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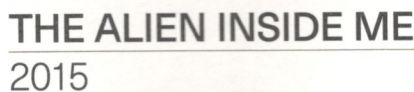
# BEFORE THE BEGINNING AND AFTER THE END

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GOSHIKA MACUGA

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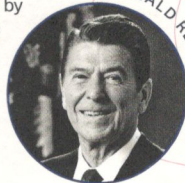
Already in the midst of contemplating themes of endings, post-human scenarios, and "humanity's ability to conceive itself abstractly" in her research for her exhibition at Fondazione Prada, Macuga wrote a performance featuring an alien visiting earth after humanity's extinction. Intrigued by Immanuel Kant's longstanding interest in the existence of aliens, Macuga uses this as a starting point to create a comic scene derived from an alien's research. Prompted by his contact with the works of astronomer Thomas Wright, Kant was fascinated by the possibilities that arose from the study of the universe and the idea of the existence of extra-terrestrial life, the thought of which gave rise to a question that he deemed could only be answerable by aliens: "What is man?" Kant's contemplations comically shrink man's importance within the universe, comparing "man" to an over-confident insect who finds the non-insect world to be irrelevant, "Man, standing immensely removed from the uppermost rank of beings, is indeed bold to flatter himself in a similar delusion [i.e., similar to that of the blithe bug] about the necessity of his own existence." This observation is later echoed by Friedrich Nietzsche but phrased in the first person, the statement elaborates on the ontological threat posed by the study of astronomy. Concerning the humiliating and discrediting effect of astronomy, Kant has left us a remarkable confession: "It annihilates my importance."



Created at a moment that coincided with Macuga's research that led up to her 2016 project at Fondazione Prada [27], *The Alien Inside Me* comically captures some of the questions around human nature that also inform *To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll*.

**Reference subjects and objects:** *3rd Rock from the Sun*, 1996–2001; David Bowie, *Ziggy Stardust* (from *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, 1972); Jonathan Glazer, *Under the Skin*, 2013; Yuva 1.0, *Harari, Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, 2015; Homo sapiens; Eartha Kitt, *Where is my man?*, 1955; *Planet of the Apes*, 1968; *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, 1979; *Mindy*, 1978–1982; *Number of Names-Shani*, 1979; Hacke and Vitalic Remix; Ridley Scott, *Alien*, 1979; Spielberg, E. T., 1982; Stromboli; Sumerian Gods; *The Volcanoes on Mars*; Robert Wise, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 1951

LI VOLCANO



SPACE SHUTTLE



## BOATS ON MARS



Well, now that's just unkind sir... I've been working—and enduring long phases of loneliness. Cruising the galaxy has been easy, especially when you're looking for dead