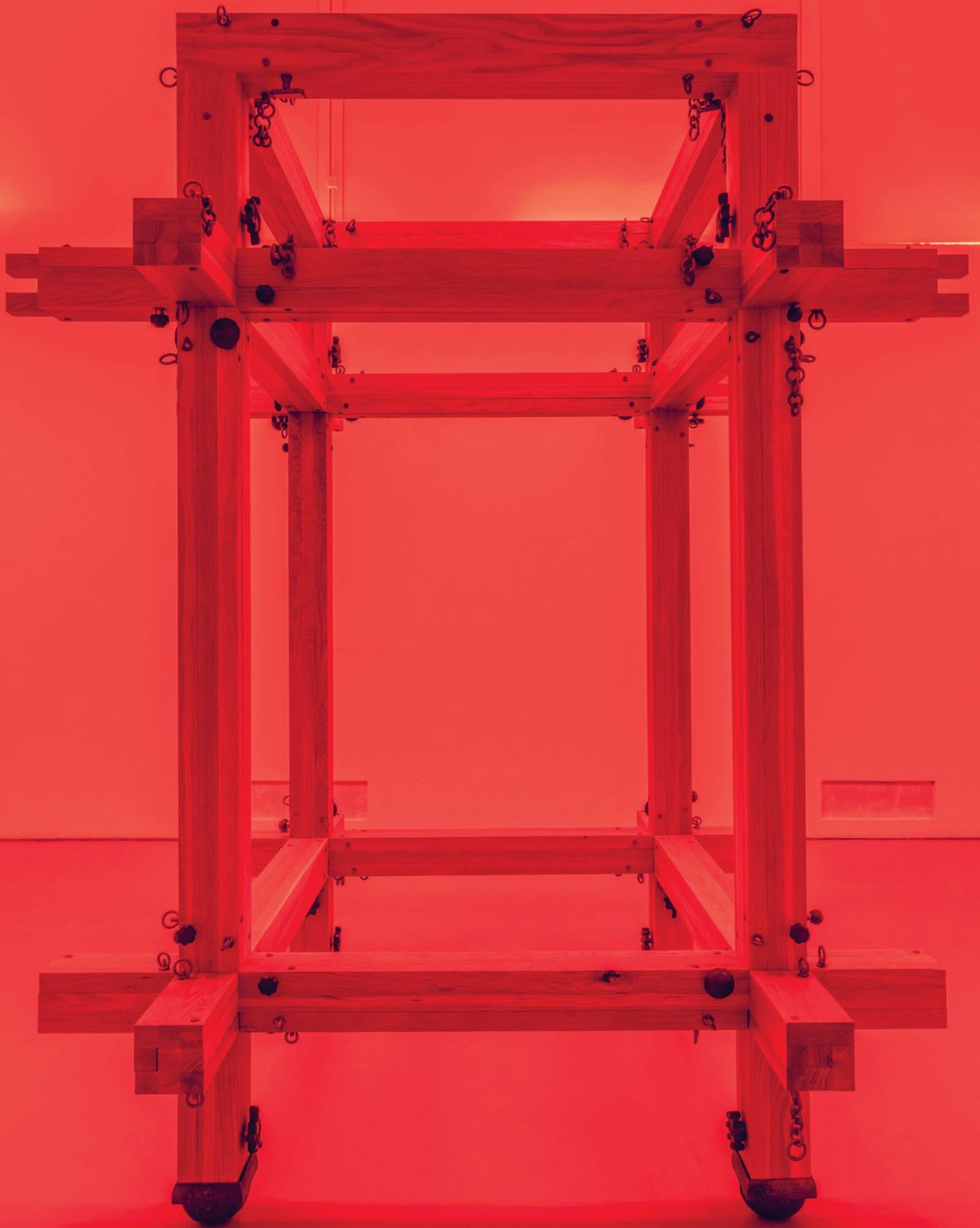
IDA IDAIDA & FATHIA MOHIDIN GRANT RECIPIENTS 2020

Each year, the Maria Bonnier Dahlin Foundation awards grants to young Swedish artists to support them in their work. The 2020 recipients are Ida Idaida and Fathia Mohidin; this year, for the first time, the exhibition expands in scale and will encompass nearly the entire exhibition space.

The annual grant recipient exhibition at Bonniers Konsthall means that vastly different artistic practices share the same space. Unexpected encounters may occur, as well as exciting dialogues between artists' works, styles and themes. This year's recipients, Ida Idaida and Fathia Mohidin, share common interests in machinery, the body and a recurrent state. They play with an industrial aesthetic where rhythmic and repetitive sounds from machines and moving bodies are interwoven and repeated. At Bonniers Konsthall, both artists seize the space and transform it; one into a place for the unconscious mind, trauma and horror, and the other into a place for exercise, performance and labour.

Ida Idaida often works with advanced, large-scale sculptural machinery that she establishes like wraiths in the exhibition space. Her work is a way to transfer corporeal experiences, energies and processes in other objects and thus let them convert the energy once more. The works become a way to materialise inner, hidden processes into new observable cycles. The work *Truth is not delivered whole but received in parts a rotten corpse flesh slushed acid rain burn the scars* (2018) embodies inherited suffering, that is transferred through genetics and cloned from one generation to the next. The visitor is encouraged to step into the installation and participate in this distorted world with its own automated lifecycle for flies. Cycles and repetition are central concepts in Idaida's works. Through pieces such as *Trasa (From flesh to meat from meat to flesh)* (2020) she examines repetitive and circular patterns as a symptom of trauma and how this manifests itself outside one's own body.

Fathia Mohidin focuses on labour and exercise as her point of departure for considerations about the body. At Bonniers Konsthall she presents spatial installations where the machine is hidden to the eye, but if you listen carefully it will gradually appear: rhythmic and ambivalent sounds from machines at work or physical activity. Mohidin's works derive from physical research where she, putting her own body through physical stress, investigates notions of work, performance and the gym



as a place for commodification (the process by which a person is transformed into a product). What does exhaustion sound like? In the video work *KIN* (2020) and the sculptural objects in *Roll Deep* (2020), we encounter fitness equipment minus the presence of bodies. Placed alone, these objects pose questions about what the body is actually meant to do with them, and likewise what the objects are meant to do with the bodies. Mohidin's installations are often sound- or smell-based works, such as the black rubber matting that covers the entire floor of one of the exhibition halls, the strong smell forcing the eye to make way for other senses.

The Maria Bonnier Dahlin Foundation was founded in 1985 by Jeanette Bonnier in memory of her daughter Maria who died in a car accident that year just 20 years of age. Maria studied architecture at Columbia University in New York and moved in a circle of young artists. Since then, the Foundation has always sought out the new and innovative, and several of those who have received the grant are now some of Sweden's most renowned contemporary artists.

Image: Ida Idaida, *DEVICE*
(*fire burns and flames lick
my poor remains*), 2017.
Installation view Galleri
Mejan. Photo: Jean-Baptiste
Béranger.

A CONVERSATION WITH IDA IDAIDA

Artist Ida Idaida (II) in conversation with curator

Annie Jensen (AJ)

Ida Idaida was born in Mora, 1990, raised in Östergarn and currently works in Stockholm.

AJ: Tell me about your artistic process, what influences you and your work?

II: It started with myself and mental problems; I have various types of memories, images, thoughts and ideas, which were a lot to handle and it limited me. To utilise this and apply it, work, research and production became a way for me to deal with my contorted thoughts and physical symptoms. I had a power and energy that I had to direct outwards, so not to obliterate myself. Since then, I have worked with handicrafts, images, sculpture, electronics, drawings, sound, spatiality: wrought through everything I could get my hands on, in order to establish inner processes beyond myself.

AJ: You have been awarded the grant, in part, for your installations, a sort of advanced machinery that you create yourself and which seem to exist in some kind of interpersonal state. What is your view about these creations? Are they alive or simply inanimate material?

II: I probably consider them affected material, a link in the chain of cause and effect. The structure is intimately allied with the material; the material bears the structure. For example, a structure that handles flies, living and dead, that structure is nothing without its flies and inside that structure the flies are no longer just flies. In the case where flies carry contagion, I am interested in the contagion, the spread of that contagion (the interpersonal) and the behaviours that are part of transmission (how we affect each other). The material is the means and not an end in itself. And all creatures consist of various components and are driven by their own logic and their world is based upon their abilities. Metaphorically speaking, of course.

AJ: When I saw your work, I was struck at first by its harsh and serious nature and expression. It feels like you approach the works at your own risk. But alongside the macabre, brutal and uncomfortable, there is also something playful. What can you say about this oscillation between the horrid and the playful in your art?

II: “Nothing is comic, everything is tragic; nothing is tragic, everything is comic.” I read that in a book when I was 15. As a quote it has also become a sort of key to a pathetic freedom: an indifference to events. Everybody alive must live; we go on living regardless of the circumstances. In a way, we have to rearrange reality, however horrible, into something bearable and this is done through mental processes. Inventiveness and fantasies: objectively it is comical how we mitigate circumstances and tell ourselves lies. When I have to choose between two awful alternatives, comedy becomes a third hidden path that creates a parallel universe. A little opening, to gasp for air, or rather to create a small dose of self-determination and autonomy. Humour is a way of creating something endurable, something within oneself that cannot be owned by others.

Image: Ida Idaida.
Photo: Christofer Dracke.



GRIEF LESSONS

An essay about the art of Ida Idaida by Santiago Mostyn

The word “monster” derives from the Latin verb *moneo*, meaning “to remind, warn, instruct, or foretell.” Monsters pre-date written history, and live outside the existing moral order, as a kind of distillation of our fears. As children, we take the dark, unknowable forces at the edges of our perception and turn them into monsters. We give form to those fears.

Ida Idaida makes kinetic structures that are at once the manifestation of personal trauma, and a material response to the social and political trauma that society is capable of inflicting on us all. Ida speaks of her sculptures as machines that affect bodies, much in the way that capitalism affects bodies: imperceptibly but profoundly.

Entering the gallery, you're met with a cast of red light that shifts perception of the room, and brings to mind a photographic darkroom. And in fact, the installation works in the manner of a photo chemical process, in which a negative – in this case the physical sculpture – is loaded with information but needs the light sensitive paper – here, the viewer – in order to develop an impression, to be received in full. Centered in the room is *DEVICE (fire burns and flames lick my poor remains)* (2017), a finely crafted, gallows-like structure assembled using the Japanese joinery technique of Shiguchi, and constrained by chains and bolts with handcrafted heads. Like the origin myth of the world carried by four elephants on the back of a turtle, *DEVICE* rests on four bronze domes, all of its monumental psychic weight touching the ground as lightly as possible.

Ida comes from a family of blacksmiths, and has been working with metal and fabric from an early age. Violence and trauma haunted her family, and the works in this installation clone and digest and mutate that trauma, no more so than in the tent-like installation *Truth is not delivered whole but received in parts a rotten corpse flesh slushed acid rain burn the scars* (2018). Maggots feed on rotting flesh to become flies that are trapped and filmed in rotating cases, their movement projected onto the walls of the tent. Rotating gears and cylinders orchestrate a rough montage of light silhouettes. “Black Holes” demarcate the corners of the tent, and reoccur throughout the exhibition, suggesting porous thresholds. An edge of dark humour shows up with the wet slapping sound of rags – literally slap-stick – on *Trasa (From flesh to meat from meat to flesh)* (2020), the third machine in the room,

and we're reminded of comedy's greatest capacity: to take back power from tragedy.

The poet and classicist Anne Carson writes that, "Myths are stories about people who become too big for their lives temporarily, so that they crash into other lives or brush against gods. In crisis their souls are visible."

Ida Idaida's machines operate in the afterlife of this trauma. But, hidden within this afterlife are imprints of the world that came before. On the bolt heads and domed feet of *DEVICE*, wax impressions of a fabric pattern are layered and repeated. The pattern is indigenous to Majagården, the plot of land in Dalarna where Ida's ancestors have lived and broken the earth since the 1700's. This pattern is a structure, too; a reminder of the world that once was, and a fragment of the new world that Ida is creating.

Image: Ida Idaida, *Truth is not delivered whole but received in parts a rotten corpse flesh slushed acid rain burn the scars* (2018), Installation view Konstakademien, Stockholm. Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger.



ARTISTS' FILM INTERNATIONAL PART V

Artists' Film International is a network of art institutions from around the world, first established in 2008 by the Whitechapel Gallery, London. From a selected theme, each participating institution chooses a film from an emerging artist. In 2020, more than twenty art institutions will participate - from Los Angeles and Buenos Aires in the west to Kabul and Mumbai in the east. The theme for 2020 is *language*.

Amina Dryabee,
*Determinism and Free
Will*, 2019

In the film *Determinism and Free Will*, Amina Dryabee investigates the concept of destiny in relation to free will. What power do we have to influence our own lives? It is an issue with particular resonance for the director herself, a female artist working in Afghanistan. In the film, we follow a hand writing and erasing a few sentences on a piece of paper. A symbolic act, manifesting the possibility of writing our own history or future. Amina Dryabee lives and works in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Yao Qingmei, *Sanzu
Ding and its Patterns:
Hypotheses on the
Origin of the Hammer-
Sickle Sign*, 2013 –
ongoing

Professor Yao is a fictional character, in the guise of an authoritarian academic, created by artist Yao Qingmei. In this fictional documentary, a group of archaeologists have found an ancient "Sanzu Ding", a Chinese urn with strange symbols reminiscent of the communist hammer and sickle. Professor Yao presents his hypotheses about the origin of the symbol and how it has evolved over time. Yao Qingmei (b. 1982 in Wenzhou, China) works in Wenzhou and Paris, France.

Francesco Pedraglio,
Scripting anticlockwise
(6 constellations), 2017

In the film *Scripting Anticlockwise* (6 Constellations) we follow a camera as it rotates anticlockwise and shows a series of abstract pictures, which could be considered some sort of symbolic language. A narrator interprets what we see and puts the pictures into a linguistic context, as if to illustrate that it is through language that we define our world. Francesco Pedraglio (b. 1981 in Como, Italy) lives and works in Mexico City.

Leticia Obeid, *Janus*,
2015

Leticia Obeid's film gets its title from the Roman god Janus, who according to mythology had two faces: one that saw into the future and the other the past. In Obeid's work, life is portrayed as the written words of a book where the pages are flipped back and forth, as if the god Janus himself sat and leafed through the pages of our life stories. Leticia Obeid (b. 1975 in Córdoba, Argentina) lives and works in Buenos Aires.

Ergin Çavuşoğlu,
Desire Lines/Tarot & Chess/, 2016.
(Background image)

Desire Lines/Tarot & Chess/ is inspired by Italo Calvino's novel *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* which examines how meaning is created, no matter if it is through words or images. In Ergin Çavuşoğlu's film, the characters, just like in the novel, cannot speak to each other. Instead, they communicate with tarot cards, the images encouraging symbolic interpretations which are seen, by some, as prophetic. Ergin Çavuşoğlu (b. 1968 in Targovishte, Bulgaria) lives and works in London, UK.

Vika Kirchenbauer,
YOU ARE BORING!,
2015

YOU ARE BORING! examines the ambivalent relationship between "looking" and "being looked at". As a viewer we meet actors who, in the language of marketing, offer us various extraordinary experiences. With her work, Vika Kirchenbauer wants to draw attention to how our bodies are increasingly commodified, not least by the experience industry. Vika Kirchenbauer (b. 1983) lives and

hanging onto an overhead bar)

The gym is, additionally, a performance of manual labour, in a world where manual labour has disappeared from view. In her essay *Aerobic Sisyphus and the Suburbanized Psyche*, the author Rebecca Solnit asks, "What exactly is the nature of the transformation in which machines now pump our water but we go to other machines to engage in the act of pumping, not for the sake of water but for the sake of our bodies, bodies theoretically liberated by machine technology?"

Fathia Mohidin takes this charged space and magnifies it, abstracting the objects into pure form, filling us with the full presence – the smell, and sound, and site – of these hidden conflicts.

Image: Fathia Mohidin, *KIN*, 2020. Installation view Gallery Mejan, Stockholm. Photo: Jean-Baptiste Beranger.



BATTLE ROPE ANCHORS

An essay about the art of Fathia Mohidin by Santiaago Mostyn

The first thing that meets you is the smell: a slow, hazy, chemical scent of industrial rubber that wraps itself around you and ushers you in. Then there is the sound: white noise at first, from what might be a factory; low, rhythmic thumping that builds to a crescendo; the clap of steel echoing on the downbeat; someone exhaling, exhausted.

Clustered through the space are concrete cylinders covered with grids of protrusions: blunt casts of exercise rollers that are not unlike the shape of fragmentation mines. Class anchors, sharp at the seams, are bolted to the walls, waiting to be threaded with ropes. Is this a space of punishment or performance-enhancement? All that's missing is a body – and we are haunted by its absence.

Fathia Mohidin describes her performative research practice as centring on the experience of the Black female body within a capitalist system. Her practice can be read as a form of “corporeal literacy” in which lines are drawn between the ideas of a productive labour force, the use of sport to control the masses, and the legacy of the commodified Black body in bondage.

“The daily grind of being rendered invisible, or being attacked, whether physically or verbally, for being visible, wears a body down,” means the writer Claudia Rankine, and Mohidin’s installations testify to the repercussions of this daily grind. But the idea of performance is inverted; there is no spectacle for us to consume, no one to stare at but ourselves. The space claims the right to obscurity, and the work becomes instead an architectural, and historical, meditation on these rooms designed for physical enhancement.

Black resistance takes on multiple meanings here. Group training as manifested in this part of the world has a legacy dating to the Fascist era, when sport was used as a means to control the masses and build a sense of idealized national identity. And it’s no surprise that, even today, the presence of a strong Black body within a space of physical enhancement registers as a threat. (The treadmill was, famously, popularized in Jamaican prisons through the emancipation era, 1834-1838, as a new and efficient technology of torture. Slaves, and then later prisoners, were forced to “dance” the treadmill while

to investigate new ways of thinking and working with the body. The time I spent lifting physical weights at the gym made me reflect on the weight we carry in everyday life and what it means in building up a strong body.

While working on *Chop Chop Corporal* (2020), I started to notice the similarities between the gym and the workplace: how one performs over intervals of time, seeks repetition and goes from station to station as if on a conveyor belt. I began listening to sounds in the gym and making audio recordings while I exercised, as part of the physical research.

AJ: You have said that you want to “think beyond the eye’s dominant position in art”. What exactly do you mean and, in your opinion, how does it manifest itself in your work?

FM: In many ways, the visual sense has a dominant position in art. Working with materials and media that target other senses help shift that hierarchy for a moment. In *Chop Chop Corporal*, I have worked with multichannel audio and a mat that smells strongly of rubber. This has provided opportunities for me to get closer to what is not seen necessarily, but is part of the framework and takes up space.



Image: Fathia Mohidin.
Photo: Christopher Drake.

A CONVERSATION WITH FATHIA MOHIDIN

Artist Fathia Mohidin (FM) in conversation with curator Annie Jensen (AJ)

AJ: Tell me about your artistic process, what influences you and your work?

FM: My investigations take place in direct and indirect dialogue with poets, musicians, machines, muscles and almost everything that invites new ways of thinking. I continually turn to sport and exercise as a point of departure from which to reflect on the body. I find it fascinating how this field is often trivialised as entertainment for example, despite being just as much a political arena.

AJ: In your installation-based work, you frequently return to the site of the gym. It is an environment that many people can find quite agonising and demanding. What is your view on performance and how does your work relate to it as a concept?

FM: Through my works, I approach “performance” and “the strong body” from different perspectives. I examine what it means to perform and push the boundaries that exist around various bodies. Here I refer, among others, to philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft and her ideas that women cannot have their rights recognised without also having access to physical activities that make them strong and resilient. On an individual and collective level, performance has the potential to be something invigorating and powerful.

In a series of ongoing works, I also examine the relationship between the strong body and demands for productivity and performance in a capitalist system. For example, companies that build a gym for employees in their office complex or put a clause relating to physical exercise in the employment contract to maintain a high level of performance.

AJ: Your work could be described as a sort of “physical research” that through sport and exercise examines the body’s relationship to social, political and economic structures. What more can you say about these corporeal investigations?

FM: My interest in sport and exercise began during my time at the Royal Institute of Art, when I started seeing the similarities to art in matters such as competition, nation-building and the creation of national identity. As I started to research this field, I became aware of my own body and started exercising regularly

Fathia Mohidin was born in 1985 and works in Stockholm.

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