

# GRIN

THE SPLIT CURATED BY AMANDA  
SCHMITT KAREL APPEL MICHEL  
AUDER SOFI BRAZZEAL NICOLAS  
GUAGNINI BROOK HSU DAWN  
KASPER SARAH KURTEN  
JASON LOEBS MICHAEL MAHALCHICK  
EBECHO MUSLIMOVA DAVINA SEMO  
AT GRIN, APRIL 22 - MAY 20, 2017

## THE SPLIT CURATED BY AMANDA SCHMITT

APRIL 22 - MAY 20, 2017

RECEPTION: APRIL 22, 6 - 9PM

Karel Appel  
Michel Auder  
Sofi Brazzeal  
Nicolas Guagnini  
Brook Hsu  
Dawn Kasper

Sarah Kurten  
Jason Loeb  
Michael Mahalchick  
Ebecho Muslimova  
Davina Semo

*This separation of oneself from one's needs and feelings is an instinctive maneuver in order to shut off excessive pain. We call it the split. The organism splits in order to protect its continuity.*

-Arthur Janov

I came across a book, *The Primal Scream, Primal Therapy: The Cure for Neurosis*, authored by Arthur Janov, on the street. I had found the tattered copy of the original edition (published by Dell Publishing Co. in 1970) sitting in a gutter in Manhattan's Upper West Side, just a block or so away from the Dakota on West 72nd Street. I was drawn to its enigmatic cover image (in this particular edition: a mouth, wide-open and apparently screaming, emerging through the cover of what appears to be a bolted box or book), its promotion as a cure for neurosis, and its title promising a potential link to the Reichian method, a specially painful form of a regressive therapy that my partner had undergone in previous years.

According to Janov's Primal technique, patients absolve themselves from their neurosis and deeply layered repression, while simultaneously avoiding psychosis, by reliving the original trauma through the seemingly simple task of screaming one's pain away. Since its initial release in 1970, the book has sold more than one million copies internationally and has been translated into various foreign languages. It quickly became infamous perhaps because of its profound effect on superstars John Lennon and Yoko Ono, who underwent Primal therapy in early 1970, and who also lived in the neighborhood in which I found my copy of the book. The album John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band, released in December of the same year neatly and loudly records their involvement with Janov. Lennon and Ono, and Vietnam, were of course the cultural reality of my parents' generation, not mine.

My main interest in Janov's unique view is how early childhood trauma is experienced (both in minor and severe forms) and how, to cope—as a protective maneuver—the organism instinctively splits, thus suppressing unfelt feelings and creating unreal needs. Through a successful primal therapy session, by figuratively touching the pain the trauma is relived and thus resolved. I also enjoy that fact that Primal Theory is essentially anti-Freudian as it bypasses language and focuses on 'the organism that knows but cannot feel'.

If the task of critical culture, in Freudian terms, is the return of the repressed, illustrated by pitting subculture against culture, low against high, and oppressed against canonical; then, in Primal terms, the task of this exhibition is not to thematize Primal theory and its subcultures, but to investigate the method of how each artist arrived at the work they create: the primal practice.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the implicit simplification inherent to a pop-psychology item of the early seventies, I found the idea of "the split" resonating with many things I've heard in my conversations with artists. Through the simple idea of a split I could look at artists as "organisms" and find commonalities more methodological than cultural. The primal is beyond culture. It's both acultural and anti-cultural. What unites the works in *The Split* is more "how" the artists arrived to them than "what" they purport to represent—this exhibition hence rejects the thematic or the illustrational while still aspiring to address our contemporary condition.

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Amanda Schmitt is a curator based in New York City, and the director of programming of UNTITLED, Miami Beach and San Francisco. Her recent curatorial projects include *Surface Support* at Signal in Brooklyn, NY, *Walk-ins Welcome* at Marlborough, Broome Street, New York, NY, *Good Luck Paintings* at The Suburban, Chicago, IL, *Seven Easy Steps* at Horton Gallery in New York, NY, performance and radio at UNTITLED, Art Fair, and numerous international video screening and performance series.

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GRIN is an artist-run gallery located in Providence, Rhode Island presenting an interdisciplinary program focused on emerging and underexposed artists. Directed by Corey Oberlander and Lindsey Stapleton, GRIN is located at The Plant in the historic Olneyville District of Providence, Rhode Island. It was founded in 2013 as a space for artists and curators to develop and exhibit their work with a steady curatorial hand.

[grinprovidence.com](http://grinprovidence.com)

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Open Saturdays 12PM - 5PM, and by announcement, appointment, and chance.