

Art Exhibition Reviews

2021

Foreword

Art Exhibition Reviews 2021 has started at the turn of the year with the desire for a proof-of-celebration in spite of this discontinued experience of Art as a social phenomenon. It became a triangulated lovestory between viewer, artist, and the spaces we share. It is an attempt on the avowed neutrality of that space.

Initiated through a request to thirty individuals from various fields of Art to write a review of an exhibition of 2021 in the broadest sense, this collection of texts mines the multiple exit points the experience of Art provokes.

It is a bit of a misunderstanding. The magic of a haptic image in the mind of a receiver. It is evidence of how the minimal amount of three (non)human subjects breed wireless compasses, also known as mycelia.

It seems natural, and generous, that the authors slip from simply reviewing towards a gesture of reciprocity. In turn, this new reciprocal relationship may facilitate a part for the reader here to play. In several moments, the authors made me think that there can be tender gestures of disruptive visibility.

A year in which the datafication of flesh was the defining means of participation, sharing what happened feels like luxury. Driven by the unavoidable taste of collective dissociative disorder that we have left 2021 in, Art Exhibition Reviews 2021 delivers a partial and collective recording of the year, furthermore inviting to verify on one's own terms, what counts as an event.

I want to thank all the authors for their trust, time, dedication, and patience. Thank you Joe Andrews for supporting this project profoundly. Thank you to the two angels and to Kunstverein München for making the print of this project happen.

Consent

Vassiliea Stylianidou aka Franck-Lee Alli-Tis

Melanie-Jame Wolf

Jacob Peter Kovner

Jan Kunckel

Kelly Lloyd

Auto_Anon

Steffen Koehn

Dalia Maini

Matthew Peers

Xavier Robles de Medina

Dylan Spencer-Davidson

Jenkin Van Zyl

Jame St. Findlay

Róisín McQueirns

Sa Lomba

Emmanuel Awuni

Isaac de Reza

monika jaeckel

Frances Drayson

Steve Paul Steven Paul

Renata Zas

Veronika Draexler

Dominik Busch

Robin Stretz

Kara Hondong

Conor Gilligan

Lena Marie Emrich

Ellie Harman-Taylor

Enej Gala

Catinca Malaimare

Leonilson

Alvin Baltrop

Bea Schlingelhoff

Brook Hsu

Julia Vogl

James Larter

Athens Biennale

Notes on [____] at [____]

Michael Dean

Thea Djordjaze

Morandi

Henrike Naumann

Vaginal Davis

The Cause, London

Mike Silva

Andro Eradze

Red.Back Movement

Maria Garcia Torres

Sol Oosel

Christina Sharpe

Ayşe Erkmen

HR Giger & Miree Lee

Disnovation

Pippilotti Rist

Nine nights: Channel B

Sky Brown

Trees Die Stand: Humans and
Plants

Lubaina Himid

Özgür Kar

A response by Franck-Lee Alli-Tis aka Vassiliea Stylianidou

Nur zu, Schauer!

15.12.21

You asked me to write a text on an
'Aus'
'Stellung'

18.12.21

I want to write this text now
It will help me to distinguish
The 'source' from
The 'location'
What kind of source could hold our bodies?

05.12.21

The air was cold and the
line long
They asked me to show my id But we didn't have to wait
They always deny entrance to other bodies
(Who speak their language differently)
How many bodies?
Bodies that [redacted] and bodies that [redacted] bodies that [redacted]
bodies that [redacted] their bodies

We entered the space

11.3.21

Nun doch ohne Zuschauer
The revolution will be performed
Without an audience

01.3.21

The space is perpetually translated into sound
Behind
Moiré fingers
Fluttering their fugitive wings in my singing palm

23.02.21

Today the news of the sparrows brings the promising storm of
New alliances

In the midst of #metoogr I started reading Joyce Carol Oates' *Zombie*,
where a serial killer speaks

In the first person

"My whole body is a numb tongue", he whispers leaking his saliva
into the printed words

I close the book and open the searching machine

I type the word `purple´

The color of a tongue in torment

The screen gets saturated with sharp exposures of

A purple institutional suit

The face framed by a well-combed concept

My ear stumbles over the term

Critical Raw Materials

The well-positioned decisive voice

clarifies

As we fought (the virus),

We found (new ways of working with industries)

Let's move from crisis mode to

A new

Cruising

Speed of

Cooperation

I straighten my ears

And I hear misspelled

The language of augmented political reality is white with blue eyes

I put the word `institutional cruising´ in the searching machine

05.01.21

I saw her sitting on the park bench, the cigarette hanging from her
hands in the way one

erases

Words with one's voice

I hadn't intended to hug her so I hurried to asked her

how the cigarette butt kissed her

silence

She got up as soon as she saw me and we walked on the cool wet grass

until it started to snow

It snowed all afternoon

Thicker and thicker

When we reached the top of the hill, we stood in front of a tree trunk

Its zigzag separated us from the flatland

What kind of letter is this tree?

I began to read aloud the wet shapes on the ground

What unheard words does this tree trunk dream of?

An alphabet in the momentum of the wind

You need no preparation, she says

The wind dances with the hair of our ears

Lust und Sprache

ξανά

και

ξανά

01.01.21

Ἦρθε ίσως η ώρα to equal the snow with the sea

~~Replace 'hold' with care~~

20.05.21

Over the next few days, I read dictionaries and newspapers

The largest iceberg has detached

Firestorm

New no

New mobilization

Museums and casinos

Will open

In anticipation of the arrival of spring

The cheerful air will accompany

The cautious devotion of the tourists

The ocean whispers
*can proximity create transformation?*¹
Schauer an Schauer

1 Paraphrasing Ocean Vuong's words

Melanie-Jame Wolf

response to
Leonilson

Leonilson

Drawn 1975-1993

KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin

Looking for a way in to writing about the Leonilson show at Berlin's KW Institute of Contemporary Art I keep getting stuck. I am bogged down in locating an angle when what I want to talk about is so earnest, so straightforward. Like the show itself. The show - Leonilson Drawn 1975-1993 - left me undone. Simple. It broke me open. I hadn't heard of the artist before. I didn't read the biographical information or the curatorial texts. I went there chasing a hunch about form. I went there because the show had been recommended to me in a conversation about textiles.

It was the first exhibition I'd been to in a long time. I went in May, thawing out from the covid pandemic's first impossible winter. I arrived upstairs via the Amelie von Wulffen show on the first floors. Where literal fake shit smeared on the walls between the German paintings left me feeling like a softly bruised fugitive. On the way up I carried some heavy questions about the potential for liberatory imagination, what I want from painting, who I am in this country. Ten works or so inside and I was a mess. I had to go out several times to stand in the stairwell and pull myself together. Undone.

It was a stitch of black embroidery cotton fixing a glass bead to white cloth that did it. Handwork performing across time. Leonilson in the early 90's to me and you in 2021. Then and there here and now. Wry, dry humour. Bitchy, not camp. Aching sadness. Tender wonder. Terrible love. Divine love. Dying, loves. **Handsome. Selfish.** Shorthand diary in gossip stitch. Boys. Immediate. Alive. Hearts. Lungs. Livers. Lace. Guts. Fucking Poetry. The world. The World. I was undone.

These stitches touching with their unbearable lightness, prying open an aperture of transcendence. These stitches doing that phenomenal poetic thing that only art can do only if the pursuit of form is serious and smart and utterly divested from a privileged politics of cringe. Nothing disingenuous - just making you cry about things bigger than yourself. Everything measured for pleasure. Everything on fire. A show I will never forget. Cross my heart.

Jacob Peter Kovner

response to
Alvin Baltrop

Alvin Baltrop
Galerie Buchholz, Berlin

The show that has stuck with me the most this year is Alvin Baltrop's photographs, as shown at Daniel Buchholz in the Spring. Spectacular art and big retrospectives all rang hollow for me this year; rather than craving art, I wanted to experience vitality. These low-fi mostly black and white photos seemed deeply alive yet cinematic, grounded yet poetic. Yet, I feel hesitant to mention them. I hate nostalgia, particularly that particular nostalgia which lionizes old New York from a very comfortable distance, glamorizing old, precaritized queer existence from the comfort of a tame, gentrified existence. But these photographs offer more than a quick dose of Bohème nostalgia.

The bulk of the works feature the famous piers on New York's West Side, seen between the mid 70s and 80s (Baltrop died in 2004). Baltrop lets all the layers of interest shine through. His camera shows us the piers themselves in nearly affective states – rigid in their large scale, vulnerable in their incoherence. When he shifts his gaze to the men in them, sometimes they are loitering in strange constellations like gangsters anticipating a gunfight in a film noir; sometimes they're right there at the end of the lens, in the act, but not caught – that's not Baltrop's way. And sometimes, a body is allowed to be poetic, traced by sunlight, or making the long line of reaching just beyond comfort.

The men Baltrop looks at don't take on a persona for the camera. And Baltrop, accordingly, gives space to be horny, space to be beautiful, space to just be.

The show pointed visitors to an archival interview with Baltrop available online. He speaks about his own work, his fascination with the piers as well as the huge amounts of time he spent there, and most of all, the people. It's not a case of artist snaps pics of pretty, talented friends. But it does have something to do with community: he has the knowledge that comes with urban contact and being part of the community of cruisers: familiarity, anonymity, possibilities for danger, as well as intimacy. The youth you just saw the portrait of – he has a story, and Baltrop knows it. He wasn't stealing their lives or (only) watching voyeuristically. Behind what looks like just another nostalgia show is something multilayered, curious about different kinds of people and different kinds of togetherness, most of all, with a beautiful sense of life.

Jan Kunkel

response to
Bea Schlingelhoff
Brook Hsu

Bea Schlingelhoff, No River to Cross
Kunstverein München

Brook Hsu, Fictions,
Gallery Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin

These vast green rectangles of memory

In 2018, I was gifted a dark green scintillating painting from a beloved friend. Back then, I didn't comprehend that I'd look at it for almost every future day to come. The multiplying silhouettes of green adhere to the semiotics of the gift itself, namely its pharmacon-effect.

It invited me as much as it pulled me away. In its ambiguous color scheme, the painting nonetheless provoked a transpersonal revelation between the friend and me, trespassing seemingly empty imagery.

It delineates a maze of enjoyment and displeasure – our diverging mosaic of pain. I guess I'm oversimplifying for dramatic effect, but that's the lure of the ontology of a secret.

In context, summoning historical recursions, Kazimir Malevich's infamous Black Square in the top corner of the room - in lieu of the Russian Orthodox icon - transmitted a metaphysical moment by the form of its hanging. The captured event remains inaccessible, dissolving in vast murkiness. Similar to truth, the traumatic utterance is trapped in the relativism of pictorial language. It mimics the funeral ritual of painting within and beyond its boundaries of material heft.

Consequently, when absence appears like content, the negation of information turns performative in the bodily shell of an encrypted message. That is my body-mind trying to speak a score of the truth uniquely.

To me, the ultimate seduction of remembering lives on in the yet unknown mythopoetic fusing of the colour green against an obsidian historical background. Its obscene interstice of becoming material stimulates speculation and projection. Now, diffracting green rectangles incubates my healing zone amid the bleeding doom of 2021. Green is resurrected and reified in two of this year's exhibitions closest to my throbbing heart. Kunstverein München hosted Bea Schlingelhoff's solo exhibition No River to Cross (11. September - 21. November), while the Berlin-based gallery Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler presented Brook Hsu's solo show Fictions (16 September - 1 November). Green, evoked by a dominant wavelength of roughly 495–570 nm, infests me continuously. A recondite feeling of rejoicing that lingers between poor health and pledging happiness.

The sanctified aura of my recall shrinks. Since the hauntingly sacred elicits a barrier to information, a sphere of mystery spans over my cognitive reprisal of what may have really happened in all these cryptic, colour-coded cavities of memory. In Hsu's portraits, the faces »are soaked in a dense green wash«¹. Almost simultaneously, Schlingelhoff reconstructs the Nazi-fascist Degenerate Art Exhibition of 1937 as a »ghostly presence«² in pistachio and mossy green. Blending the signification fields of »fiction« and »river« as currents that interlace my remembrance makes me feel abundantly grounded under an alien sky. Being against amnesia means embracing grieving. »river« as currents that interlace my remembrance makes me feel abundantly grounded under an alien sky. Being against amnesia means embracing grieving.

1 Quoting Christina Gigliotti & Catherine Wang for Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler

2 Quoting Kunstverein Muenchen and Studio for Propositional Cinema

A vicious circle closes, yet another more permeable process of working the wound through opens up.

PS: After a period of absence, I reencountered my friend inside the womb of the green chambers, inserted into the exhibition spaces in Berlin and Munich, and in my peccant room at the top corner where pleasure floods any attempt to purity. I've seen their silhouettes again, with no anger but grace.

Kelly Lloyd

response to
Julia Vogl
James Larter

Julia Vogl, *Still Dot Moving*
James Larter, *Polarity*
Rebecca James' *Show home*, London

Moments when it feels like everything is totally fucked, but it's still going to be ok, are rare. James Larter's live marimba performance within Julia Vogl's multi-media exhibition *Still Dot Moving* on 2 October 2021 was one of them. So much so that I immediately went home and purchased Larter's *Polarity* album even though I don't have a record player, and am considering purchasing a light projector to poorly approximate the feeling.

For *Still Dot Moving*, Vogl silkscreened colorful patterns onto 35 mm film, which were then spliced together, fed into a projector, recorded, digitized, and projected onto a large living room wall where a white screen was installed to disguise (or replace) the window. The floor was covered wall-to-wall in dark green and blue silkscreened fabric cut into large tiles and sewn together. All the furniture in the apartment gallery had been taken out except for a daybed and a couch, both muted in bespoke white slipcovers sewn by Show Home Director Rebecca James.

Larter and his marimba were placed on the opposite end of the room from Vogl's film, so they could exist simultaneously, without one framing the other. Instead, they ordered one another with the clear tones of Larter's percussion narrating Vogl's looped 10-minute abstract film, making each sequence feel new; the patterns morphing into one another and crowding each other out, structuring and being structured.

You know when you're in the passenger seat of a car, and the rain on the window half-obscures the world, turning it into a pattern. Then the people and places outside the window sync up to the music you're playing and the speed of the car. And for a moment everything slows down, and makes sense, and becomes manageable, and beautiful. Like that. For two 30-minute sets that night, it felt like that.

A response by Auto-Anon

@autogyniphiles_anonymous

Some nudes I've received this year:

- A soft girls cock a few months away from being cut off cumming or pissing, it was a video but it was hard to tell, from words I had written
- A sex worker relaxing with pizza a client had bought her casually telling me about her day
- "Do I look pretty as a girl?"
- "Would I look pretty as a girl?"
- A new couple sending proof of a successful first date
- A trans guy showing me how hard he can get

- A nb person showing off the tattoo my ex gave them
- An autistic girl sending nudes because she's trying to learn to be look more "natural" in them
- A trans guy putting his metamour's dilators inside himself to see if he can

When an artist hosts a show of their own work we call it an exhibit. When a person enjoys showing off their own body as a kink we call it exhibitionistic. When we try to taxonomize we ask what traits something or someone exhibits. When a meme page posts a meme, and it is subsequently added to the page, we do not call that an exhibit. We call it posting. We also do not call tweets exhibits. It would seem then to exhibit is to display something proudly and publicly. But when we have found proof of a murder, often the evidence is listed Exhibit A, Exhibit B etc. Well in this case certainly the criminal is not displaying proudly.

However, perhaps the police are proud of having found things. So, an exhibit does not need to belong necessarily to the displayer. The line between what is an exhibit and what is not and if our common-sense use of the word is accurate is unclear and would require much more space to parse. However, it would seem a commonality is a curate desire to convey through materials something immaterial. Or materials representing or signifying something immaterial. Perhaps that's why nudes hold such power, and why the best ones aren't poses mimicking porn you've seen, but people trying to tell you something. A nude can be, and often is, imbued with importance.

Steffen Koehn

response to
Athens Biennale

"Eclipse", the seventh edition of the Athens Biennale, curated by the Berlin artist collective OMSK Social Club and the Ghanaian-American curator Larry Ossei-Mensah already makes a statement with the choice of the central exhibition location: An empty department store in the center of this is economically bled-out city in which abandoned billboards display sports stars and models from the early 2000s.

They are almost indistinguishably linked with works of art whose form aims at a mimicry of capitalist commodity aesthetics. Simon Denny shows a board game about the extraction of raw materials, Jacolby Satterwhite presents a VR walk through a virtual electronic music festival with pumping vocal house tunes and bizarre guests, and Andrew Roberts mounts a truncated foot with the Nike logo on the wall as if he were a new arrival at the Foot Locker store. In addition to the physical exhibition locations (in addition to the department store, an old courthouse and an office complex), a large part of the exhibition takes place in virtual spaces. A striking number of works are actively involved in world building, taking the form of computer games, augmented reality sculptures, digital live simulations, or tarot sets.

The endeavor to create new, alternative worlds is strongest in the numerous works by artists from the African diaspora, for example in Miles Greenberg's video of one of his sculptural performances that refer to imaginary mythologies or Paul Mpagi Sepuya's intimate studio portraits. The political moment of this biennial, whose work is so dedicated to the technological possibilities, aesthetics and imperatives of the metaverse, is probably to be sought precisely here, in the gaps that will be settled in this upcoming digital super-platform.

A response by Dalia Maini

Notes on (___) at (___), Berlin

At the entrance of the exhibition [___], after checking our proof of the vaccine, a receptionist handed over the list of artworks on view, a blueprint of the space, and a marker – to me and other 5 visitors. A blue-tiled architecture of [___] however, was devoid of any sense of human craft or utility device. I meant to ask the person at my left whether they knew how to experience the exhibition, but as I moved closer they made a step back to avoid any contact.

Soon, one of the mediators came to find us and gathered us in the main room where 3 crates stood at its center. “The artists invite you to curate your own group show” – they said, “to question your own spectatorial role, to find your own message, to formulate your own sense, to make something meaningful collectively and for one another and for the next visitors who will build on your choices.” Unsure of how to behave, I moved toward the crates and chose among a couple of canvases by [___] and a video of [___] a recorder; after pressing play, the neutral voice of a person repeated in a machinist loop - weaponize your body at work... It must have been [___]’s audio piece. The other visitors, now my peers, slowly followed me and each of them in turn took a piece, maybe guided by an instinct beyond objectual-human belonging.

Although none of us expected to be part of a Live Active Role Play on exhibition making, negotiating arrangements, ideas and cultural desires, the organization started organically from there. A couple of hours later at the end of our time-slot before leaving, we were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement, after which we received an invitation to come back in 3 months for the finis-

It will be in 4 days from when you will read this piece, I hope to see you there. To title it will be your responsibility.

A response by Matthew Peers

Sculpture: The ineffability of emergence

Dust, Light, Volume

Micheal Dean, Kiss Emitting Die Odes, October-December, 2021, Herald Street, Museum Street, London

'Like earthworms whose lives are spent making more earth'

'Under the microscope, largeness becomes smallness, which becomes largeness. It was obvious that both ends were open on this continuum'

- Anne Truitt

A universe in each handful of dirt;

The thinnest sculpture, an index, imprint and touch. Dust sticks to the greasy residue of lips, the paper kissed.

Ornamentation becomes a means of grounding.

Reminiscent of etching or photocopy the paper thin sculptures framed in pairs hang like open books in the corners of the gallery. A structuralist manoeuvre to aid complication, as a viewer we begin to become aware of our own bodies and the architecture of the gallery.

Thea Djordjaze, all building as making, September 2021 - January 2022, Gropius Bau, Berlin

All text and titles are removed, the sculptures take on the history and resonance of the building. One becomes aware of the ceiling; its patina of age, layers and layers of paint, white, greying, off white, white, grey, wear and tear.

Grasping the volume of the space, the light, the atmosphere.

The work deftly and sparsely spaced

A
transparent
 perspex
 angled object sits flush to the wall,
hovering on top of the skirting

A window to its far side

The rooms walls,
 porous

Light bouncing off the perspex,
Glistening bright
 A building reflected,

Reflections as material, matter, part of the sculpture itself
 yellow leaves of the tree outside,

of a body,
of arms,
of legs and feet .

Light hits the perspex edges refracting in on its self making them opaque.
The wall behind a slightly greyer off white.

Clouds and the blue of the sky,
the greyness of the floor

and the ceiling again.

Each Sculpture is an experience of temporality, a belief of a 3d world, things
that have to be walked around. Looked under and looked over.

Morandi, Infinite Resonance, September 2021 - January 2022, Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid

Paintings that make me think of sculpture, the in-between as foreground.

Air solidifies.

The eye's movement, looking as an active, haptic process. One of examination, understanding, testing.

Boundaries, outlines and scale dissolve become confused; oscillating.

For me all three exhibitions raised more questions than gave answers. Reassuring in their positions of art as practice; an act of enquiry and complication, a place of figuring out and failing, and ultimately of emergence.

Xavier Robles de Medina

response to
Henrike Naumann

"Einstürzende Reichsbauten" (transl. Collapsing Reich Buildings)
Kunsthau Dahlem, Berlin

The press release for Henrike Naumann's solo "Einstürzende Reichsbauten" at Kunsthau Dahlem describes a "private-looking interior of a living space." Upon entering the exhibition however, the space reads more as a furniture shop. The objects are on display, with many of these also serving as supports for other, often smaller objects.

A ceramic Marlboro cigarette-case-ashtray is exhibited atop a coffee table framed by grandiose couches. A kind of 80's kitsch, that also evokes the transatlantic slave trade, imperialism, industrialization, and empire (a literal translation of the German word Reich). Another ceramic object on a dining table is a Bierkrug suffocated by a Dirndl. A Dirndl is a bustier, a common tool to slim the waist and enhance the chest, but this is a Dirndl to drink beer from.

There are silver-painted artist manikins incorporated into various tables. Manikins are generic, and designed to be manipulated and posed. They're holding up mini furniture sets on surfaces covered in fake fur. This stacking trope is repeated throughout the exhibition, creating literal clusters of thrones.

Towards the back of the space, inside a dish cabinet in the shape of a pipe organ, are five Matryoshka dolls. Traditionally the outer layer is a grandmother figure, with the inside figures being her offspring. This alludes to sexual reproduction and Russian expansionism but in Naumann's installation, the dolls show a sequence of German chancellors, from Gerhard Schröder as the outermost layer counting down to Konrad Adenauer.

The show is housed by the former state studio of Nazi favorite Arno Breker, whose works can be seen in the room just behind Naumann's exhibition. It's another chilling reminder, alongside Naumann's show, of the remnants of the Third Reich that persist in German society today.

Understanding the building's origins, as well as the artist's decision to incorporate elements of the reception of Adolf Hitler's Obersalzberg residence, shows poignantly Naumann's methodology, of collecting and recontextualizing historically laden readymades, into a kind of collage-in-space, not of objects, but of history.

Dylan Spencer–Davidson

response to
Vaginal Davis

Izabella Bortolozzi Gallery

It had been two years since I'd been to a commercial gallery, and in that time, my hopes for what might be possible in those spaces had almost disappeared. But a snippet on a friend's story showing a gigantic, veiny papier-maché penis lovingly tucked into a spinning double bed convinced me to go.

The first thing that catches my eye upon entering are the pink books on pink bookshelves, mounted up high near the ceiling, too high to grab them to see if they're real or not. Scrawled in metallic marker on the covers are the titles: Dead President's Son, Haemorrhoids, Stairs of Sand, The Man Milker, The Bigger Life, Your Pussy Killed My Husband. Each one: by Vaginal Davis.

A week earlier, I had read a poem by Anne Boyer called Not Writing, which begins:

"When I am not writing I am not writing a novel called 1994"

It goes on to list all the poems, novels and essays that Boyer is currently not writing. She never reveals the reasons for not writing—be it procrastination, writer's block, depression, capitalism, or the fear of writing something that has already been written.

The power of the poem for me is that in writing down the list (in the form of a poem), she paradoxically frees herself from her predicament and ends up not only writing about all of these things but also creating an elegant document of the process of escaping from whatever it is that is blocking her.

On each spine, the artist's name is shortened to 'Davis,' perhaps a nod to the Angela from whom Vaginal borrows her name.

In another room, there is a huge pile of yellow A4 sheets of paper, onto which *Speaking From the Diaphragm: The Vaginal Davis Blog*: has been printed out in its entirety. This time, it's within arm's reach, undeniably real and written by the artist herself, and I leaf through it, narcissistically looking for a reference to a performance of hers in which she singled me out of the audience and flirted with me. Of course, there is no mention of me.

To make an exhibition has seemed so impossible and absurd these last two years, but to do so in a hyper-commercial space by putting some obscene books with ambivalent relation to reality on a wall, under a borrowed name, while exuding the contagious, defiant joyfulness of a black trans woman not giving a fuck while simultaneously giving a very sincere fuck, feels like the ultimate transcendence of the violent walls, systems and identities we find ourselves currently trapped in.

Jenkin Van Zyl

response to
The Cause, London

When I get around to moving the still sodden knot of zebra-print lingerie a few days later, left there as steaming votive, a little culture of mould is left growing from the sweat imprint left on my floor; something like the iridescent sheen of souring steak.

In the prior 16 months it had become increasingly clear that the Physical Real World was untenable. And besides, if I had lost the belief that this world could change for the better - than what? Pre-covid, London's queer nightlife was in a decline, and by 2017, half of London's gay bars have closed; queer venues were being pushed out by developers and profit hunters against a monotonous backdrop of drag race, social media and an attendant decline of subversion. I, meanwhile, had found myself transposing the hedonism of dance-floors for the hermetic hedonism of postgrad education.

In Summer of 2021, as an unrecognisable England braced itself for a reopening on Freedom Day, we were all craving social connection: hope, friendship, security—even negative connections like fear and, of course, anger; any connection at all. Outdoor raves, house parties and other illegal queer spaces had been fluorescing dubiously underground, however despite a light-in-the-middle-of-the-tunnel in the vaccine rollout, the notion of indoor clubbing was controversial.

In any case, the clubs opened amidst this re-negotiation of a world in which we were to regard each other's bodies as potentially fatal. Nightclubbing, however, necessarily orbits itself around the crude mess of fantasy and so despite the disagreement, and on the stroke of midnight on July 19 2021, we skittishly painted ourselves for a trial by fire.

First the most essential part of any party: the preamble. The weather—horrific! In fact, it's disgracefully hot; I melt in anything over 20 degrees and the temp is reading a sticky 30. I stupidly fill my flat with the additional heat of decorative candles, as though prepping for a seance, while nervous WhatsApp groups ping fuckk, is this acc happening? As friends arrive at mine I'm drinking, copiously, for Dutch courage; a toast to never, and melt a crumbled corner of a pill into my mouth; a first shrill taste of serotonin in something like 18 months.

After a fraught onward journey of false starts and missing passports, I brace myself by frothing back another bottle of Prosecco with Nicholas in front of the Cause's gate and reapply some plumping serum lipgloss he has brought that makes your lips dilate. Excitedly nauseous, we join the back of what will be a one-hour queue of other fags in lingerie snaking the barriers. There is an uncomfortable exhilaration of bug chasing in a pandemic, combining with the dull (but then still novel) bureaucracy of covid-passes, LFTs and the air-kissing of queens you adore and hope to never cross in daylight.

Mid-queue the uneasy thought flashes through me—god, could we live in a society where it's against the law to see our loved ones again? Knowing the answer, unfortunately, to be yes: our discomfoting adaptability one of the certainties evidenced by the last two years.

Once inside I'm a blur, my body on fire from the pure *sensation* of it all—of mass and collective bodies, of speakers... almost immediately my skittishness melts into the heat and I'm welcomed there by muscle memory. This Adonis is like being at a foam party that produces sweat and disembodied chatter rather than suds: you can't move so much as slip. Bodies become bumpers to rudder your ship through the tides; a glittering sea of fags, identikit torsos, sword swallows, dolls and gladiators, all palpably unsure if they are having a Good Time or instead the right kind of Bad Time. Rather than the world opening up *properly*, and being the first of many nights back out, it feels like the crowd has instead received news that they had one more party before the end of the world. Somewhere that world must have been outside, still in motion, but for however-many-hours we were centre of its movement; an alternate ribbon of time reeling out a viral soup of the sexy and scary.

Time becomes unbraided and gravity yields its thong until I feel scraped-out and humming, acceptably liquidated. My alarm bells are ringing, but they sound like soft rock. My past and future selves keep me company as the fog machine and blood-red lasers erase us all while a fleeting dance-partner plucks imaginary flowers out of the air to pin to my soaked harness.

Despite my indiscreet appearance, the moments where I'm most blissed-out on the dance-floor I'm feeling entirely invisible; held in the comfort that I'm in fingertip-reach of loved ones within the febrile ebb of the crowd. I want to be haunted, to make out with someone until I could taste the the iron in their sweat, I want an answer that makes my questions disappear, I want to be stunned so hard by the speakers my skull echoes for days.

The night fades on with its fair share of drama and amnesia, but when the super glue keeping my prosthetic horns and ears adhered become irrevocably unstuck I decide to call it a night. I stagger outside to starry-eyed millipedes as big as cars limping about Tottenham refreshing their Uber's.

I think we all have an addiction for fantasy: clubs were a votive for dreaming; if the world were crumbling, we used to be able to count on it to be there, weekend after weekend. I think I essentially seek to go out out because I like the space of being in a state of oblivion without feeling alone: in a good nightclub it's not about individualism or atomisation, it's a collective experience of reaching beyond yourself and creating *something*---a deluge of sensation spun amongst other fantasists.

Inevitably, the outside world (with its attendant racism, transphobia, misogyny and classism) provides the scaffolding for our queer dance floor. But I ultimately think clubbing at its best can be its own form of world building, with new logics, rules, confusions, negotiations and disappointments.

As we enter into another period of winter uncertainty I feel now at least slightly bolstered by the reassurance that our collective muscle memory can remain in tact, at least a little bit longer. So much will change, but I'm reminded and reassured by Adonis' New Year's Day party-line of *If we can, we will*.

As I let my brain become unstuck and I reel myself out into bed, I comfort myself with a lyric from a track by Jenny Hval my phone shuffled on the journey home.

You are your own disco ball Hval sings, her glassy vocals buoyed by muted drum tones;

*hovering above you like a comforting reminder,
that not even you belong to you*

A response by Jame St. Findlay

As I entered the space, the door shut behind me and blended seamlessly into the wall. It was a square room, softly lit by a grid of glowing ceiling panels. The light was off white with a slight pissy yellow hue. At the centre of the room was a deep ovoid pond set about 2ft into the ground filled almost to the brim with clear water. In the water floated what looked like a severed head, a blonde boy with rosy cheeks and a serene closed eye expression.

There was a hissing sound coming from a vent on the far wall, the air coming out of it smelled like potpourri, a generic kind of floral stench that put me in mind of a grandmothers house, a linen closet, a wooden chest. On the left hand wall there were three enormous framed images of an old man kissing the forehead of three different horses, their manes platted intricately. The horses eyes looked impossibly wet, and when I looked closer I realised that they were black glass marbles inset into the photographs. I noticed at this point that from a speaker presumably behind one of these images there came a looping clip of a young English woman talking. I pressed my ear to the glass of the frame and listened. Over and over again she said:

“My mouth is red and white and grey
And I taste it's taste all night and day”

I stood for a moment, trying to take it all in. I noticed the water in the pond was fizzing, though only slightly and at one end. A siren blasted from a tannoy somewhere, signalling that it was my time to leave the space. The door revealed itself again, opening softly and without a sound. I walked towards it, crossed it's threshold, and left.

Róisín McQueirns

response to
Mike Silva

'London Portraits and Still Lives',
The Approach, London

Let the light in

Stay a while with me

Each piece of furniture. The surrounding shapes.

Remember how it felt when you stood by the window watching the wind push
the
leaves into triangles.

The blazing heat pressing the windowsill so heavily the paint crackled beneath it.

That strange space. The conversations.

We talked about the leaves that looked greener, the flowers bolder. The fog had
parted
for a blue pillow sky.

We could see so clearly now.

I thought about why someone chooses to wear what they do. If it is sentimental,
personal, a gift, a colour someone suggested. What makes someone feel better.

Attitudes to life.

How do you absorb that yellow light?

Floor shadows. Edges, corners, windowpanes.
The white walls

Personal decorations

On the hour, feel the other, recall that warmth. Love the way he was.
Breathe in, so that it can live inside you.

Sa Lomka

response to
Andro Eradze

Andro Eradze
'Mouth of Darkness', Off-site, Tbilisi

It could be felt as if you are the one who is the seer. With urban abandoned spaces, documentation almost does not allow you to sense what's outside those walls. So it's almost impossible to adapt with time as if it is dark ages within post-apocalyptic ruins. This show has mana personality. Maybe the title itself points to the political or social crisis through supreme romanticist Victor Hugo. The strong feeling of isolation, introversion with a poetic point of view. The concentration on taxidermy images of nocturnal scavengers or winged hunters exudes a sense of surreal staging. The authenticity of found objects relating to icons of Georgian culture in metal shapes make us think that they are simulations, and the same goes for the haunting images with neon green light within.

It cannot be denied: the abstract expressionist character of metal frames perfectly articulated with graffiti on the walls and some parts of the frames playing with letters as in "EB for W"; there is a dialogue with a metal spider web. Trapped in a looped corridor in a ritualistic movement as an escape out of the mundane. With traces of handprints on the wall and eyes of soulless creatures, and the paradox of seeing it under daylight. As it is said in the exhibition text - 'And while we cstarlightin the darkness, the star light is always enough for them to find the way out '.

You can almost hear whispering voices as echoes from the past, virtually grounded inside ruins adapting to reality as a provisional being.

Emmanuel Awuni

response to
RED BACK

Red.Back Movement
Harlesden High Street, London

August 4, 2021. I journeyed down to EC4A 2AF to an exhibition hosted by Harlesden High Street Gallery. A notorious gallery that seems to have a knack for finding abandoned spaces and filling the void spaces with Art.

I hopped on my bike and as I weaved through the busy road of Piccadilly Circus. After a dull day in the studio, the only thoughts carried with me were the soft hue of orange and pink sky. The promise of summer had arrived, and its sweet scent filled the streets. 100 meters before my destination, I saw a cloud of people gathered outside the Exhibition space. I couldn't help a tingly smile curl up since we spent the past year in a lockdown.

It was a refreshing site that brought back the excitement of life. The opening had generated a spark through faces which exquisitely suffused with the warmth of the cool summer breeze, filled the gallery space with a scent of blossomed flowers. The mood for the performance was set by the security guard, who had a solid militant stance. He stood at the door conducting the number of people allowed on the floor with a chilled ardor. In our group of six, we entered the show by instruction and crept down towards the ominous red light as cautious as a snail. At the center of the room hung a red spotlight with a soft glow that drained the flow of air. The suffocating radiance of the light sedately extinguished those rosy summery thoughts swimming on the surface of my mind. To our right were three rooms. The first two were collaged with drawings and images that contained satirical scribbles and doodles intended to expose underhand structures of population control, be aware you're being watched!!!! (hmmm) Moving into the last room, there stood a shirtless black male. His face turned away from us, revealing his stained back. A back tainted with blood. A RED BACK. To our surprise, he breaks the tense silence by jumping into the air, and when his feet landed on the ground, he exploded into a krump dance that sent electrical waves throughout the room. As we watched on in total silence, his wild movement seized the flow of our thoughts and will. The tension in the room was deafening, and in my desperate attempt to take a breath, a po po (police officer) burst into the room, violently beating down on the young man.

The intensity of blows increased incrementally whenever the young man made an attempt to shield himself from the pain. RED BACK RED BACK. Excruciating screams billowing out seeped into our flesh and, to that end, suppressed our presence into a state of inertia. Despite our immobility, the sensation from his tormented screams flashed through our skins like bolts of lightning. In an instant, the warm room turned cold, freezing the chilling sweat on my head.

I couldn't help my thoughts from being lured into the gray corners of despair; where do we go from here? Another black male at the mercy of white law. Mesmerized by the scene, I unconsciously slipped into a dream state where I saw myself as the victim; I saw my rage, my own pain, my own helplessness. I asked myself, when will it stop? Is it ever going to stop? Can it be stopped? I can't help but think about Rodney King, Sandra Bland, George Floyd, Travon Martin, and countless others who burned away. Well . . . At that stage of the performance I was overwhelmed and wanted it to be over. A flood of those memories made the performance feel too real. To my bitter disappointment, I was the only participant in the audience to leave before the end...NO MORE. NO MORE RED BACK. NO MORE RED BACK. RED BACK.

To be continued....

Isaac De Reza

response to
Maria Garcia Torres
Sol Oosel

Practical Demonstrations of unique quantum systems as mechanisms to produce resonances in the Earth's atmosphere, as part of the Group Show Otroxs Mundos, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City

I have a weakness for artworks that feel cosmic, and so encountering this show, which consist of analogue stills from a performance that took place in Torcuato Di Tella University in Buenos Aires hit me by suprise. A mediated encounter with a poetic moment that deliberately hides the complexity of the event itself; I see heavy sound machines, people dressed as scientists "investigating" an art project that seems to be the very music we're hearing. The emotional linking of these diverse elements is enabled through Oosel's atmospheric soundtrack.

My immediate reaction is that this event feels sublime; it goes beyond a dynamic way to show a performance's documentation but rather there is energy in its particles; a luminescence to the stage, a brightness on its analogue shooting, and a romantic energy in how I encounter this work as I relate to the people that saw it in real life. The work is magnetic; the analogue stills that the film consist of have remarkable electricity to its visual quality. The copper paintings mounted at the back of the stage often appear throughout the video so that the viewer gets the feeling that, somehow, the music emanates from these misleading formal artworks.

I feel the idealization of an analog past, a sensible approach to the limitations of reproducing a real moment of intensity through sound and light. The aesthetics are vintage, and so nostalgic. The material quality of the analogue, but also the framing of how objects are shot reminds me that photographs are nothing but contained light, and that it always comes down to particles, to which our whole reality is made of; in this case it is the image and the music.

The analogue photos are misleading as they seem to come from archives; we have this nuanced relationship to the origin of what we see, and so there is a growing sense of hyper connectivity: the amount of people, technologies, and translations that have been distilled for those 4 min video.

A response by monika jaeckel

Ordinary Notes: On the (Un)Making of Black Meanings by Christina Sharpe

Zoomed: a doing with and caring through words

The previous year, only a few events had brought me out and about to see a show, a performance, or lecture. When asked to write a brief exhibition-year-review my mind went blank – what had I seen? Despite my love of the performative live event, what first came to mind was a virtual lecture within the Syracuse Symposium series “Conventions”, entitled Ordinary Notes: On the (Un)Making of Black Meanings by Christina Sharpe.

While virtual, there was a heightened sense of framing to Sharpe's presentation leading to a zen-like scenario, a considered placement for every object, as well as each of her gently yet precisely worded statements. A de-archiving, a recounting of narration for the sake of knowing through re-telling as unmaking thereby re-making modes of being through recognition and acknowledgement.

A work that is, as Sharpe describes her technique of confronting an unfinished history, a wake work. It was a gathering in which all attendees, rendered invisible by Zoom webinar settings, were part of the haunting of "tracking of phenomena that disproportionately and devastatingly affect Black peoples any and everywhere we are" (Sharpe, 2016: 13).

Despite being unknown to each other the sense of mending in the written expressions of acclaim inspired an experience of connection, much like any amazing live performance, lecture, or other event.

My listening was deeply immersive, and affected, despite the flat screen picture, as I learnt to make place for the unlearning of established meaning. The passion this work had elicited became obvious in the instant and nearly never-ending roll-out of 'thank you!' in the chat-window by names both familiar and unfamiliar when presenter Kevin A. Brown wisely ended without discussion. A session of a performative narrative which had re-assigned mattering of life and love for those who are deprived.

A response by Frances Drayson

In the summer, I was pinged and isolated for 10 days. Our flat holds on to heat, which I'm happy about for 11 months of the year. At that time though it was 32 degrees, and I could only work upstairs without sweating from 6 AM to 10 AM. The rest of the day I went downstairs to lie on the sofa and look for jobs.

A friend gave me a list of films to watch, and I picked *Harakiri* (dir. Masaki Kobayashi, 1962) first. The film opens with a suit of samurai armour, backlit like a devil with hell-smoke curling round it. A smooth change in lighting locates the armour in a ceremonial room. 'Date: 13th day of May, 1630. Weather: fair'

Bushido code, usually celebrated by Jidaigeki films, collapses into absurdity once a destitute *rōnin* arrives at the Iyi clan compound and explains his circumstances. Cold tension builds to an explosion of violence between the clan and the *rōnin*. Despite all potential for change, the film closes with blood being calmly scrubbed from the courtyard and the suit of armour reinstated indoors. By this point it had cooled down to 24 degrees and I could go back upstairs.

Steve Paul Steven Paul

response to
Ayşe Erkmen

Scrolling

Galerie Barbara Weiss

Through the vestibule entrance, then left. A large main room with two columns. Five narrow rows of horizontal greenish images run along the two white walls. A frozen still life of another version of the digital light panels on the buildings of Times Square, on which the quotations of the U.S. stock market are displayed. Like when Jenny Holzer and the endless playback of lettering on her LED strips had always also co-metaphorized the codified aesthetics and display of Wall Street's power and sign language. Synonymous to the American finance and trading industry, its economic power as well as its (global) political and social imperatives. Ayşe Erkmen's lined up picture catalog, "Itself 2011/2021" takes the representation and abstraction of such a power and sign language a few updates further.

This series of images is a result of Ayşe Erkmen's online search for herself. She had googled her name and mounted the resulting green monochromatic images on Dibond; by additionally selecting the green filter for the google search, assembled to a kind of algorithmically heteronomous self-portrait. An insight into how not-really-comprehensible algorithmic processes (as one of the most decisive modern power tools) co-decide about the representation of our persona in public. Which cryptic shadow commands do the algorithms follow when they allot (and order) pictures to a name to confect a representative context, and how does this affect your self-image.

Therefore, Ayşe Erkmen's portraits are portraits of the revolution. Portraits of an increasingly comprehensive digitized present, its manifestations through the Internet and the fundamentally revolutionized relations of production. Every image in Itself 2011/2021 or movement of her Scroll Movie 2020 and Capable 2019 is always also evidence and reference to a second truth in the backrooms behind retina displays of the digital revolution. The omnipresence of the godlike creative source texts or codes. With its reality-producing capabilities and law-giving structure, the source codes have risen to become the new holy scriptures, the talmudic Hadiths of the present. The new power and sign language without which nothing is and without which nothing becomes in the Internet and its associated equipment. Only the doctrines of these new holy code scriptures are undogmatic and extremely inclusive. These scriptures are open to everything and everyone to

inscribe and to become part of this additional (digital) reality and its acting realm the World Wide Web. Due to the significance for the 21. century peoples daily lifes a majority of peoples life expressions and operational interests (business activities, politics, social life, communication, education, knowledge, entertainment and so on) have migrated into this new realm or is on the way there. Directed and executed by the creational writings and instructions of the source codes and in addition, they also make us all (more or less) act according to their ideas and will. Because the digital joke is, in the mainstream internet ideology it does not matter what you do, as long as you do it. All activity seems to be in the source code's ideological sense. They do what we want and enter, so we do what they want because we enter.

This duality is the actual ambiguous nature of the Digital Age. A seductively stimulating WWWeb and App wonderland with its innumerable fabulous but equally creepy possibilities and functions veils or at least distracts from the long prevailing economic intentions behind the counters. The production and trade of (user) information. As (all the birds and fishes know by now) the prime commodity of the digitalisation. The finest constitutive (but not unproblematic) compromise. Superficially, the initially democratising ideals and promises of the mainstream internet are preserved. A free global community space for everyone to freely interlink and commune, work, exchange, and whatever. It's just that this no-cost pipe dream is largely made possible and financed by this systemic background data economy. As the (historical materialistic) cardiovascular system that keeps this whole digital Utopia idea shop on life support. *Still.*

Here, the quality of the work grows once again in the context of the exhibition. In Ayse's individual way of working, she uses the internet and digital techniques on behalf of everyone, reflecting on her individual case the general state and a matter of course of the present. She lectures about the usage and user dynamics of this quite incomparable joint attention project. Because the value of this matter only comes from the value and attention we give to it. Because every behavioural stir and contribution (the sum of usable data of our interactions) that we radiate online into the depths of the digital space is used as the main energy source, the trace elements and basic building material of that society- and reality-producing sphere of the Internet. This makes us all essential subcontractors and development workers of this hyper-reciprocal and hyper-reproductive global enterprise.

What it says about the future of artistic process or the general daily, probably a lot. Somehow this digital cycle of the *user who is also used* reminds me of the Barbara Kruger's iconic ideologically transformed epistemological principle *I shop therefore I am*, but complemented into today's *I shop so I get shopped therefore I am* and now upgraded into Ayşe Erkmen's more contemporary termed version through her pieces and images to *I google therefore I get googled therefore I am*. But again, what it all means, I don't know either, thanks.

A response by Renata Zas

This year I cannot say I saw an exhibition that changed my way of thinking. It has happened, of course, but not this year. So, after being invited by Lene Vollhardt to write about an exhibition year review for 2021 – thinking of *exhibition* in its broadest sense – I faced within myself this contradiction: I always like writing about things that have changed my way of seeing the world. In fact, that's basically my aim: my professional motive and maybe a way of life.

I see a lot of things changing in the Arts, though: due to the pandemic (from which we are already very exhausted), due to the digitalised society (which I spend time observing & thinking through), and due to cultural changes (that have marked society throughout history). We could think of this scene I am describing as an exhibition, because indeed, it's kind of it. Lately, I ask myself how a visionary would have seen real cultural and social changes coming? I mean not to the ones that can be found on the surface, such as jeans fashion or the global warming protest movement. Please don't interpret this as less important, but the ones that completely transform the way we see things, the world: what's in front of us, and what's a bit hidden or not in front of our faces.

I guess, maybe, Spinoza could be a possible interlocutor in this question...not sure if he would have tea with me. And, though today more people are reading him, not so many can apply his philosophy to their lives. *God deus natura*. I see a lot of new trends in the arts, which seem a bit like new fashions that most people inhabiting the spaces we all have built seem to like, almost fanatically. I cannot skip being a bit worried about any fashion or trend fanaticism, since criticality – at least how I understand it – lives on the margins.

I guess art, surely philosophy, and no doubt my political education at secondary school, and of course, the reality I cannot deny every day of my life living in Buenos Aires-Argentina, has given me eyes to see different angles of reality. Or maybe, this was just there, inside of me, and all what I consumed, consciously or not, has helped me to feel more solid about it – *donno*. I speak in the first person, but I am sure, that each of us can transpolate this example to their own lives and eyes: we are affected by all that surrounds, but we also carry something within us from the day we are born.

I wonder whether we could think further about the role of art and why we are replicating trends within structures that might not be really critical nor healthy for our ecosystem? This I can expand on in a future occasion. Thank you Lene Vollhardt.

Veronika Draexler

response to
HR Giger & Mire Lee

Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin

Those slimy and dark creatures in the movie Alien have never seduced me into watching them. I have been too scared that they might enter my dreams and transform my sleep into an extinction hell. But in the last weeks of 2021, I saw Instagram friend after friend posting about the show of HR Giger & Mire Lee at Schinkel Pavillon in Berlin. The possibility of watching an Alien sculpture frozen in time, instead of animated and in the full bloom of melting into my mirror neurons, suddenly felt appealing.

My idea of visiting this exhibition was that the power of moving images might be muted, like pressing pause, and I would be able to let the storyline unfold in my rhythm instead of having to accept a director's timeline. I was right but wrong. I had no sudden thrills and shocks, but HR Giger and Mire Lee's creatures creep into my memories since then: organisms between humans and technology. Skin like textures, chains, motors and the dark corners of the unconscious trying to get alive, suffering slowly and transmitting uncanny feelings by Mire Lee. An unborn robot-soldier in a suitcase sculpture, more unborn robot-soldiers in a pistol painting wait to come to life when the trigger is pulled - by HR Giger. To name two scenarios without their titles and timeframes.

So why have I rejected facing alien darkness in my humanity? That's the question that haunts me since.

Dominik Busch's

response to
Disnovation

Nicolas Malgret & Maria Roszkowska as part of group show "Proof of Stake"

Kunstverein Hamburg

If 2021 would enter western history books as the second year of the corona pandemic, it better annexed a whole chapter on how the world had the chance to institutionalise otherwise, but didn't. Not only did 2021 painfully disclose structural maladies of nations

states and its institutions, it first and foremost laid open an inherent but blatantly ignored discourse of western society everybody is affected by.

If 2021 was to be remembered as a year of potentiality, well, we blew it. Economic, monetary, spatial growth is still at the forefront of political agendas. Even sustainability is argued to be „a growing market“. If anything but all, 2021 should enter western history books as a colossal fuck-up. Because as a society - outside of that (not so) little Kunstverein in Hamburg and other art institutions tackling that issue - we did not manage to rethink western society's fatal path of constant growth.

If 2021 was to be recalled as a rush in institutional digitisation and digital mediation, I'd like to turn your attention to a (not so) simple board game that taught me to understand institutionalising as a normative policy of western modernity, and how modelling it differently - thinking institutionalised growth otherwise - is an endeavour of essential importance.

If in 2021 I had to name an exhibition, an artwork even, that could touch on my deep mistrust in the continuation of the worldwide growth-logic, it would be the „Post Growth Toolkit“ (2021) by Disnovation as exhibited in the Kunstverein in Hamburg as part of the exhibition „Proof of stake“. The toolkit's „design-approach to politics“ „invites us to challenge dominant narratives about growth, work and progress (...)". It plays the ten pillars of capitalism against each other.

If in 2021 anything should be remembered, please let it be that game.

A response by Conor Gilligan

Whoever is into skateboarding these days knows Sky Brown.

Sky is a thirteen-year-old professional skateboarder who recently won a bronze medal for park skating at the Olympic summer games. Asked to write about inspirational sightings in 2021, Sky popped into my head. To be precise, one trick she did during her runs for X Games Park 2021 instantly made me sob and cry the first time I saw it.

It seemed absolutely perfect to me.

I watched it again and again, and by now, I don't cry about it anymore; that's sad. But, sky inspires gazillions of people throughout the world, and it seems that she will be doing so for another while.

She also inspired me.

Of course, there is her mesmerizing appearance.

There seems to be almost no picture or video in which she doesn't smile from ear to ear, alienlike but, after all, authentic.

The biggest impression on me makes the way that she's attached to her board. Furthermore how every trick she lands seems to be a statement of authenticity in every sense of:

This is me, all that I am, right now, right here, this is how it is done, this is 100%.

Every landing is the equivalent of a succinct rimshot to a snare drum. Throughout history, there have always been people who showed us what we are capable of doing when we put our head and heart to something, but it is this particular person and how she does what she does that speaks to me and reminds me to gently and calmly say to myself: you can do it.

A response by Lena Marie Emrich

When life gives me lemons I like to contemplate in my safe places. And come on 2021 was a tough one. Along the 2000 sqm italian supermarket in a conservative western german town, and kind of hardware store with cheesy music, I like to go to the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. One may think I go for the paintings. Fair enough. They are stunning but after two rooms normally I get exhausted of the obsessive hustle for details. Too much info for my tired eyes. But the Gemäldegalerie obtains a special feature in some corners you may find sitting islands.

Flooded in natural light. White curtains soften the rays of sun or winters grayness. depends. the benches are build out of solid wood. in a golden tone. the finish is shiny and soft. the bench touches the walls with round shapes. the body naturally falls into a comfortable position. feeling the energy of art history in my back and the blank clean material fetishized room surrounding me i can breath again. i am craving for the blank spaces. relax your eyeballs. Am I a spiritual person?

No. Am I attracted to divine architecture yes. Let's decontextualize the obvious and create spaces to liberate our pandemic infused tired bones to be wild and free again.

Robin Stretz

response to
Pipilotti Rist

Pipilotti Rist Big Heartedness, Be My Neighbor
Geffen Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

I never felt very much in control while staying in Los Angeles. The city simply pulled me in and I stayed adrift until I boarded the plane heading back home. As someone from central Europe (born and raised deep in the countryside) who knew this city only from movies, books and magazines, I was immediately stunned finding myself in the midst of a metropolis like LA. A city seemingly infinitely expanding into the desert.

Entering Pipilotti Rist's retrospective, I find myself in what seems to be a ménage à trois between Rist's body of work, The Universal Studio Tour and the themed interior of a Las Vegas casino hotel. The warehouse-like space of the Geffen now accommodates three houses with lawn furniture and picnic tables in front. A forest of pink and blue lights stretches out behind them. Both in and outside the houses a survey of Rist's videos is playing.

Upon initial inspection, the show seems reminiscent of both the labyrinthine streets guiding you to the slot machines and blackjack tables of the New York New York, and of the meticulously choreographed and well-rehearsed tour through Universal's most famous film sets. Places of comfort, desire and stupid fun. Places that seem to offer a counterweight to the loss of control one experiences in the desert or the metropolis.

After spending more time in the show looking at the works, another feeling starts seeping in. Yes, the work is a beautiful, sci-fi, escape vessel, but it's also

messy and raw enough to keep you from entirely forgetting that there is a world outside. The show embraces the entropy surrounding it. Without retreating into escapism, *Big Heartedness*, *Be My Neighbor*, lures you in and guides you through the cacophony of the Pipilotti Rist Studio Tour.

A response by Kara Hondong

Nine Nights: Channel B at Institute of Contemporary Art, London

Encountering a poem in an exhibition space: I see a text on the wall and before I even read a word of it I know it is not just telling me something about the concept behind the exhibition I am about to see.

We are used to seeing context on the walls. Printed and plotted in big letters. This means this and that means that. Contextualise what I see, give me the facts.

I appreciate the lighting in this exhibition. It gives context. Futurism encapsulates me.

The writing on the wall asks questions and transports a voice. I get drawn into the narrative. I read in my own time and still I feel as if in the cinema, as if bound to the time of the screen. Cinematic spa inviting you to listen. Listen to the muffled sounds of the electric night. Listen to black voices telling you of inequalities. Listen to the sound of the diaspora.

The text leads me through the whole show. It is drawing my gaze to the walls. Making me eager to find the next snippet to continue on. The growing intensity of the lights makes every change of rooms into a change of chapters or of scenes.

Even though I visited the space when no-one else was there and none of the accompanying events were taking place it felt activated. Like walking through a digital world.

A response by Ellie Harman-Taylor

TREES DIE STAND: Plants and Humans
Pi Artworks, London

'TREES DIE STAND: Plants and Humans features on diverse mediums and captures intellectual and various ways in which artists relate to nature. This exhibition places plants and natural world at its heart because humanity could not live without them.'

Admittedly, I haven't done a lot of exhibition reviews, but once you read the curators text to 'Trees Die Stand: Plants and Humans' at Pi Artworks, London by Freya Uziyel it feels impossible to not just quote their entire text and just say "... this" as it so concisely contextualises the show. Presenting themes of the natural world through paint, sculpture, natural materials like wood and a sculpted textile person straddling a tree branch (yes, see Merav Kamel & Halil Balabin, Tree of Knowledge, 2021.) Circling through the bright two-roomed gallery off of Oxford Street, the wooden floorboards creak under our presence and it feels apt that this show is here, these groans of the wood collaborating with the art inside, highlighting further how integral nature really is to human life, something I often overlook living in the city, in this digital age. Nature is ultimately what holds us up, and what we stand upon- under these concrete slabs and tube stations there is soil, rock, liquid, core.

Seeing how different artists, spanning different generations (Anonymous, Untitled (Tree of Jesse), c1520 in the same room as work made in 2021!) respond to the themes of plants and humans is what makes this show so interesting.

This show serves me as a sweet reminder of what we have at our fingertips, and how we still continue to study, appreciate and work with nature and it's materials millions of years after it all came about.

Enej Gala

response to
Lubaina Himid

Tate Modern, London

I keep thinking about why one chooses painting as the main language to address such "real-world problems" as Lubaina does. I hope and believe it becomes a properly conscious choice only when it stands for a specific point above identity or zeitgeist. It must be a linguistic stance that does not dissolve into "painting is easier to sell", but necessarily involves the consciousness of it being an almost absolute lie.

If painting is a language that uses lies as means of communication, to use it as Lubaina does, this should mean fighting the "world of lies" from within. Still, the best part of the show for me was the "blue room", without painting, just some objects stuck on the wall with a blue line running on top of them and an audio piece with Lubaina saying blue in many languages. It struck me how on point this work was, especially as it was so recent and apparently far from her usual painting practice. So successfully painful, I could not spot this amount of poetry in any other work. I wanted it to be the last room to see. Not because I didn't like the later rooms, but because it delivered an experience that would comfortably settle, and give a different sense to the rest if I would leave the show at that point. After a soft resignation, I started to wonder where is the limit between curators and artists influencing the outcome of a show. Who made which decisions when it came to choosing rooms for specific works and which compromises prevailed? How actually perverse is it to paint for so many years, inventing a language to better understand and be understood, fighting for the greatest of the causes, and knowing that it will never be truly enough. Because a painting was never meant to be truly enough. It was never meant to actually solve anything. It was a lie from the start, which only when perceived through a "world of lies" strikes as a truly painful truth.

Catrinca Malaimare

response to
Özgür Kar

Özgür Kar: Storage Drama,
Emalin Gallery, London

One death, two deaths, three deaths and counting (all 2021)

The snug fit of TV screen flight cases is the perfect solution for transporting your fragile television screen to exhibitions, where the gallery is open for virtual burial visits. I fall out of sync with the familiar gallery space as if suspense simmers gently on the TV screens and ancestral skeletons call out to me in their undead joy to admire, to spoon with, to lay down horizontally with. It is illogical to get this intimate with Death and to walk away, but it's a pretty joyful meditation to leave the gallery with.

Özgür Kar's catacombs in Emalin's gallery space are not located at the end of a downward flight of stairs, but many steps up, where animations of death lay on display, in an open casket 4K mass. Death is a social space in Storage Drama. The onscreen burial ritual is established technology, so much so that the technology setting the scene is banal but the TV model is exquisite; and so are Özgür Kar's statuesque burial pedestals.

About the Contributors

Auto-Anon is creating memes, takes, and hopefully community.

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Emmanuel Awuni is an artist studying at the Royal Academy of Arts, his work explores painting, sculpture, architecture, video, performance.

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Dylan Spencer-Davidson is an artist and performer based in Berlin, working across sound, performance, writing and education. His work wrestles with interpersonal power dynamics, neurodivergent subjectivities and the inadequacies of verbal language. dylanspencerdavidson.com/

Veronika Draexler is an interdisciplinary artist, performer and author based in Berlin and Fürstenfeldbruck. She researches digital identity, (re)appropriation and (post)colonialism. For her, art offers the possibility to find strategies to balance the pressure of the attention economy in late capitalism.

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Francis Drayson is an interdisciplinary artist exploring possibilities of expression within rigid systemic frameworks. Recent exhibitions include 'Arcadia', Bold Tendencies, London, and 'Natural History', Galerie Britta Rettberg, Munich (both 2021). They are currently researching sensations of intimacy and alienation experienced by clinicians and patients during medical treatment.

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

Salome Dumbadze is an artist, there is inherent Passive disturbance tendencies towards escapism yet estrangement from human being. Her practice emphasizes the fear of forgetting. She observes her authenticity through ambiguous local cultural belonging, questioning and therefore rethinking. [@sa_lomka](https://www.instagram.com/sal_lomka)

Lena Marie Emrich interweaves performance, documentation and sculpture utilising Car tuning races, abandoned airports, arenas, hip-hop videos – all these are cultural references that nourish her multidisciplinary practice. Her works tell of the encounter between supposedly rigid everyday objects and human longings, and conserve them in a simple formal language. lenamarieemrich.space/

Conor Gilligan I could get rid of it all / For the sake of the bethel woods / To a time and a place/ Where peacefulness once stood//Gather the women and children/ Leave our homes and our buildings/ I've been ready for years now/ Planted my seeds in the ground/ With no more" (Midlake - Bethel woods)

Ellie Harman-Taylor is a London based multidisciplinary artist also making work under the internet persona '@whinegums', wherein she explores her experiences of being a disabled, mentally ill and neurodivergent artist. Since graduating from Central Saint Martins in 2019 she co founded the lecture series 'Don't Worry I'm Sick and Poor' originally held at the Royal College of Art in London and has since been developed with the ICA and continues to work on her art practice.

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Kara Hondong is an artist living and working in London. She will graduate from the Royal College of Art in 2022. [@karamagdalen](https://twitter.com/karamagdalen)

monika jaeckel (Berlin/London) works as a performer, researcher and writer, concerned with notions of co-constitutional practice working with performance and technology. Recently completed a practice-based PhD at the CREAM department, University of Westminster, London. www.mindgap.org/portfolio

Jame St. Findley is:

- A snake in the grass
- A wolf in sheep's clothing
- The grit in the oyster
- A 1st year student at the RA

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Steffen Koehn My work is situated in the shared space that has opened up between art and anthropology. I am equally interested in ethnography as a form of engagement with social worlds and in the practices of video art as explorations of perception.

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Jacob Peter Kovner is an artist and writer whose work has focused on autofiction and inherited wealth through writing, film and performance. His live work takes the form of staged conversations, which bring together tactics from therapy sessions and town hall meetings, creating a space that oscillates between personal and political. He is working on a novel, Servants (working title), which reads class relations in New York through the prism of care work.

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Jan Kunckel is an undisciplined artist working on transversal epistemologies. Within his practice, he focuses on processes of attachment, loss and mourning. Jan maintains the art space PlusX (+X) alongside various other comrades.

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Kelly Lloyd is a transdisciplinary artist who focuses on issues of representation and knowledge production, and prioritizes public-facing collaborative research. Lloyd is co-founder of the collaborative projects HAIR CLUB, Art Workers and Living Within the Play, and a member of the collective 12ø. Lloyd currently is studying at The University of Oxford's Ruskin School of Art and Wadham College for her DPhil in Practice-Led Fine Art. www.k-lloyd.com

Xavier Robles de Medina (b. 1990 in Paramaribo) is a visual artist based in Berlin. He graduated from Goldsmiths, University of London. His (often) monochromatic work tends to combine a monotonous mark-making with images drawn from his own collection of found images, ranging from the generic to the highly personal. This year Robles de Medina will partake in Senegal's fourteenth Dakar Biennale. <https://xavierroblesdemedina.com/>

Dalia Maini is a mediating figure between cultural and survival production. Writer, editor and urban mermaid, she is possessed by the poetry and the politics of the undercommons. [@shitshines](https://twitter.com/shitshines)

Catinca Malaimare is a London based artist and current postgraduate student at The Royal Academy of Arts. Performing alongside anthropomorphised technologies, Malaimare's choreography manifests our intimate relationship with photographic tools and the screens onto which they project our visages.

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Róisín McQueirns is an Arts Professional, curator and archivist based in London. Her interests centre around overlooked Feminist and broader art practices which challenge mainstream ways of thinking. She currently works in the curatorial team at White Cube. [@roisin_mcqueirns](https://twitter.com/roisin_mcqueirns)

Steve Paul Steven Paul born, lives and works in Berlin. Studied film and art in Berlin, Mexico and Los Angeles.

Isaac De Reeza is based in London. His artistic drive is fueled by his subjective experience of life, how he attempts to make sense of culture and history, yet is humbled to realize artistic endeavors don't need to come up with answers to world issues; instead, it is a constant building of dialogues to keep us linked throughout an existence of solitude. isaacdereza.com

Matthew Peers is an artist living and working in London. Currently enrolled at the Royal Academy Schools, they will graduate in 2022.

Robin Stretz is an artist living and working in Frankfurt am Main. He is graduating from Staedelschule in the summer of 2022.

Vassiliea Stylianidou aka Franck-Lee Alli-Tis studied visual Arts (B.F.A., M.F.A.) at the University of the Arts Berlin and Literature and Linguistics at the University of Ioannina (GR). S*he works as a video and installation artist, using related artistic media such as text/writing, sound/music and performance.

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Lene Vollhardt (US/GER) is a London-based artist who has spent 2021 investigating more-than-human languages such as those of divergent plant spirits. She seeks new modes of sensing, valuing and embodying. She has received international awards such as the Hong Kong Arthouse Filmprize, the Scholarship of Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes and Fokus Film Award.

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*Footnotes of Róisín McQueirns: This exhibition was in 2020 rather than 2021, as when I looked back on the past two years I realised - time is just a construct.

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