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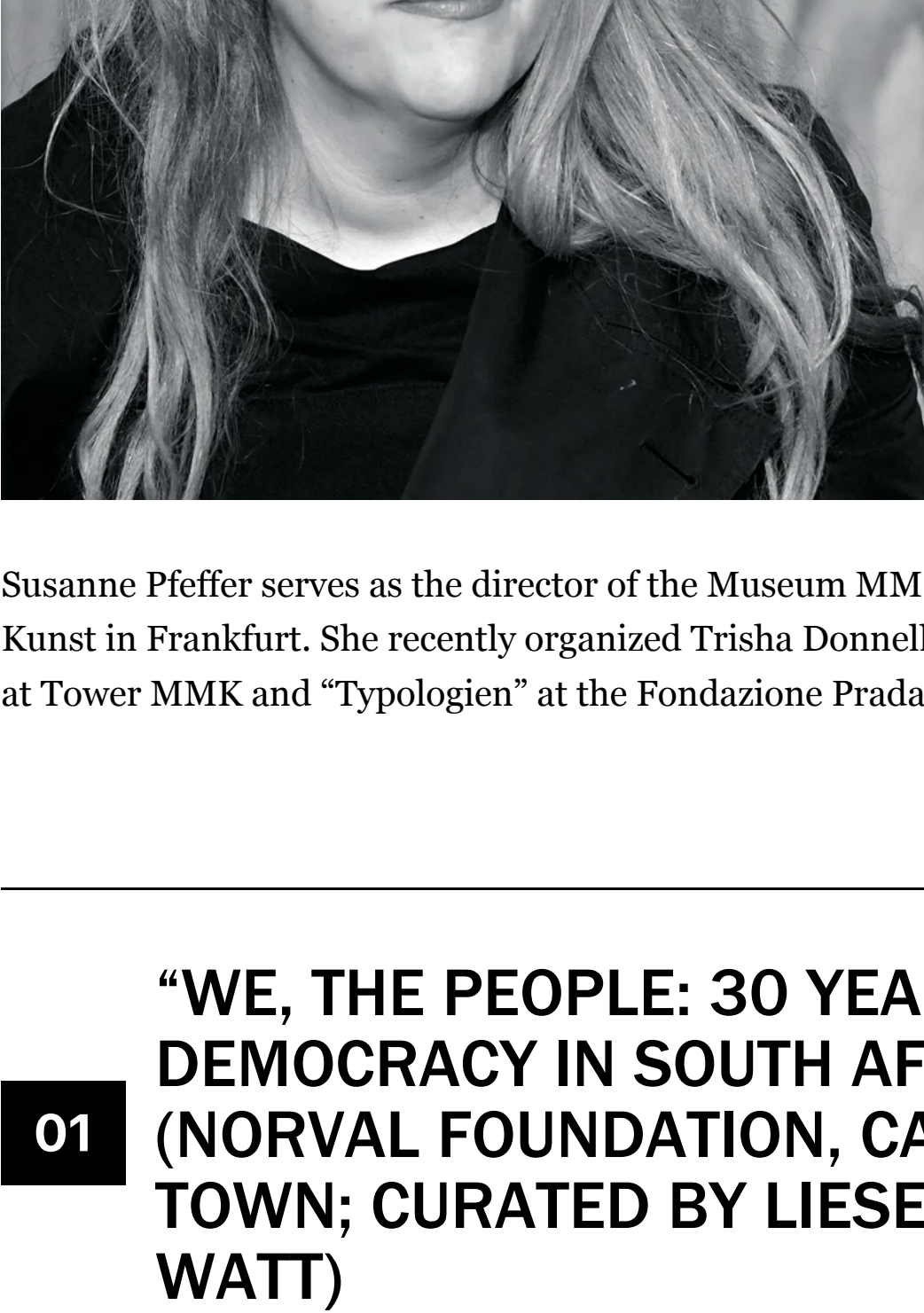
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BEST OF 2025

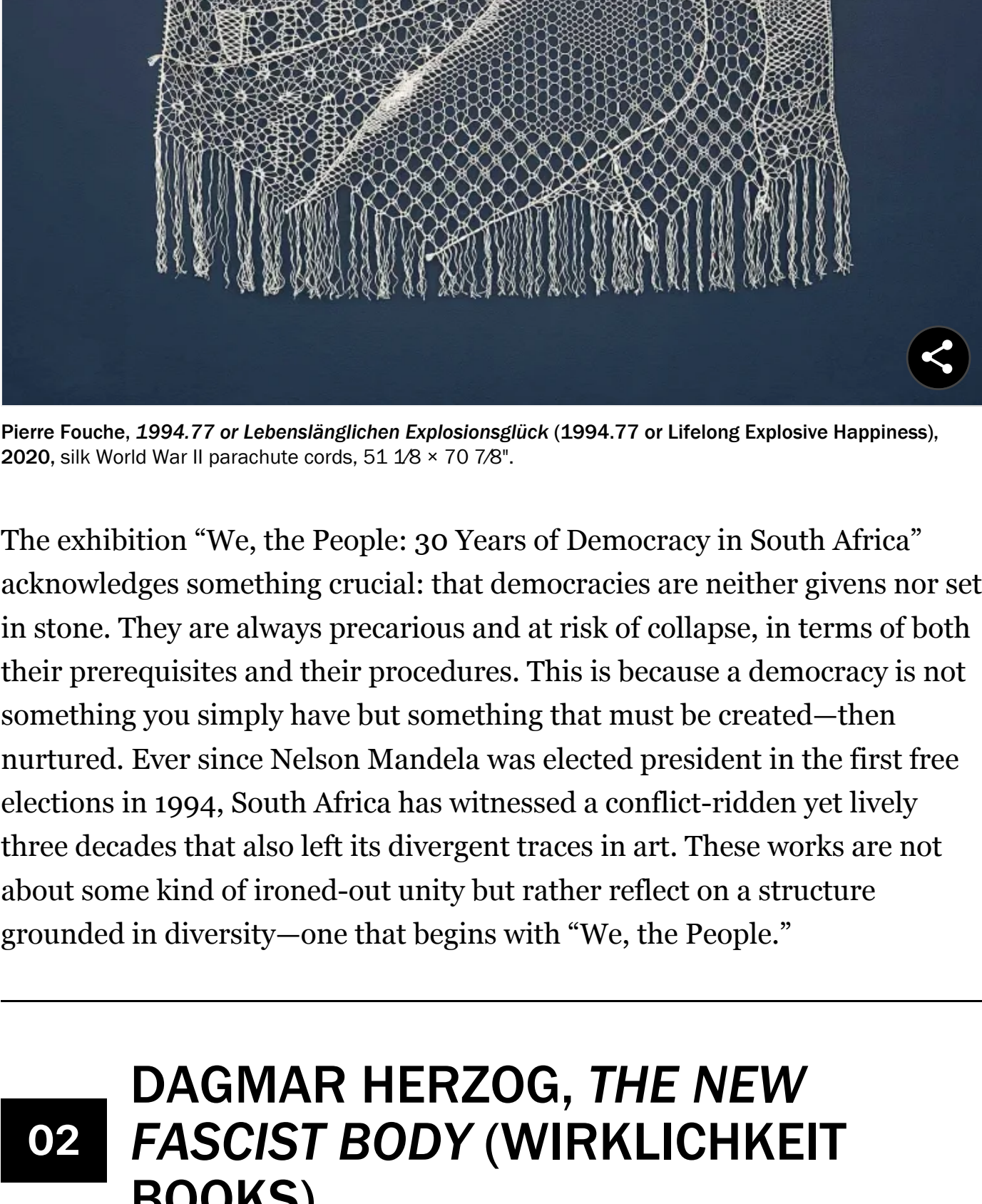
TOP TEN

By Susanne Pfeffer 32



Susanne Pfeffer serves as the director of the Museum MMK für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt. She recently organized Trisha Donnelly's solo exhibition at Tower MMK and "Typologien" at the Fondazione Prada, Milan.

01 “WE, THE PEOPLE: 30 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA” (NORVAL FOUNDATION, CAPE TOWN; CURATED BY LIESE VAN DER WATT)



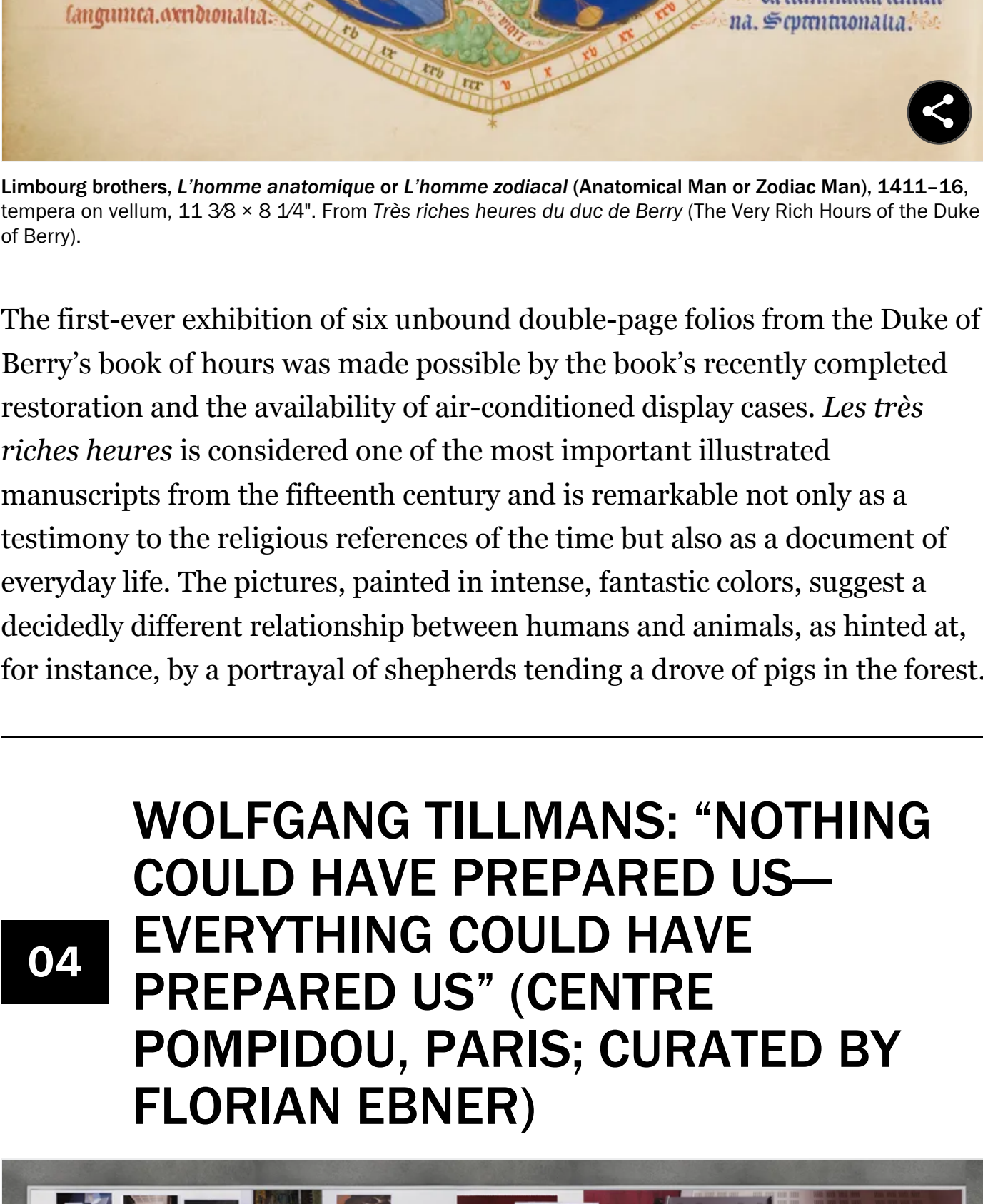
Pierre Fourche, 1994. *77 or Lebendergeisteren Explosionskrieg (1994.77 or Lifelong Explosive Happiness)*. 2020, silk. World War II parachute cords, 53.68 × 112.16".

The exhibition “We, the People: 30 Years of Democracy in South Africa” acknowledges something crucial: that democracies are neither givens nor set in stone. They are always precarious and at risk of collapse, in terms of both their prerequisites and their procedures. This is because a democracy is not something you simply have but something that must be created—then nurtured. Ever since Nelson Mandela was elected president in the first free elections in 1994, South Africa has witnessed a conflict-ridden yet lively three decades that also left its divergent traces in art. These works are not about some kind of ironed-out unity but rather reflect on a structure grounded in diversity—one that begins with “We, the People.”

02 DAGMAR HERZOG, *THE NEW FASCIST BODY* (WIRKLICHKEIT BOOKS)

It's well established that fascism functions primarily through its body politics, including the permanent production of rejected or surplus bodies destined for destruction. Fascist regimes promise their followers that they can satisfy their unbridled lust for violence in everyday acts. That's nothing new. What is new is that these fascisms now dispense with the mass spectacles of the “old” fascist regimes without losing their influence. In this book, Herzog shows that the obsessive and persistent ideas of the right-wing extremist German AfD party against people with disabilities operate with the same effectiveness as previous anti-Semitic and chauvinist motives and reveal the secret message of the new right: that its aim is not to oppress but to behave uninhibitedly with impunity.

03 “LES TRÈS RICHES HEURES DU DUC DE BERRY” (THE VERY RICH HOURS OF THE DUKE OF BERRY) (CHÂTEAU DE CHANTILLY, FRANCE; CURATED BY MATHIEU DELDICQUE AND MARIE-PIERRE DION)



Limbourg brothers, *L'homme anatomique or l'homme zodiacal (Anatomical Man or Zodiac Man)*, 1413–16, tempera on vellum, 13.38 × 8.52". From *Les très riches heures du duc de Berry (The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry)*.

The first-ever exhibition of six unbound double-page folios from the Duke of Berry's book of hours was made possible by the book's recently completed restoration and the availability of air-conditioned display cases. *Les très riches heures* is considered one of the most important illustrated manuscripts from the fifteenth century and is remarkable not only as a testimony to the religious references of the time but also as a document of everyday life. The pictures, painted in intense, fantastic colors, suggest a decidedly different relationship between humans and animals, as hinted at, for instance, by a portrayal of shepherds tending a drove of pigs in the forest.

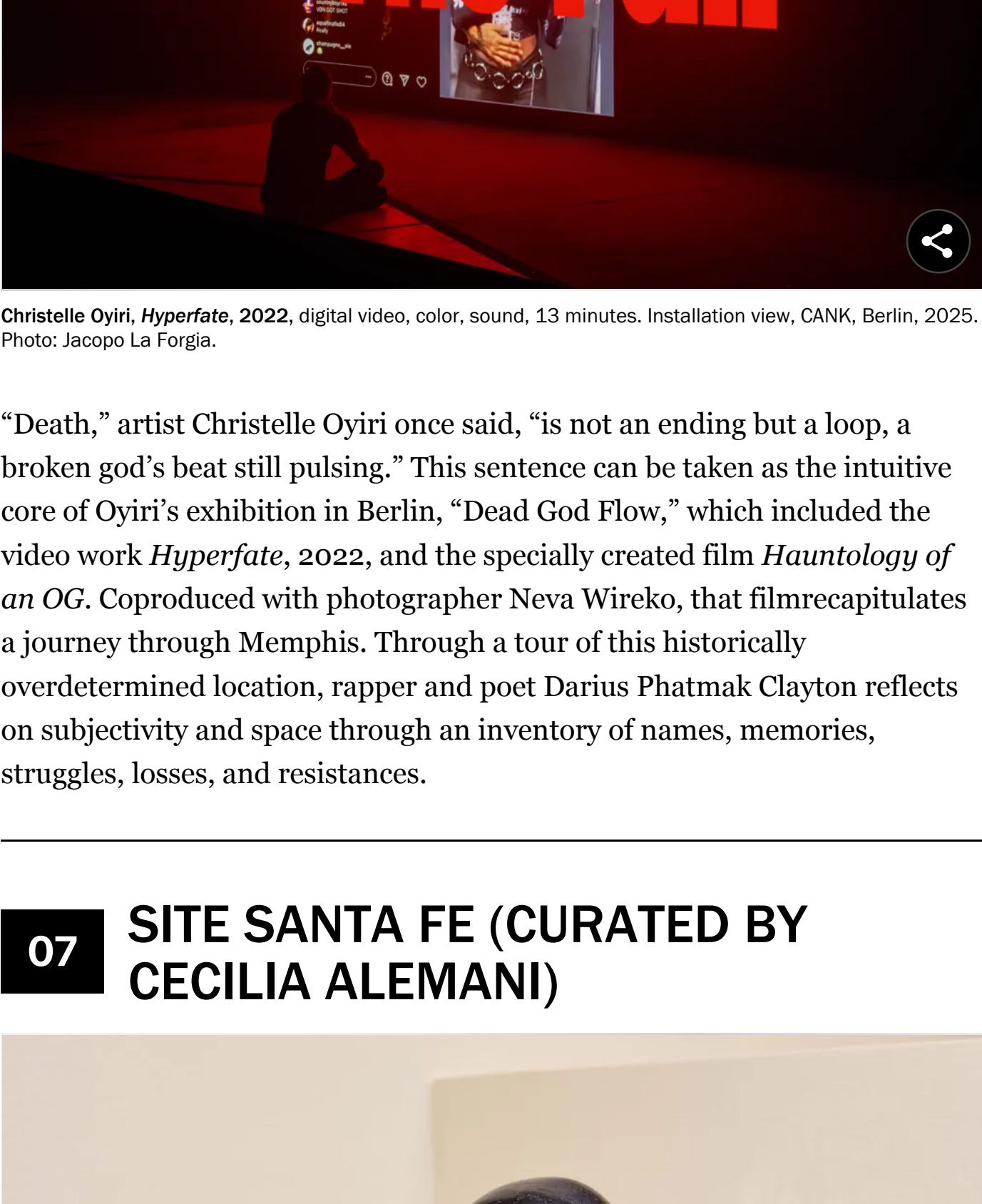
04 WOLFGANG TILLMANS: “NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED US—EVERYTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED US” (CENTRE POMPIDOU, PARIS; CURATED BY FLOPIAN EBNER)



Wolfgang Tillmans 2025 *vitae*, mixed media, installation view, Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Wolfgang Tillmans's exhibition at the Centre Pompidou is a masterpiece of consistency, combining the Pompidou's architecture with Tillmans's work over the past forty years. His fascination with elementary experiences—observing the presence of the sea or hearing the deep bass of early Detroit techno—is recast in photos, video, and sound. It's a plea for the courage to experience things for oneself. In an age of unprecedented sensory expropriation by tech corporations, this highly artificial environment served as a thoroughly political statement for the liberation of the senses from the terrifying power of false feelings.

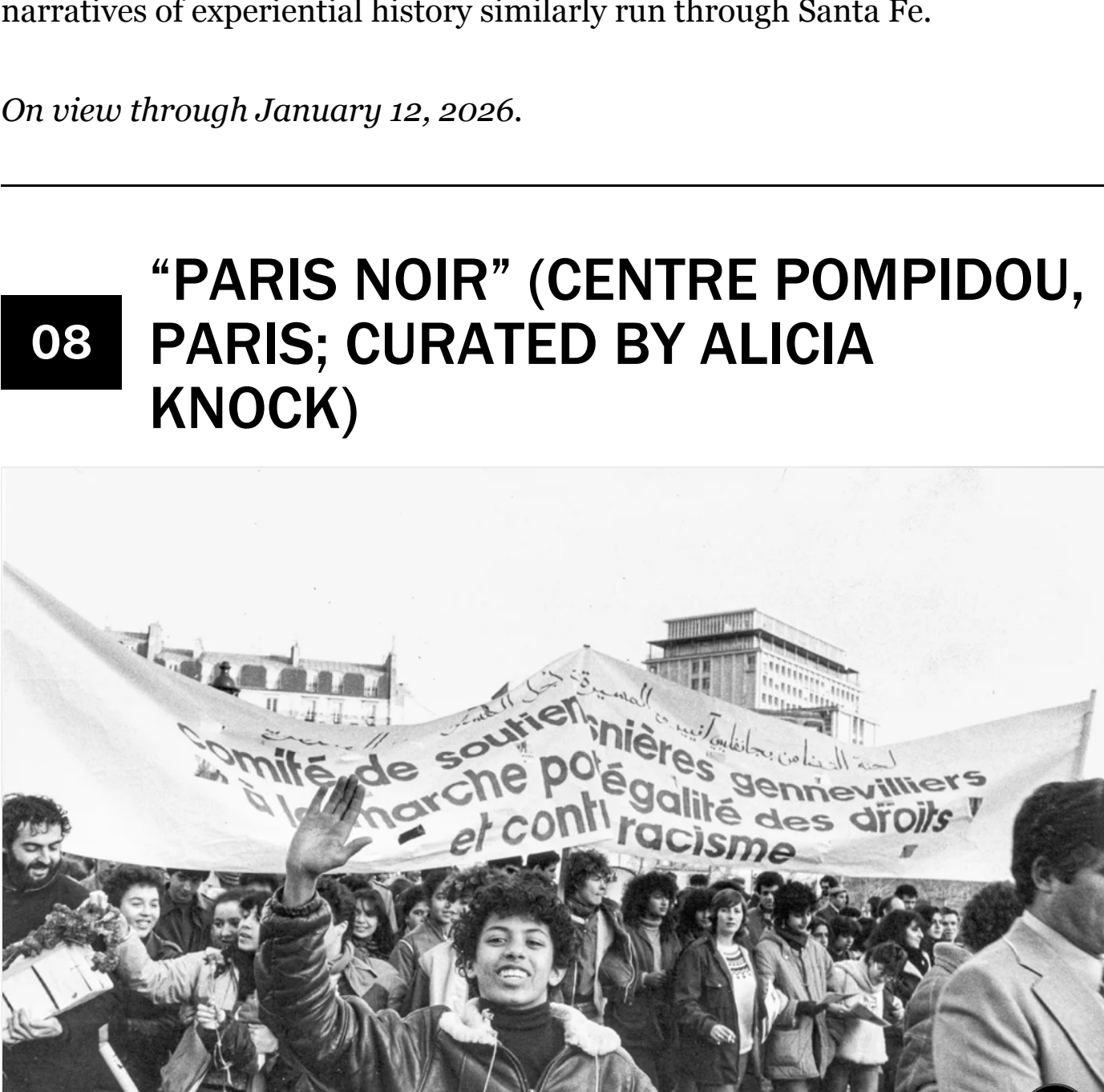
05 BIENAL DAS AMAZÔNIAS: “VERDE-DISTÂNCIA” (DISTANCE-GREEN) (BELÉM, BRAZIL; CURATED BY MANUELA MOSCOSO WITH SARA GARZÓN, JEAN DA SILVA, AND MONICA AMIEVA)



Marcellino Nascimento, *Raízes do vento (Roots of the Wind)*, 2021, oil and acrylic on canvas, 23.56 × 27.52".

Curator Manuela Moscoso titled the Second Bienal das Amazônia's “Verde-Distância” after a phrase in Benedicto Monteiro's 1972 novel *Verde vagando*. With this show, Moscoso completed a seemingly endless chain of green variations produced by the vast Amazon rainforest, which can only be appreciated from a distance. “Distance-Green” conjured up a forest that, since the arrival of the early colonizers, has evoked the logic of occupation, control, and labeling. Except that, today, the early botanists have been replaced by loggers and prospectors for gold and oil who have no interest in the forest as such. This was one reason why the biennial did not seek solutions in the fight for the Amazon. Rather, it traced the marks left by the occupations on the forest's inhabitants and their paths out of the green into the wider world—well beyond the Amazon and greater Caribbean.

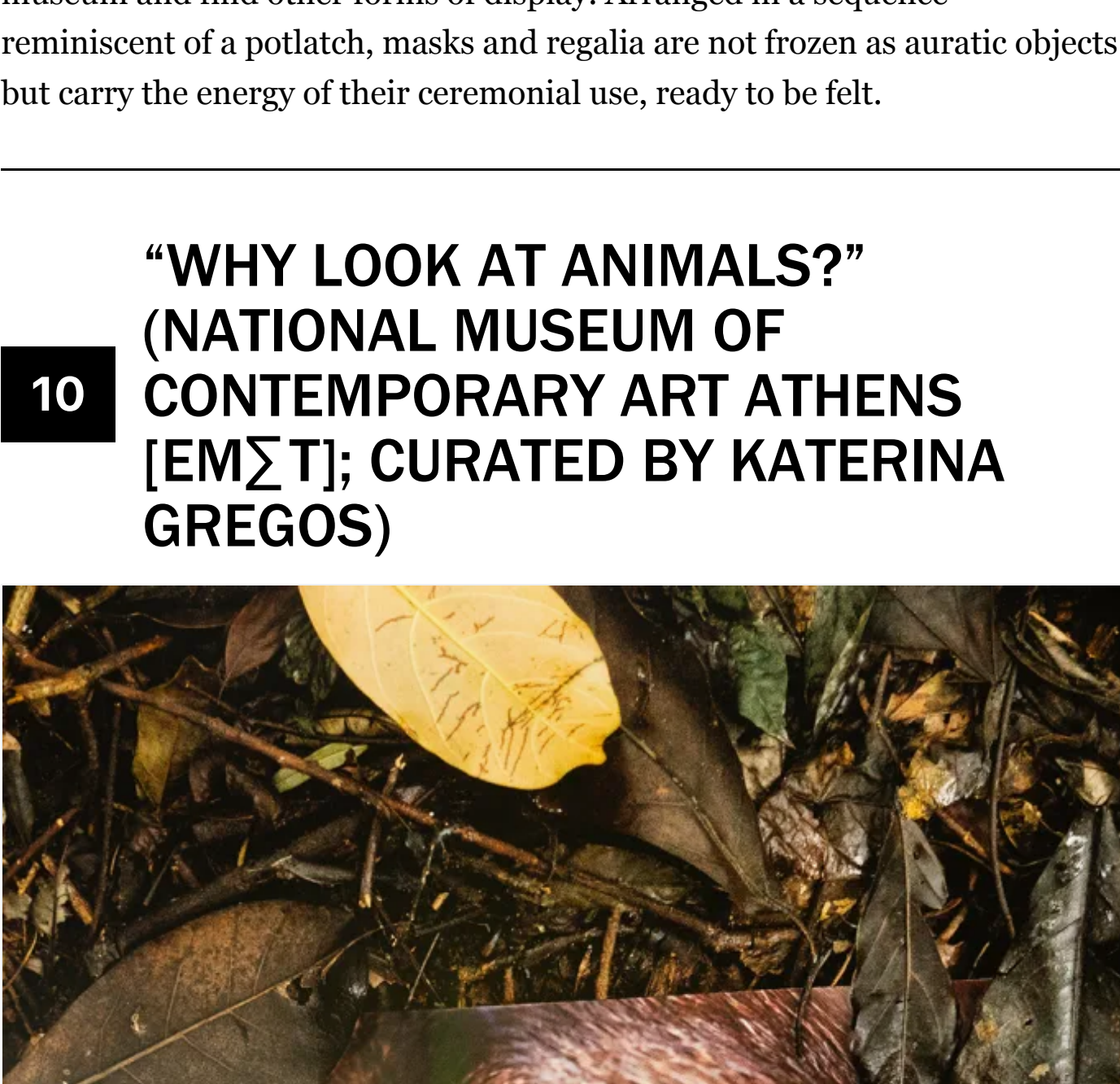
06 CHRISTELLE OYIRI (LAS ART FOUNDATION, BERLIN; CURATED BY SAM OZER)



Christelle Oyiri, *Hyperfate*, 2022, digital video, color, sound, 13 minutes, installation view, CAVE, Berlin, 2025. Photo: Jacopo La Ferla.

“Death,” artist Christelle Oyiri once said, “is not an ending but a loop, a broken god's beat still pulsing.” This sentence can be taken as the intuitive core of Oyiri's exhibition in Berlin, “Dead God Flow,” which included the video work *Hyperfate*, 2022, and the specially created film *Hymanology* of an OG. Coproduced with photographer Neva Witoko, that film recapitulates a journey through Memphis. Through a tour of this historically overdetermined location, rapper and poet Darius Phatmak Clayton reflects on subjectivity and space through an inventory of names, memories, struggles, losses, and resistances.

07 SITE SANTA FE (CURATED BY CECILIA ALEMANI)

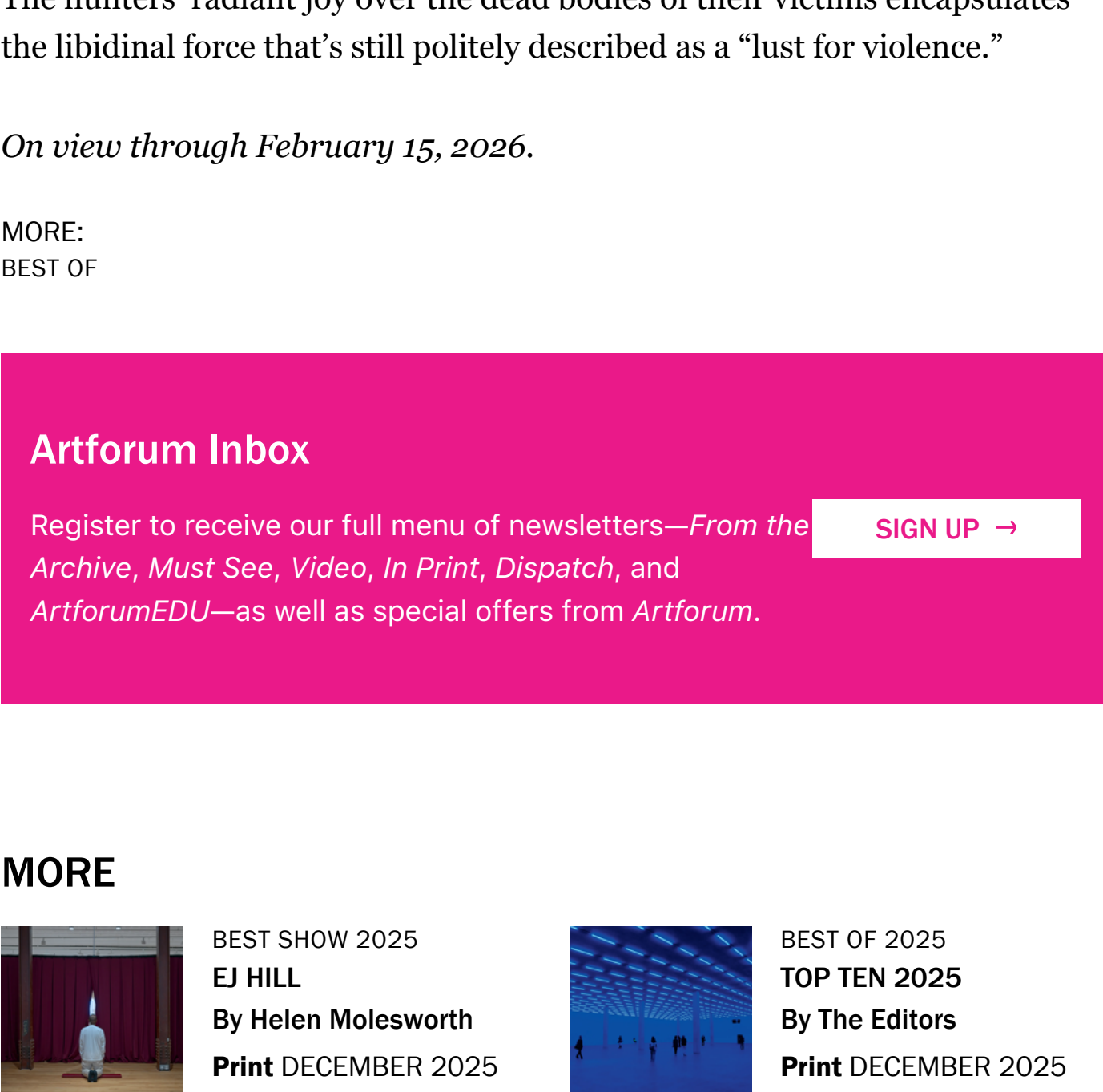


Helen Cordero, *Storyteller*, ca. 1970s, clay, paint, 10 × 7.12 × 7.12".

The twelfth edition of the SITE Santa Fe International is titled “Once Within a Time.” Helen Cordero's sculpture *Storyteller*, circa 1972, can be read as the embodiment of the intuition and program of the newly relaunched biennial. In the 1960s, Cordero, who grew up in New Mexico's Cochiti Pueblo, began making and painting small sculptures of people with their eyes closed and their mouths open. These works were inspired by her preoccupation with the lives of her grandparents, whom she learned about primarily through the stories they told. And just as they influence Cordero's work, aesthetic narratives of experiential history similarly run through Santa Fe.

On view through January 12, 2026.

08 “PARIS NOIR” (CENTRE POMPIDOU, PARIS; CURATED BY ALICIA KNOCK)



Armandu Gays, *Les quartiers populaires défilant à Paris à l'instar de ceux d'Amérique-Généralistes pour accueillir la Marche (The Working-Class Neighborhoods Arrive in Paris Like Those of American-Generalists to Welcome the March)*, 1983, giclée silver print, 9.52 × 14.18".

“Paris noir” brought together 150 artists from Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas who have rarely been exhibited in France. The result could be compared, without exaggeration, to Paul Gilroy's masterpiece 1993 book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Just as Gilroy empirically removes all essentialism from his discussion of musical productions—from blues to reggae to hip-hop—to make room for hybridization, this exhibition showed the syncretic origins, experiences, and styles that coalesced into works of visual art.

09 THE POTLATCH COLLECTION (U'MISTA CULTURAL CENTER, ALERT BAY, CANADA)

In the Kwakwaka'wakw language, *U'mista* means the return of something significant. In the context of the U'mista Cultural Center in Alert Bay, founded in 1980, this term refers to the return of masks and dance regalia that were repatriated after the potlatch ban (1885–1951). Part of the repatriation agreements from museums and private collections worldwide stipulated that the objects be housed in a suitable museum. It was therefore imperative for the Indigenous community to rethink the idea of a Western museum and find other forms of display. Arranged in a sequence reminiscent of a potlatch, masks and regalia are not frozen as auratic objects but carry the energy of their ceremonial use, ready to be felt.

10 “WHY LOOK AT ANIMALS?” (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART ATHENS [ΕΜΣΤ]); CURATED BY KATERINA GREGOS)

Daniel Staegemann-Margraf, *La pensée forale (Feral Thinking) (detail)*, 2020, Ciochromes, serigraphed text by Juliana Fautou, each 27.12 × 22".

Based on John Berger's groundbreaking 1980 essay of the same name, “Why Look at Animals?” explores the legal status of nonhumans. The spectrum of works ranges from Marina Costas's investigations into similarities between the vocalizations of unrelated animal species to Sammy Balaji's “Hunting & Collecting,” 2015, a series of photographs of hunters and their animal prey. The hunters' radiant joy over the dead bodies of their victims encapsulates the libidinal force that's still politely described as a “lust for violence.”

On view through February 15, 2026.

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