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THEN

INDEX

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[#43 A GRAY STONE WALL DAMMING MY STREAM - REVIEW - MARCH 2018](#)

## DEEPER IN THE PYRAMID

Laura O'Leary explores Melanie Jackson's exhibition at Grand Union, Birmingham, 2 February - 21 April



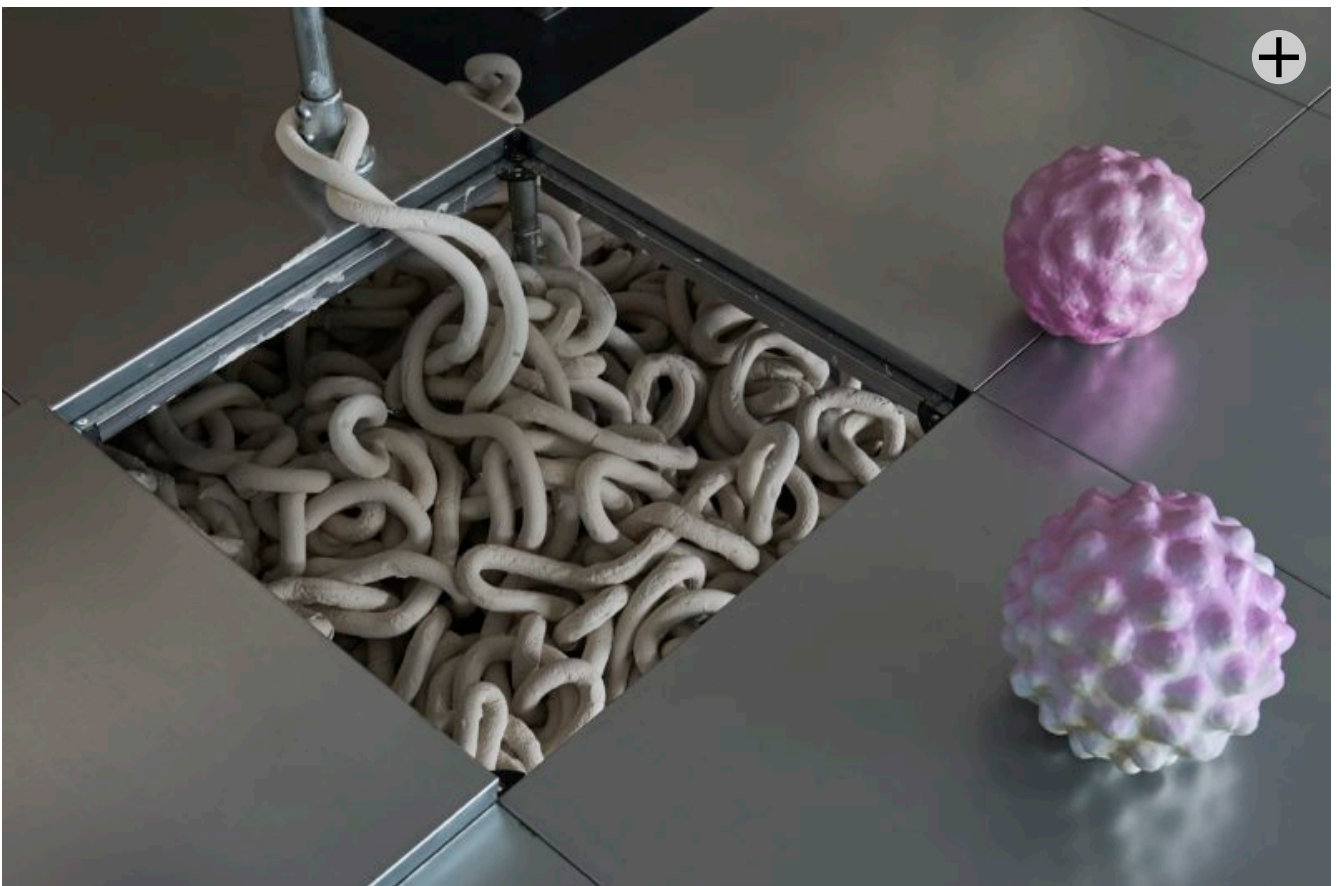
Melanie Jackson, 'Deeper in the Pyramid', 2018, installation view. Courtesy Patrick Dandy

Grand Union, a gallery in Digbeth, Birmingham, is located near the former *Bird's Custard* factory. Melanie Jackson's solo exhibition, comprising animation, sculpture and a glossy publication written collaboratively with

Esther Leslie, is an exploration of milk, the main ingredient of custard; a pleasing coincidence. *Deeper in the Pyramid* brings together the many associations of this white fluid, its use and representations, from biologically essential to technologically disconcerting.

Elevated metal flooring, like a deconstructed grid, forms a space simultaneously dense and light. All three video works in the gallery emit ambient sounds, at times reminiscent of the satisfying noise of a PS1 PlayStation—tickling the gamer-brain. For non-gamers, this computer-generated digital chiming takes you to another world. On the grid itself, iridescent bulbous sculptures are sparsely arranged, occasionally clustered together, like constellations in a night sky.

A white hanging sculpture—a paper-snowflake or molecular structure perhaps—divides the room. Natural light floods in through the large window, bouncing off the metal grid. A zigzag cardboard construction lines the walls: some of these ‘walls’ have shelves for the exhibition publication, *Deeper in the Pyramid*, a compilation of research undertaken by artist Melanie Jackson and Esther Leslie, professor of Political Aesthetics at Birkbeck, University of London.



Melanie Jackson, 'Deeper in the Pyramid', 2018, installation view. Courtesy Patrick Dandy

Three videos are fixed on elevated poles stretching up from the grid. All are short and on a loop. In one, a white lactic compound piles up like Play-Doh, perpetually spinning, producing more and more and then jolting to resemble a collage of GIFs oscillating over Instagram stories and selfies: the screen becomes overloaded with data.

Another video displays thermal greens and pinks overlaid with a cartoon cat guzzling milk, rubbing its belly to indicate sated fullness. A fast cycle of images acts like a chemical reaction to this milky overdose. The final video has a particularly memorable moment—a baby languidly moves around a cosmos. Harking back to the iconic Nirvana *Nevermind* (1991) album cover, this infant is instead surrounded by water, an avatar floating in clouds of baby formula.

These kaleidoscopic videos illustrate a breaking down and reforming of positions, viewpoints, opinion. There is no narrative: the underlying message touches on a story of milk which, in debunking the pastoral fantasy of cows and farmers, places the ubiquitous product in a more complex world of meaning than it is generally associated with.



Melanie Jackson, 'Deeper in the Pyramid', 2018, installation view. Courtesy Patrick Dandy





with the vegan agenda'. Milk's entanglement in contemporary social, political and technological discourse is all too complex and concerning.

*Laura O'Leary is curator and writer based in Birmingham*

*Deeper In The Pyramid will be shown at Primary in Nottingham, and Banner Repeater in London, later in 2018*

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a Dostoyevsky Wannabe Experiment



# **Liberating the Canon:** **An Anthology of Innovative Literature**

Edited by  
Isabel Waidner

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#43 - MAY 2018

**WE'RE ALL STRANGERS IN SOMEONE'S PUB**

Nasser Hussain reviews *Liberating the Canon: An Anthology of Innovative Literature* edited by Isabel Waidner, published by Dostoyevsky Wannabe

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L A R A  
F E I G E L



F R E E  
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*Life, Liberation and Doris Lessing*

B L O O M S B U R Y



#43 - APRIL 2018

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Victoria Horne on Lara Feigel's *Free Woman: Life, Liberation and Doris Lessing*

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