

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Alex Greenberger, "More is More and More," *ARTnews*, October, 2015

ARTNEWS



ED ATKINS: COMPUTERS
MAKE THE MAN

OUTSIDER ART IS MOVING IN
RACHEL ROSE'S INFINITE QUEST



OCTOBER 2015

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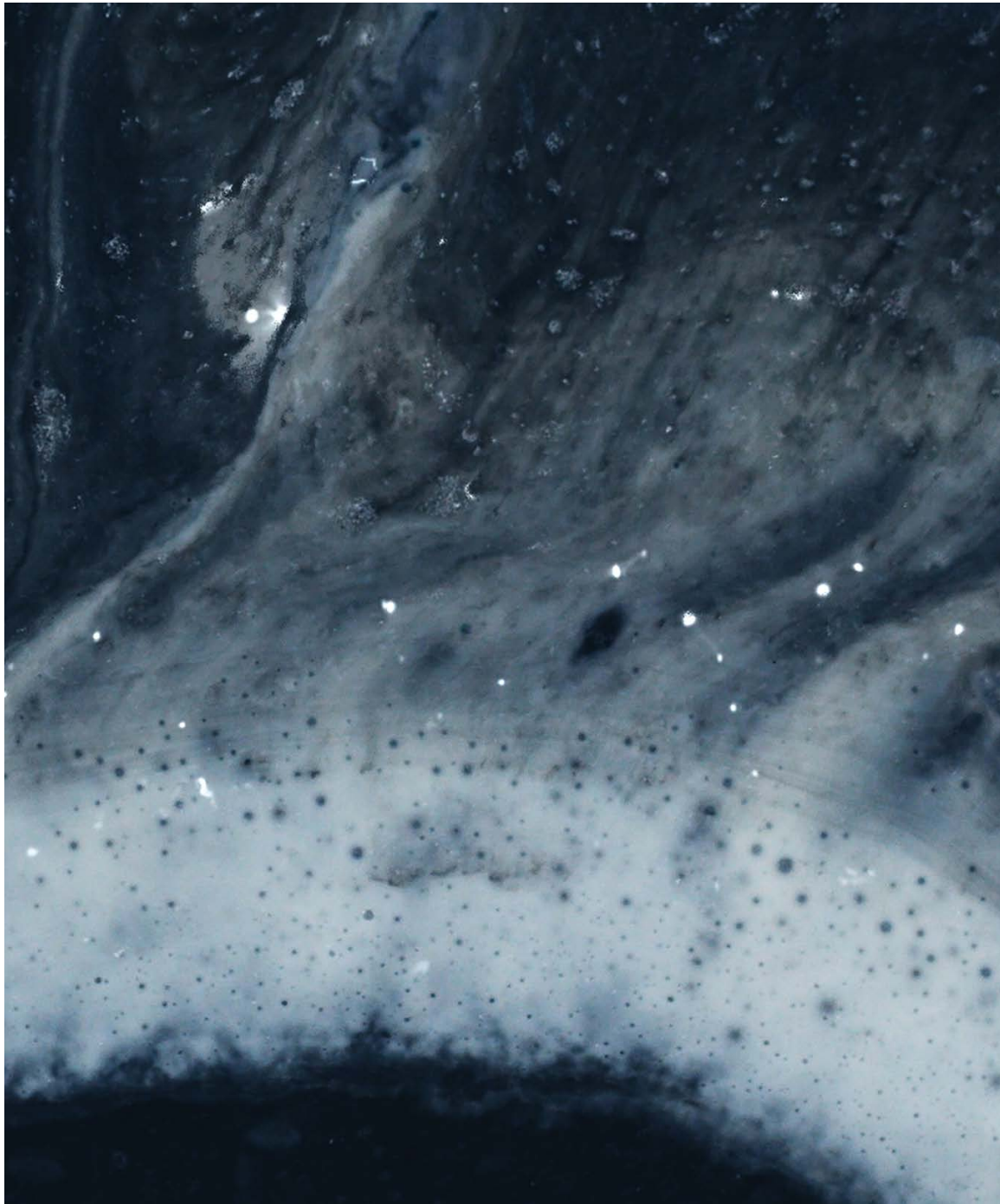


MORE IS MORE AND MORE

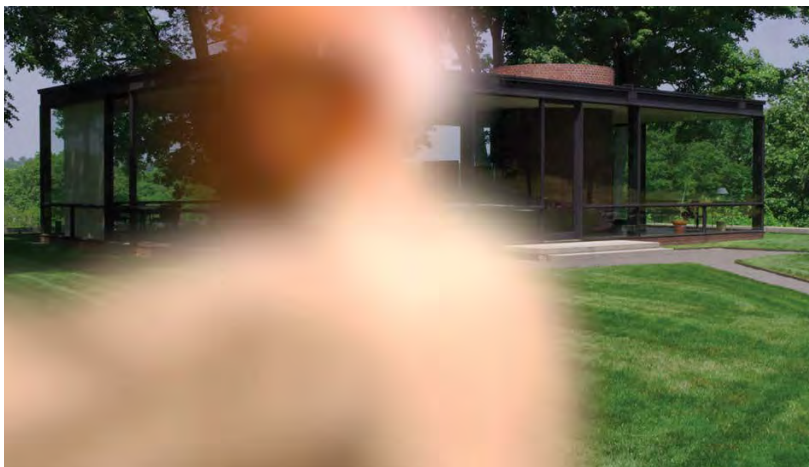
In Rachel Rose's compulsive video collages, war, polar bears, and cryogenic labs unite

BY ALEX GREENBERGER

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Revolutionary War paintings, Philip Johnson's Glass House, cryogenics labs, crushed berries, polar bears—all of these images and more have figured in Rachel Rose's antic videos. It's a vast spectrum. One difference between the 28-year-old New York-based artist and most of her peers is that Rose is having her U.S. solo debut not at a trendy Lower East Side gallery but at the Whitney Museum. On the 30th of this month, just a few weeks after her first solo show in London opens at the Serpentine Galleries, Rose will be presenting a multimedia installation titled *Everything and More* in the Whitney's new Renzo Piano-designed building. When we spoke over the phone in August, as she was putting the finishing touches on a video for the installation, she seemed only slightly anxious about it all.

The artist knew that parts of the Whitney installation might change. She wanted the work to respond to a mammoth glass window in the museum, but wasn't sure whether what she had in mind would work. Yet the installation, like much of her art, comes back to a subtle

emotion she was wrestling with and wanted to explore in depth—in this case, the feeling of being finite in a limitless space.

"Yes, the work is always changing as I'm making it," Rose said, "but it's always coming back to the central feeling. In some ways it feels like I'm making a work over and over again in every stage in the process. The edit becomes its own work, the shooting becomes its own work, research becomes its own work."

In the past Rose let her research guide her. For her 2014 video *A Minute Ago*, which won her the illy Present Future Prize at the Italian art fair Artissima that year, she didn't know initially that she wanted to shoot at Philip Johnson's Glass House. "I ended up there after many months of research—looking into the history of glass, thinking about our relationship to boundaries, interior and exterior, permeability, the way that glass functions in the history of New York City architecture, the International style," Rose said. "So the relationship to site is very conditional, very much related to the feeling of the work. They're not independent of one another."

PREVIOUS SPREAD, THIS PAGE, AND OPPOSITE: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND PHILIP JOHNSON GALLERY, LONDON (3)

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Her research led her to make a video about “the question of how catastrophe can feel like a collage,” a mash-up of a YouTube video of a hailstorm hitting a group of unsuspecting bathers, footage that Rose shot of the Glass House, sounds from Big Sean and Pink Floyd concerts, and an image of a Nicolas Poussin painting. As with any collage, despite its seemingly random nature, there is generally an underlying structure. “You have all different kinds of techniques, but they are coming back through my hand, ultimately,” Rose said.

“For me it’s important that I’m making the work, that I’m trying to understand something more deeply for myself.” She considers her art an inquiry that begins with barely felt emotion and culminates in something larger and more defined.

Rose’s Whitney installation has been one of her biggest challenges to date because it brings her so far from concrete feelings, ideas, and objects. “In the work, I’m thinking about what it’s like to be in infinite space from the point of view of a finite being, like a human,” Rose said. “There [are] no shots of space or anything

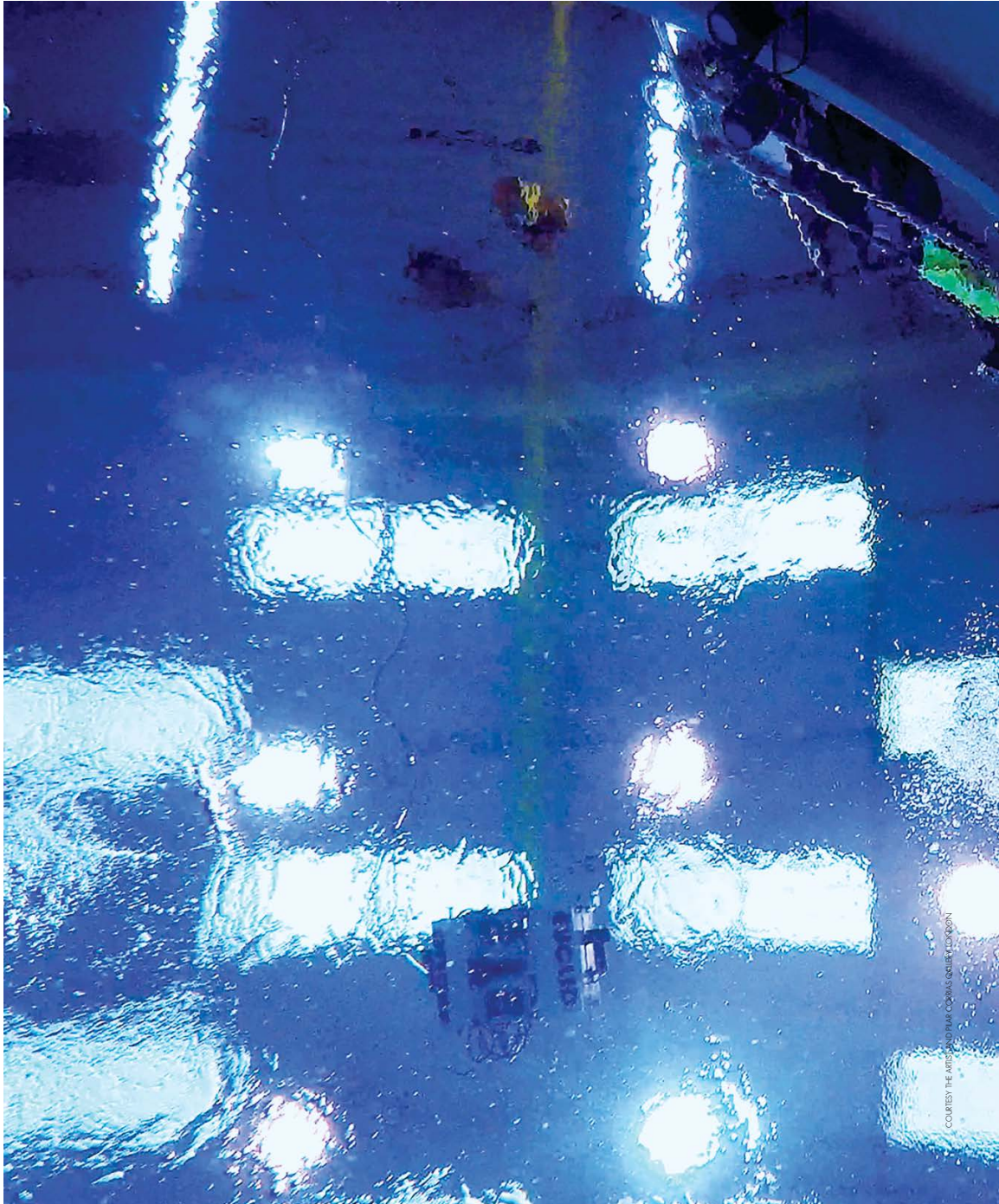
like this in the work. It’s all very grounded, on-earth, but it’s trying to approach an infinite state from that perspective.”

THE IDEA FOR THE *EVERYTHING AND MORE* VIDEO BEGAN with an interview Rose did with an astronaut who told her how he experienced his body in outer space. That led her to the Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory in Houston, Texas, where she had scientists film their research in a four-story-deep pool with robots simulating the daily tasks performed by astronauts in space.

She shot other parts of the video at her home, using everyday materials such as milk, ink, baby oil, and water. Rose applied an air compressor and shot the materials in close-up to create colorful, abstract images. Much in the way special-effects supervisor Douglas Trumbull used fluorescent dyes and cream to create

PREVIOUS SPREAD AND ABOVE Rachel Rose, stills from *Everything and More*, 2015, HD video. OPPOSITE Rachel Rose, still from *A Minute Ago*, 2014, HD video.

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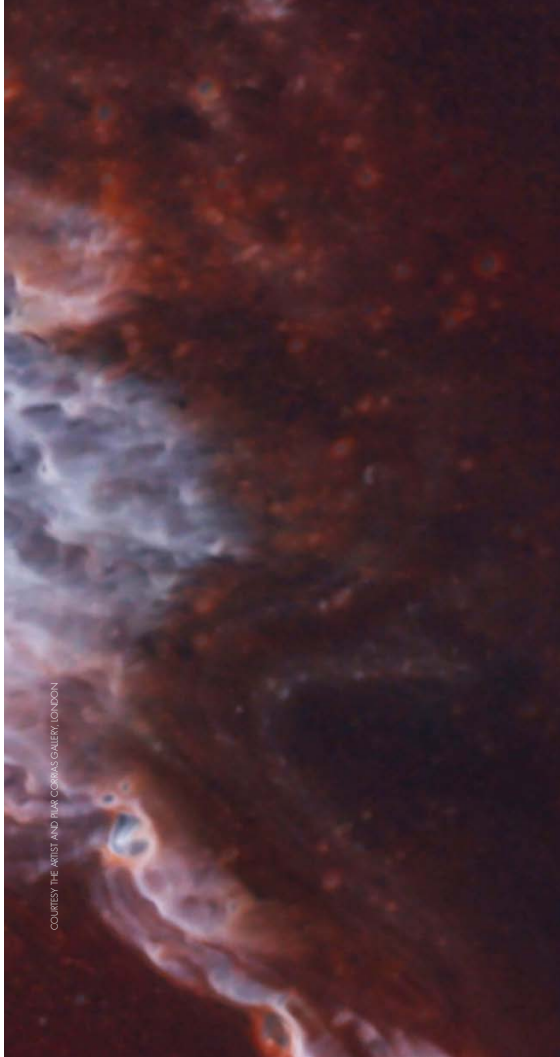
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COURTESY THE ARTIST AND IVAR CORRIGS GALLERY, LONDON

the cosmos for the films *The Tree of Life* (2013) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Rose relies on familiar objects to evoke images of places on a sublime scale. Most of the video's materials, she told me, were actually no larger than one inch.

AS ROSE WAS MAKING *EVERYTHING AND MORE*, SHE WAS thinking about the California Light and Space artists of the 1960s and '70s, with their quasi-spiritual, transcendent installations that combine natural and manmade light. The perceptual element in their work—as well as Experiments in Art and Technology's 1970 Pepsi Pavilion installation for Expo—fascinated her. “Being in that room, in that moment, feeling your body in relationship to the thing you're absorbing—that's not something you get, exactly, in a cinematic constraint,” Rose said.

Rose also described being influenced by Walter Murch, the Academy Award-winning sound designer and editor who worked on such films as *The Conversation* (1974) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). “Walter was one of the pioneers of the way that we think about sound design in film—bringing interior and exterior sounds together, inverting how we think about sound effects and soundtrack,” she said. “He thinks very much about the difference between a cut and a blink, and in this way [he is] thinking about the film you're seeing in relationship to your body.”

To Rose the work of the Light and Space artists has affinities with the effects of some of Murch's editing. I asked her what she thought of Robert Irwin's *Scrim veil—Black rectangle—Natural light*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, which was originally staged at the Whitney's Breuer building in 1977 and shown again in 2013. For that installation Irwin covered part of the museum's fourth-floor window with a white polyester scrim, allowing light from outside to flow across the floor. She described Irwin's installation as being about shifts in perception. “It was like a film cut,” she said, “but physicalized in such an explicit, sublime way—black to not black.”

With Rose's installation, “black” is infinity; “not black” is finitude. In between is everything and more—no small charge indeed for one room, in one building, in one city, on one planet. ■

PREVIOUS SPREAD AND LEFT Rachel Rose, stills from *Everything and More*, 2015, HD video.

Alex Greenberger is an editorial assistant at ARTnews.