# Bomb Magazine: Artists on Artists

Pedro Reyes

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**Related Project: New Utopias**

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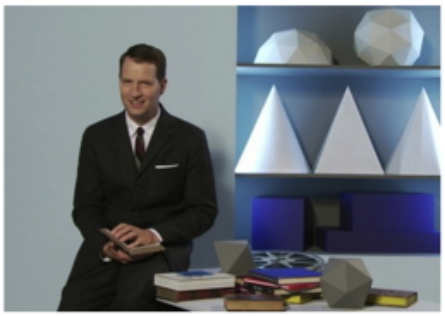
ARTISTS ON ARTISTS

Terence Gower
by Pedro Reyes



Still from *New Utopias*, 2010

Terence Gower's latest video, *New Utopias*, is a lecture filmed in the style of a 1950s Walt Disney documentary. Among the utopias under analysis are Parliament/Funkadelic's 1974 Mothership Connection tour in which George Clinton proposes to improve the world by bringing us The Funk from outer space; The Rocky Horror Picture Show, where a society promotes uninhibited sexual behavior; and the world of Jacques Demy's Les Demoiselles de Rochefort, an aesthetic utopia of beautiful artists who are perpetually falling in love. The following conversation took place this past fall.

Pedro Reyes: I got so excited when I saw New Utopias because it's not stuck in nostalgia; it's a prognosis, a promise, an invitation to reimagine the world. The key line in the video is the last sentence: "I'm curious to see what new visions of utopia will replace these." I'd like to ask you how the three utopias in the video—the funk, the meta-sexual, and the cheerful musical utopia—tap into the viewers' desires. Desire is a driving force for change, as Augusto Boal wrote. Without desire, you focus on the problem; with desire, on the solution. You have to desire the change you want to see. That's the intoxication of utopia.

Terence Gower: Exactly. New Utopias is about the attraction of ideals, the desire to move toward them. The three utopias I feature are about pleasure. Desire serves two purposes here, to trigger progress and change (by enacting a utopian response) and to entertain (as a catalyst for the viewer to enter the work)—hence music, sex, and architecture. I wanted to feature the most diverse and unlikely examples of ideal societies, partly to be funny (pleasure again), and partly to stretch the boundaries of what utopia could be.

PR: At the same time you acknowledge that no one wants to live in someone else's utopia. For example, the modern urbanist's ideal of radiant cities guided by hygienic codes, mainframes, and superstructures has proven to be oppressive. The liberation of

utopia is when individuals find their “sweet spot,” the place where they fulfill their desires and perform at their highest levels. In the video, you repeat the mantra from The Rocky Horror Picture Show: “Don’t dream it, be it.”

Still from *The Mothership Connection*, 1974

TG: I like your idea of the sweet spot, because I think utopia’s impossibility has this primal melancholic quality that is almost erotic in its nature. All the examples I use in the piece are from the 1970s and celebrate eccentric individualism, as opposed to the modernist collective utopianism that usually comes to mind.

PR: Your video acknowledges these heterotopias. A recurrent image in utopia is the crystal; in your piece it occurs as the glass prism, the pyramid, or the geodesic dome. On one level the crystal symbolizes the molecular synergy of the collective. But the fun begins when a beam of light passes through the crystal and casts a spectrum of diversity. It is there for us to explore, a rainbow of desire.

TG: I think we’ve just written the manifesto for the New Hippie Utopia.

—Pedro Reyes is an artist and trained architect based in Mexico City. His ongoing project Baby Marx, which contemplates capitalism versus socialism, was most recently featured at the Walker Art Center.