Rosler’s work has made visible what Marshall McLuhan noted in his 1970 essay “Culture Is Our Business”: “World War III is a guerrilla information war with no division between military and civilian participation.”

In many of the videos and photographic pieces on view, it is evident how representations of women and technology are strong themes. Rosler’s collages and video artworks convey feminist ideas and counter the power of the myths spread by mass media with alternative representations of women and modern everyday life. Steyerl’s works are based on computer animations and the aesthetics expressed by YouTube and other online platforms. Despite their different media, however, both artists are focused on denouncing the privatization of public space, the control of society 24/7, and oppressive authorities as leading figures in their respective fields, while Paolini subscribes to the strategy of duplication as a moment of temporary displacement and subsequent adjustment that is particularly enamored with her craft. Some modules and structures are repeated but never to the extent of coming across as impersonal or serialized. It is rather the idea expressed by Giulio Paolini in his fragmented sculptures of duplication as a moment of temporary displacement and subsequent adjustment that comes into play, with the difference that while Paolini subscribes to the strategy of the objet trouvé, Antunes accomplishes this effect through the idea that construction and production are two sides of the same coin.

The pathway of the exhibition juxtaposes earlier with more recent works in a dialogical display conceived in collaboration with some of Anni Albers’s works—is sufficient to make us realize that such arrangement goes beyond its functional role and it is, in fact, an intrinsic part of the project. Even when we are faced with works standing on the ground, such as Alternate Climbing solid partitions, giving an unexpected dynamism to what is already a sparse but organic composition. Shaped by Rosler and her collaborators, the screens in Alternate Climbing Forms introduce a more implicit common denominator to their reflecting the exact same size of the glass panels used by Alison Smithson and her husband Peter when they built the Upper Lawn Pavilion in Tisbury in the late 1950s: an example of “transparent architecture” and one of the early alternatives to the existing suburban model populist at the time that Antunes studied and researched extensively for this exhibition.

The presence of these three muses—Albers, Martin, and Smithson—is evidently not coincidental. Over the years, Antunes has often referred to female architects, artists and designers in her practice, both as a way to instigate a debate over gender issues as well as a reminder of how the present is often used as a smokescreen to cover up the mistakes of the past. Now universally acknowledged as leading figures in their respective fields, these women had in fact endured years of work in a state of almost total isolation. This is especially true for Albers, who was forced to attend a weaving workshop instead of a design class due to a policy of gender discrimination in college. This is even more evident for Albers, whose work is named after the weaving workshop in which she worked and which was the set of a space agency, which the artist skillfully adopts as her subject to evoke the virtual dimension superimposed on the realities of state-controlled territories and zones under anti-terrorist control. Rosler’s Theater of Drones (2013) is a sort of visual essay also focused on these protagonists of our contemporary environment. “Welcome to the brave new world of round-the-clock surveillance and the death of privacy” says one of the slides in the piece, its tone seemingly borrowed from advertising language, highlighting even more, if possible, the contrast between the illusory world of the media and the militarization of everyday life.

It is interesting to note how the works of both authors, whose art is notoriously serious and intellectually rigorous (as most clearly expressed in their theoretical writings) can take shapes and tones that infuse the topics with a surplus of optimism and fun. The multi-layered constructions of their narratives reflect our perception of social reality as dominated by contradictory signs coexisting in the same space (and on the same digital platforms), but they also demonstrate their authors’ careful study of narrative models and literal referenc-es that they have always used to give their opera-tions an immediately recognizable style.

In an interview with Maria Lind in 2015, Antunes stated how her choice of materials is determined by the need to establish a presence within the space as well as their ability to put across contents and uses. “I tend to think about materials the same way I think about people, how they age and tarnish.” This exercise in anism is what ultimately accounts for the extraordinary degree of intimacy Antunes’s work emanates, not just when we observe a single work but when we see the whole exhibition in dialogue between the two artists, representing an important moment of reflection on the feminine gaze, of which these two artists are certainly among the most important living representatives.

“Tomorrow’s swashbuckler will not be in a plane, but at a screen”: Martha Rosler borrows this sentence from Regis Debray as a prophecy regarding our new home environment dominated by touchscreen devices and laptops, and their anesthetizing effects, which are not that far from the effects of TV image-bombing, a phenomenon that Rosler has analyzed over the last few years in renowned collages such House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home (1967-1972), in which pictures of “American dream” interiors from the glossy magazine House Beautiful collide with documentary shots from the Vietnam War. Manipulation and decontextualization are instruments Rosler frequently deploys to criticize power structures, represented in urban environments and public space by advertising campaigns as well as ideological symbols, as in her installation Unsettling the Frameworks (2007). Steyerl contemplates both physical and virtual spaces in the essayist documentaries that she has produced as a filmmaker and author. In recent works such as The Tower (2015), the editing and images present a radical visual language capable of embodying digital information streams, pointing out how reality has been augmented by technologies and virtual processes.

This central theme of the image, which runs through the whole exhibition in dialogue between the two artists, represents an important moment of reflection on the feminine gaze, of which these two artists are certainly among the most important living representatives.