

# SPIKE

## PARIS

**Sam Lipp**  
**"Incest"**

Bonny Poon  
28 March–5 April 2019

Bonny Poon gallery is perched on the 26th floor of the Tour Rubis, which is one of the many residential towers in Paris' 13th arrondissement that embody the Manhattanist schizophrenia that the city experienced under the presidency of Georges Pompidou in the early 70s. Elevated superhighways and high-rise condominiums were to reify the economical apex of the Glorious Thirty after World War II, that is, until this pharaonic project, which aimed at transforming Paris into Epcot, was

brutally stopped by Pompidou's successor Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and his architectural favorite Ricardo Bofill. The tower is the stillborn child of French modernity whose architectural icons are the monotonous Monoprix, well described by Michel Houellebecq, that hosts Paris's most Kool-Aid artistic program. Founded in 2017, Bonny Poon proposes a unique assemblage of synthetic-pop hermeticism with an anti-radical chic attitude. Sam Lipp's exhibition, "Incest", the last occurring in this location, is a stringent manifestation of the gallery's appetite for *Fantasia* and Greer Lankton-esque figures.

Installed with the straightforwardness of a bullet's path in a dealer's

head, *2746782FH008\_jacko\_po* (2019) is an oil reproduction of Michael Jackson's mugshot taken on November 20, 2003, after the police arrested the singer on child-molestation charges. It is the only work in the gallery's living room and it challenges the viewer with his gaze, which seems to be loaded with an irreconcilable mixture of innocence, guilt, and vertiginous despair. A recurring motif in Lipp's work, the emaciated traits and the over-dilated pupils of the forever-child of American pop, but this one is owned by Getty Images – or at least, it is what its watermark wants us to believe. The company is known for watermarking and selling pictures belonging to the public domain such as



Photos: Romain Darmaud

View of Sam Lipp, "Incest",  
Bonny Poone, Paris, 2019  
Left: *2746782FH008\_jacko\_po*, 2019  
Oil on steel, 46 x 34 cm

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footage from the Holocaust. This image, as well as the other pictures taken from Jackson's judiciary odyssey, are now subjected to an Olympic volatility: one can purchase waterproof stickers, wall art, beach towels, and wallets with Jackson's mugshot. But if Lipp's gesture could be akin to a Warholian pop martyrology, it is in the transformation of Michael Jackson into one of the most powerful modern-day taboos, as the title of the show seems to suggest. Considered as an artwork in itself, the exhibition scrutinises desire and the production of taboos as an ultimate and universal principle of social organisation. Indeed, incest and to a lesser extent, pedophilia are the supreme alterity against which human

organisation structures itself. Biological or social? Epigenetic or moralistic? No one is able to source the mother of all interdictions, a sulfurous luxury that can only be enjoyed at a certain height by the Hellenistic gods. In that regard, *Coffin (After Jade)* (2019) suspends any resolution and lets us muse in front of a bathtub whose water is about to overflow. It is encircled by a bottle of Dr. Hauschka water essence and a fading portrait of Charlize Theron posing in a J'adore Dior perfume ad, which were not originally part of the installation but left intentionally in place. Alluding to the artist Jade Kuriki Olivo's transition from male to female, this work nods at the symbolism of the cleansing process

as an equivocal site of purification that often conceals the social obligation of making oneself legible to the collective gaze. A gaze that can also convert intimacy into a valuable social currency as *IMG\_0818 (January 3, 2017)* (2019) suggests. This bottom-view selfie of Lipp was used as the main communication material for the show on social media along with a clip from Taylor Swift's ethereal video *Delicate (Vertical Version)* (2018).

"Ash is our purest form" as the late Lil Peep taught us. "Incest" seems to critically indulge this maxim in linking the idea of immaculate perfection to an eschatological horizon.

**Charles Teyssou**



Sam Lipp, *Coffin (After Jade)*,  
2019  
Bathtub, sink, water,  
dimensions variable