

falls in love with the beautiful replicant Rachel, who until he points it out to her, doesn't know that she is not human. ND's Bunraku bride from the 2012 exhibition: "Care of the Sick and Late Spring" is also a hybrid doll/film reference. The Bride has perished and been restored, but not in a violent Tarentino manner. The Tender Daughter seeks no revenge. The Bride has been re-animated, like a 100 year old zori, by the tender loving care of her creator. The oldest manuscript of mechanical engineering in Japan, called 'Karakuri-zui,' introduced the *Karakuri* dolls, automata which by: "setting the tea cup on the tray, the doll moves, and it stops when the tea cup is removed. If the cup is replaced, the doll swivels around and returns to its original position." *Karakuri* dolls influenced the puppets of the Bunraku theater.

The juxtaposition of puppets, animated objects, technology and *shinbutso shugo* leads us right to the Speculative Realism movement of contemporary philosophy. Briefly, this movement is opposed to the Kantian strand of philosophy which places the idea of correlationism at its center.

The French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux contends that the often unstated theory of correlationism is that humans cannot exist without the world nor the world without humans. Speculative realism is opposed to this anthropocentrism. It rejects the privileging of human existence over the existence of nonhuman objects.

Ray Brassier, one of the proponents of Speculative Realism, describes how a posthumanist vision is reshaping human subjectivity and consciousness through the use of neurotechnologies: "Neurotechnologies, including cognitive enhancers such as modafinil, brain fingerprinting, neural lie-detectors, and nascent brain-computer interfaces, are giving rise to phenotechnologies which will eventually usher in the literal manufacturing of

consciousness in a way that promises to redraw existing boundaries between personal and collective experience and recast not only extant categories of personal and collective identity, but also those of personal and collective agency."

Human consciousness as we think of it in the West may well be just a passing fad.

Reza Negarestani, an Iranian philosopher and writer who was associated with the Speculative Realism movement for several years, wrote: "Puppetry is the realization of the ethics of the weird: in conformity to my intention, I enforce the radically exterior intention of *nothing*. ... This is another way to say that by abiding to their intention for remaining in themselves, the objects are puppetized by the intention of nothing. Nothing vermicularly looms out of the intended and makes it problematic. The universe is infinitely weirder when we know that even the gimmick of *ex nihilo* is the perforation of something with nothing, not the other way around."

ND's puppeteers, black shapes which she calls Men or Fathers, are perhaps shards of the nothing, the chaotic entropy behind the seething matrix of energy that surrounds us and animates everything.

The pinks of ND's "TDWPH" are the tenderest colors of all. The delicate pink of a little girl's party dress, the lavender-pink of a girl-baby's bedroom curtains, the ribbon pinks, and my favorites, the pink circles, like color patches for mixing skin-tones, from brown-pink to white-pink. For me, the pink is the fabric of humanity: tender human flesh animated and perforated by the inevitable black shard-like Puppeteers, giving itself up in ignorance or in joy to the beauty of the void.

## Tender Daughter with Picasso Arms (TDWPA)

Jenifer Bar Lev

In this exhibition I try to recover the daughter that slipped into the abyss and to hang from her slender shoulders Picasso's arms.

– Nurit David

In 1992, a group of Israeli artists was invited to exhibit in Leipzig, Germany. We were driven around like a rock band in a large, comfortable bus, stopping for gigs in museums and art academies. On the very last day we arrived in Frankfurt and saw the exhibition: "The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932" which contained an extensive collection of textiles: repeat prints, in delicate colors, of squadrons of threshing machines, rows of pastel geometric marching girls with drums and flags, swirls of candy-colored teeny factories with white puffs of smoke emanating from their tiny smokestacks. A basic tenant of the revolution was to abolish decoration in favor of the purely functional. ND, so far as I know, has no use for politics of any kind. She is neither a feminist, nor an anarchist, nor a communist, nor any other 'ist' except for the most subversive ist of all, artist. Although lately she has expressed a renewed love for modernism, I wouldn't call her a Modernist, either.

Her use of geometrically contrived figures, pipes, ticker tapes and other objects, drawn with various stencils, from architectural templates to shaped dressmaker's rulers, is neither propaganda nor decoration nor pure form. Whereas Israeli art follows strict laws of artistic *kashrut*, the art of ND obeys its own laws. ND has made her distinct meandering path in art by way of alchemical transformation.

ND, who doesn't believe in the supernatural, has accomplished many marvelous transformations. First of all, she was born Chinese, in Israel, to

Hungarian parents. Then, by way of a love affair, she exchanged her imaginary Chinese homeland for its neighbor, Japan, a much more subtle and refined nation, as island nations often are. Perhaps as a special mark of refinement, the majority of Japanese do not claim affiliation to any one religion but rather incorporate elements of various religions in a way called *shinbutsu shūgō*, a syncretism of Buddhism and Shinto *kami* worship – *kami* being the spirits of nature which represent the interconnected energy of the underlying pattern of everything.

This is the true meaning of 'animation', not the invention of cute caricatures of woodland creatures and the telling of anthropomorphic tales about them. Animation means that everything is an object and they are all alive. Circles traced from stencils, given two dotted eyes and long hair traced from an armhole ruler, can be made to come alive. ND's figures are not caricatures/parodies of anything: they are geometric shapes given life, which then play roles, like actors, or puppets. I'm not sure that even Modernism permitted or encouraged shapes to live in that way. Your mind would have to have been steeped in the Japanese culture of *shinbutsu shūgō* wherein everything is possessed by *kami*, spirits.

*Tsukumogami* are a sub-class of *kami*, household spirits, basically any object that has reached its 100th birthday and thus become possessed of a soul. You have: *aoandon*: the spirit of the blue paper lantern; *bakezōri*: a zori straw sandal spirit; *chōchinobake*: a possessed *chōchin* lantern; *furu-utsubo*: an animated jar; *ittan-momen*: a possessed roll of cotton that attempts to smother people by wrapping itself around their faces; *kasa-obake*: a paper umbrella monster; *kyōrinrin*: possessed scrolls or papers; *shirōneri*: possessed mosquito

nettings, just to mention a few. The main threat they present is of banding together to take revenge on people who did not take care of them properly or threw them away needlessly.

The shapes and spirits of ND's "TDWPA" series will have no need for such malevolent intent. I know for a fact that ND has great respect for her possessions, the bulk of which are the tools of her trade, the brushes, papers, paints, canvases, and lately acquired but no less appreciated, computer, tablet, printer and other technology which she uses with greater and greater expertise. In fact, she told me just today, over coffee, that she has fallen in love with technology. I have come to think of the expression 'falling in love' as a typically Davidian one. ND is subject to immediate and extreme emotional attachments. The Tender Daughter fell so madly, deeply, passionately in love with Picasso's paintings that she is willing to replace her own arms with his. What can I say about this act? The first thing to come to mind is that it is a 'crime de passion', which leads me to one of the legendary lovers, Casanova – but I must admit, I was leading to him from the start, in his cinematographic version, via Fellini.

Cinema is another of ND's passions. She was the first of my friends who knew how to download films. With her characteristic generosity, she wished to share this knowledge with everyone, even with those of us too technologically challenged even to try. I figure by this time she has seen a stultifying percentage of all the movies ever made. She is an expert in the history of Japanese cinema, to be sure. But my own frame of reference is totally eclectic.

Fellini's Casanova draws together several strands of my thoughts about the TDWPH. Rosalba, the beautiful girl with whom he ends up in the film is in fact an automaton. In "Blade Runner," Deckard