

underlying images, almost as if Vega were trying to negate them. In some of these works one could just make out favelas; in others, the chaos of the shacks was mitigated by the orderliness of the cardboard's abstract geometries, such as in *Social Landscape (Tutti-Frutti)*, 2016. Finally, in "Interventions on a Book," 2016, a series of collages utilizing the same strategy, the artist intervened on the ready-made pages of the classic tome *Brazil's Modern Architecture* with superimposed objects, photos, drawings, and applications of paint creating dissonant and unexpected thematic and figural associations.

—Eugenio Viola

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

ZURICH

Ana Roldán

ANNEX14

Placed at the back of the gallery was *Lacking the Real* (all works 2016), a folding screen composed of double-sided mirrors that reflected a fractured image of Ana Roldán's exhibition "NO," including its visitors, while concealing what was behind it from any inquisitive glances—a seemingly simple device that nonetheless introduced an uncanny disruption into the space of the gallery. Lying on the floor in front of this reflective partition was *Elsewhere*, a flat, round stone across which a blue, many-armed form, like an abstract octopus, extends a set of truncated tentacles. Here, too, a gap opened up in the fabric of the real.

In his 1966 radio talk titled "The Utopian Body," Michel Foucault refers to our own bodies as "pitiless place" to which we are "condemned." And yet I shall never be able to see my own back, my own head—and least of all the back of my head—in the same way I can see the things in front of my eyes. The former reveal themselves to my gaze only if I contort myself physically or have recourse to a mirror. But as he pursues these thoughts, Foucault slowly comes to the conclusion that the utopian moments offered by one's body's ineluctable presence lurk precisely in its shaded depths and hidden corners.

In Roldán's work, however, the absence of the real does not simply amount to the failure of an integrated representation—for instance in the series "Negative Bodies," which extended across an entire wall of this exhibition. What shines forth in these works in black overpainted neon—which hang like the cryptic symbols of a latter-day writing on

the wall—are precise copies of the curled shapes assumed by images of snakes in encyclopedias or scientific publications. In this way, a series of simple models gives rise to mysterious forms, some open, some closed; and these "negative bodies" can implicitly be understood as glowing symbols of the body's utopian depths as described by Foucault.

Vanilla Overseas is a pair of square silk cloths printed with a series of short, clear black lines formed by the silhouettes of vanilla pods. Beneath them, the words of its title appear to sink into backgrounds evocative of a bright or gray sky, while the words CHANGE and TAKE are repeated across the entire surface. The Aztecs referred to the vanilla pod as the "black flower." The colonial imperative to "take" it ensured that it came to be cultivated far beyond the Gulf of Mexico, in many different colonies across the world. Today its placeless and historyless aroma has become the epitome of a globalized culture of taste. For Roldán, who comes from Mexico and now lives in Zurich, vanilla has become a key symbol of the complexity of postcolonial dependencies, as well as of the loss of biological and historical roots. Her work generally avoids the explicit imagery of exoticism, which here appears only in the palm leaves featured in high-contrast photograms from the series "Constructions," 2012–, composed of photochemically fixed traces of light.

"NO," the exhibition's title, appeared in two small sculptures, one composed of obsidian and the other of brass; but their costly mien, their seductively shiny existence, seemed only to negate itself. The two letters might initially remind us of Markus Raetz, whose anamorphic sculpture *Crossing*, 2002, turns the word NO into a YES and back again. But Roldán lets her "NO" remain as it is and keep its meaning, alluding to different kinds of negation and self-dissolution.

—Hans Rudolf Reust

Translated from German by Nathaniel McBride.

VIENNA

Yto Barrada

SECESSION

Yto Barrada's video *Faux départ* (False Start), 2015—an investigation of the artisanal production of fake fossils—served as something like an establishing shot for her recent exhibition "The Sample Book." The film follows the exacting methods used to fabricate historical specimens in a location somewhere "between the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara desert," and considers why specific modes of labor have cropped up to meet the needs of particular capitalist markets. Though we do not witness a single transaction—the camera is closely focused on the physical strain and remarkable skill involved in manufacturing these curios—we can easily imagine the tourists whose desire for prehistoric souvenirs propels this trade. Barrada clearly appreciates the craftspeople's dexterity in meeting the demands of the global travel industry; if the search for the exotic runs the gamut from locally woven rugs to "authentic" fossils, so be it. The exploitation of consumers by producers and vice versa is mutual.

Of course, the reception of objects, ideas, images, and narratives at a contemporary art venue is similarly modulated by market forces. Not unlike many other practitioners, Barrada situates herself as a highly specialized purveyor of authentic, out-of-the-ordinary experiences to visitors imagined as aesthetic day-trippers. The idea of the sample book offers a compelling framework in which to consider diverse models of labor: By definition, it is a portable medium used by merchants (often in showrooms) to display a collection of fabrics, wallpapers, color swatches, etc. Before buying goods and committing to an object in toto, customers can consult a comprehensive catalogue of smaller-scaled examples. The volume is both an archive of existing possibilities and

