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Dear Ambiguity,
(UN)LEARNING FROM
THE VIRUS
Graduating in the COVID-19 pandemic

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The invention of the printing press rapidly changed the world. Printed matter became a disseminator of culture and an effective vehicle of democratization of information which offered the world unprecedented and widespread access to knowledge in a network of open learning. Nowadays, however, printing is being swept away and replaced by digital texts and online publishing.

Under the title “Dear Ambiguity, – (Un)learning from the virus,” this book presents the work of the graduating class of the Master of Fine Arts 2020 at ZHdK. Its materiality counters the digitalization recently imposed on many of the fields that surround our productive and leisure time. We conceived it as a collective action that gathers all the different positions and perspectives of a heterogeneity of emerging artists. With it, we resist the impermanence of art on the new digital platforms while also exposing the limits of the printed book in a contemporality signified by technologization and interconnectivity.

The publication is a physical trace in time, for the past and for the future. Not only a diary in response to the latest events and anxieties unfolded by the pandemic and their impact on the cultural world, not just a statement of surprise, but a web of the practices of the artists who graduated under such conditions. The book diagrammatizes fragments of art works and texts to provide insight into emerging artistic voices and drive resonances with their creative processes, giving them visibility and a space for reflection. It thus empowers the beginning of a journey in the current professional landscape as its paradigm is shifting at an unprecedented rate.

The edition was produced in a collaborative and direct democratic approach through discussions and collective decision-making that took place via Zoom in the spring of 2020 and the following months and ended, in its final stages, in face-to-face meetings of the editorial team. The book features three pages for each graduated artist, curated by themselves, followed by a short personal interview prepared by Yasmin Afschar and Marie-France Rafael. Moreover, an experimental text written by the students poetically synthesizes the urgency of collectivity – a combination of approaches to making art, thinking about art, and the impact of these practices in our daily life, and

their forking paths. It reveals a hyper-textual topography of impressions, brief interventions, and immediate reflections.

Invited by the graduating students, Yasmin Afschar and Marie-France Rafael also each contributed with a text of their own. Under the title *We are the Institution*, Yasmin Afschar guides us through the graduating students’ works, reflecting on the sudden change of conditions for preparing the Degree Show while weaving threads between the works and historical and theoretical lines of inquiry. Marie-France Rafael takes a walk through the empty and silent corridors of ZHdK, as her thoughts compose an arc from fear and anguish, through time travel to the origins of a virus and to a childhood image, to the role of art in a time of mass circulation and mutability of images. She comes to focus an image gone viral, that of George Floyd, whose image power has unfolded in the social upheavals of Black Lives Matter felt all the way to Europe.

The pandemic has exerted a powerful force on all art communities to reset and reinvent the display practices and dissemination of art, rethinking how to interact with its audiences under such circumstances. Even the art market took to migrating from the physical to the digital realm, incorporating technologies such as Augmented Reality or Virtual Reality. Perhaps some of these changes will stay and establish themselves as new tools of showing and interacting that may completely alter life and the physical experience of Art as we knew it. Under the requirements of the quarantine and the compulsory isolation of spring 2020, the final MFA examination took place via Zoom. The Degree Shows at ZHdK were replaced by online presentations and the virtual sharing of feedback and portfolios. The physical exhibition was postponed.

Like the event horizon of a black hole, the pandemic has sucked all attention towards itself. As T.J. Demos pointed out in his recent Zoom talk as part of the exhibition *Potential Worlds 1: Planetary Memories*¹ at Migros Museum, its global and cosmic dimensions have turned it into an ontological event. Thus, we have entered a historic time with planetary consequences. The art world has dramatically reached an indefinite pause in the vertigo of the events. The large-scale international art events have

2. We refer to a mainstream discourse on the end of labor under the rapid technological development, robotization and artificial intelligence, countered by the critical visions of the accelerationist movement regarding post-work futures, but also the question of the artist as a non-waged worker or a deskilled laborer in this process. We also hint at Hito Steyerl's post-Fordist analysis of consumption turned production, and of artistic production in this context.

3. Caroline A. Jones, "Virions: Thinking Through the Scale of Aggregation," *ARTFORUM*, May/June 2020 (<https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/virions-thinking-through-the-scale-of-aggregation-82828>), (accessed 2020-11-01).

4. *Ibid.*

been postponed to an uncertain future; other exhibition projects and talks canceled; big museums, galleries and many other art institutions closed down across the globe, some of them later resuming at reduced capacities while others have shut down for good. Inevitably, this pause will have a deep impact on the art world and especially on the emerging artists featured here and those others yet to come.

Might the vast digitalization of the dissemination of art lead to its further democratization, including of the art market, for art to reach an even broader public? Or will it rather exacerbate precarization in already precarious art communities? There is an ongoing polemic among representatives of the international art world, trying to project their visions of what will become of art after the pandemic. Art cannot be segregated from other domains of life, economic and cultural processes and relations. In all of those, the pandemic has expedited changes initially triggered by the fourth industrial revolution of automation and connectivity, what some have called the era of the end of labor or the end of work.² Will the artist remain one of the few workers in the digital futures of a post-work society? How will these changes impact artistic production, as artistic work has been among the first forms of precarious work, predating a process leading to a society of high technological unemployment?

In this unpredictable time and before a scattered art landscape, the emerging artist must find their own way, resources, and context. Amid the slow-down imposed by the global situation, the critical discourse of the post-Anthropocene has accelerated and generated a new awareness. In an article in *ARTFORUM*, Caroline A. Jones engages "the nonhuman capacities of a mere virus" and asks if we can "learn how to embrace the 'species reset' that the current pandemic has forced on our everyday individualist episteme."³ She further reflects on the virus's strange and horrifying agency that happens to go back to a "more-than-human cause"⁴ – a cause which demands a new sensibility and empathy to reconsider the human exceptionalism of the selfish hegemonic world. Tobias Rees and Anicka Yi speak of "a dramatic undoing, one in which

humans are becoming undifferentiated from the microbial world we live in."⁵

Paul B. Preciado, in "Learning from the Virus," writes how in the face of the virus, healing and care can only stem from a process of political transformation. He thus prompts his readers: "Let us turn off our cell phones, let us disconnect from the internet."⁶ This print publication, whose title refers to Preciado's, is an invitation to such a small gesture, a moment of displacement and exploration of the analog media and the physicality of the book's body. This crisis demands not one but many transformations in which art can play a relevant role not merely as a communicative device of semio-technical producers.

Could we learn to see viruses not just as a menacing danger, but as ecological agents interweaving with other forms of life on the planet? Learning from the virus, we can imagine mutations and transformations by random proliferation that lead to an effusion of variations of life in which art, research and creativity can make a difference. This edition contributes to the question of what it means to be an emerging artist, and how the pandemic will impact the future generations and boost new forms of creativity and art. Confined as we are, let Art be at the service of an imaginative power that evokes the arrival of an unexpected future and wisdom.

Text by the Editorial Team: Sarah Jacky, Carolina Márquez Bernard, Martin Mur, Alan Roth, Esther Schena, Dimitrina Sevova

5. Tobias Rees and Anicka Yi, "The Teachings of a Virus," *ARTFORUM*, May/June 2020 (<https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/the-teachings-of-a-virus-82987>), (accessed 2020-11-01).

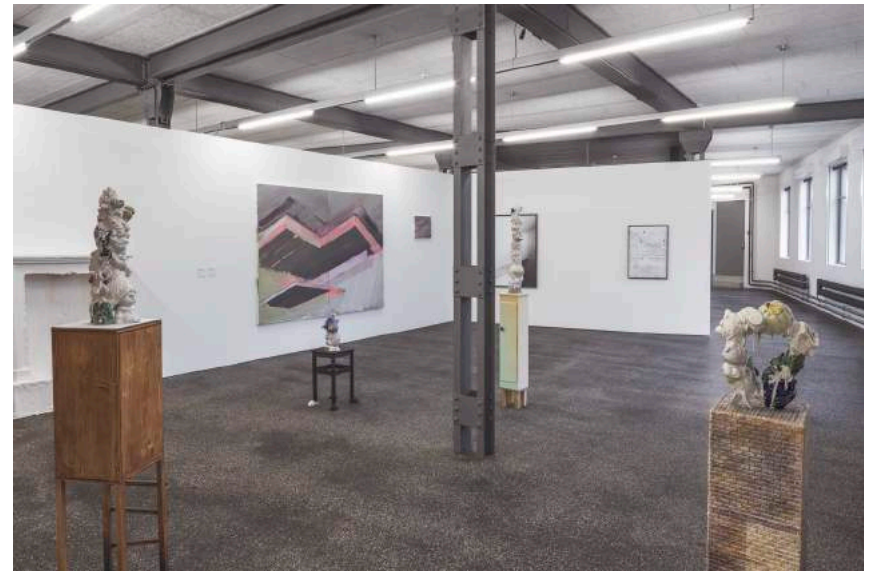
6. Paul B. Preciado, "Learning from the Virus," *ARTFORUM*, May/June 2020 (<https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823>), (accessed 2020-11-01).

"THERE IS SO MUCH
USELESS WORK. WORK
THAT AIMS TO MAKE
THINGS THAT NO ONE
NEEDS, AND CREATE JOBS
THAT NO ONE WANTS."

– BJÖRN KERN, "ARBEIT:
MACHT NICHTS", *DIE ZEIT*
NR. 11/2016, 3. MÄRZ 2016

ARTISTS' CONTENT





LP ↑ Candy, 2018
Bibelots, earthenware, glazed
50cm x 20cm x 20cm

LP ↓ Dolphins, 2018
Bibelots, earthenware, glazed
60cm x 25cm x 25cm

RP Dreamcatcher, 2019
Bibelots, earthenware, glazed
40cm x 40cm x 20cm

Roomer, 2019
Installation at Grosse Regionale in Alte Fabrik
Rapperswil, 2019/2020

Fredericks Vorräte (Frederick's Supplies), 2019
Ceramic, reflective foil, handy, video Pool
35cm x 25cm x 15cm

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

MB Chewed, blown up and spit out. This ends up like a joke that fell flat. Nobody is laughing, and there's nothing more to say or to explain about it. Just: "Whatever... forget it." Everything is old now. I need some time to discover and develop new postcoronial stuff.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

MB I like turtles.

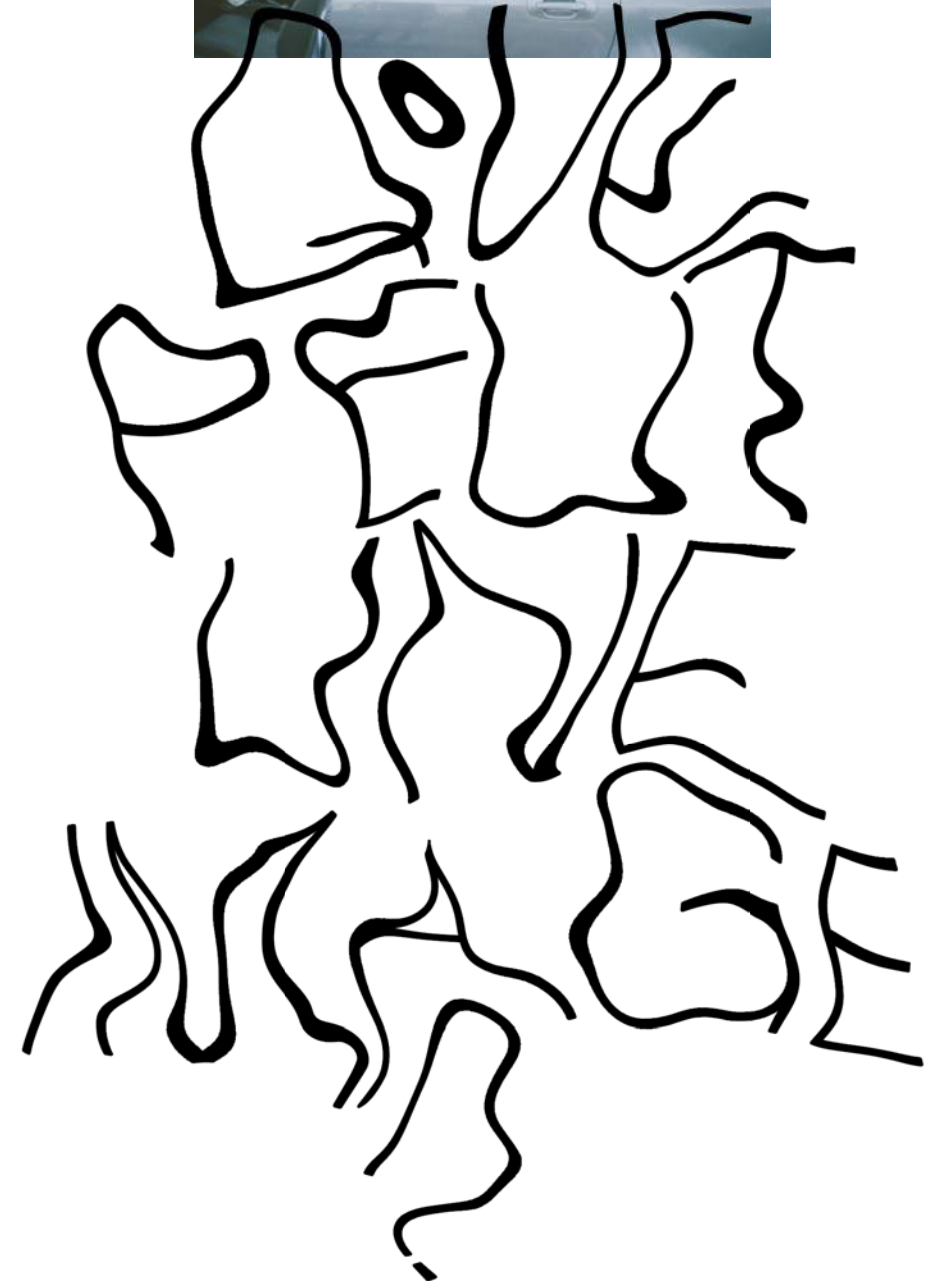
Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

MB I will study art restoration and conservation in Bern.



« QUE PEUT UNE IMAGE ? »

– DORK ZABUNYAN,
QUE PEUT UNE IMAGE,
LES CONDITIONS
D'UNE QUESTION.



L'idée qui définit notre approche de la question « Que peut une image ? » se formule en fin de compte assez simplement : c'est que, précisément, on ne peut rien dire d'avance, on ne peut rien prédire des puissances de l'image. Justement parce que cette puissance réside le plus souvent dans un inconnu sensible où elle nous projette, dans l'imprévu d'une signification qu'elle nous invite à explorer, dans un suspens fortuit de nos façons de voir ou de penser. Sachant que cet inconnu, cet imprévu, ce suspens produits par l'image s'inscrivent dans une échelle temporelle longue et qu'ils ne répondent pas nécessairement aux sirènes de l'actualité.

Dork Zabunyan, *Que peut une image, les conditions d'une question*.
Les carnets du BAL #4, Centre National des Arts Plastiques,
Paris, 2014, p. 8.



Là où nous sommes (*The place we are in*), 2020
Video, color, 36'53"
1920px x 1080px
HD video stillframes



Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

AB It is a continuity and the beginning of new challenges to adapt to shifting situations. It allows us to get out of our comfort zone and to explore other ways of creation.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

AB The uncertain comes like waves, back and forth, especially at the beginning or at the end of a project. This uncertainty is probably one of those sparks that spurs us to dig deeper and continue research and a project in order to get what we are looking for or trying to understand. It's actually something very strong and it's also a freedom and a desire.

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

AB The plan and the desire is to develop more precise forms and expand the esthetic of filming. To generate more fiction and speculations from the reality. To collaborate with people from fields other than art. But also, to continue to have a porous border between work and artistic work, without the two becoming one.



“AND I FELL VIOLENTLY
ON MY FACE.”

– EDGAR ALLAN POE,
THE PIT AND THE
PENDULUM.





Schuhsohlenabdruck (Sole Print), 2020
Sole print in mud
30cm (Size 43)



Waldspaziergang (Forest Walk), 2020
Color pencil on yellowed paper, polyurethane, clay
92cm x 50cm x 4.5cm

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

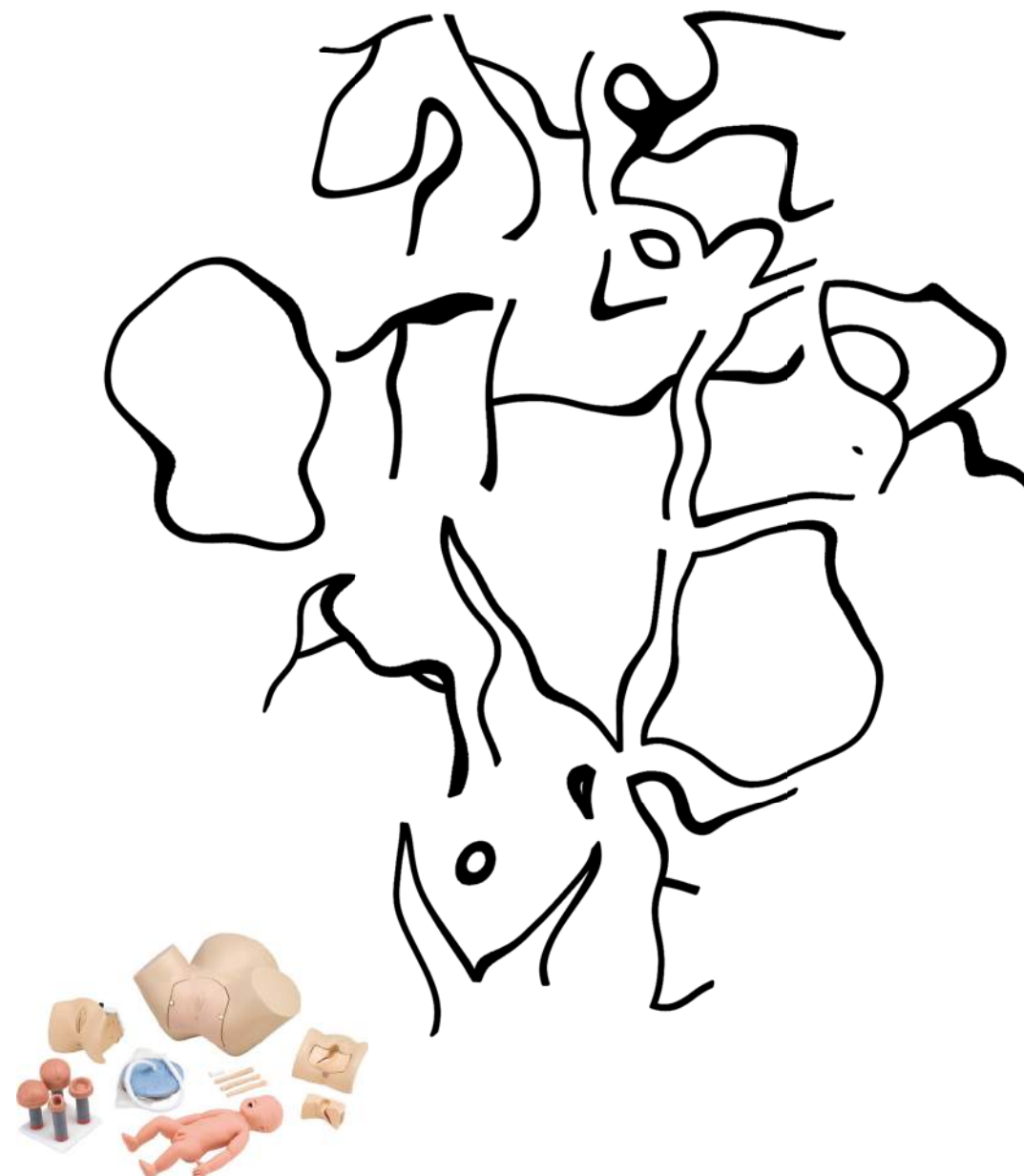
JB Wonderful, I had so much fun cycling the empty streets to my studio. It was quite a productive time. I reckon "these times" make a lot of the things and especially imbalances visible that would have needed an overhaul for a long, long time. In an ideal world, this would be the starting point of a new era.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

JB It is the point of entry to a different world. One that does not need to obey the rules that we made and that now make us. A way out of the intensifying feedback loop, out of the rigid systems. A gentle invitation to disrupt and widen our way of thinking.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

JB Wander the forest.



M(other). It's a between the other and me. Between the subject and the object. She conjures up a powerful emotional response within herself and the spectator. Like the abject she gives rise to an inner and outer dialogue and challenges predetermined notions of the body and society. She gives birth to herself. Feeds herself. Fertilizes herself. She's an autonomous female organism. M(other). M(other). It's a between the other and me. Between the subject and the object. She conjures up a powerful emotional response within herself and the spectator. Like the abject she gives rise to an inner and outer dialogue and challenges predetermined notions of the body and society. She gives birth to herself. Feeds herself. Fertilizes herself. She's an autonomous female organism. M(other). M(other). It's a between the other and me. Between the subject and the object. She conjures up a powerful emotional response within herself and the spectator. Like the abject she gives rise to an inner and outer dialogue and challenges predetermined notions of the body and society. She gives birth to herself. Feeds herself. Fertilizes herself. She's an autonomous female organism. M(other).



1

- 1. *Simple life*, 2019
Paintings, acrylic on canvas
198cm x 166cm,
Duo show *command not available*
Up State, Zurich
- 2. *Abject of identity: made in Switzerland*, 2019
Photographic self portraits, online publication
Zurich
- 3. *Farm material*, 2019
Performance, 05'39"
Duo show *command not available*
Up State, Zurich



4

- 4. *Simple life*, 2019
Paintings, acrylic on canvas
198cm x 166cm
Duo show *command not available*
Up State, Zurich
- 5. *Abject of identity: made in Switzerland*, 2019
Photographic self portraits, online publication
Zurich
- 6. *Oral abort/cannibalistic love*, 2020
Performance, 09'33"
Duo show, *protocooperational cannibalism*
Löwenbräu Zurich



2



5



3



6

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

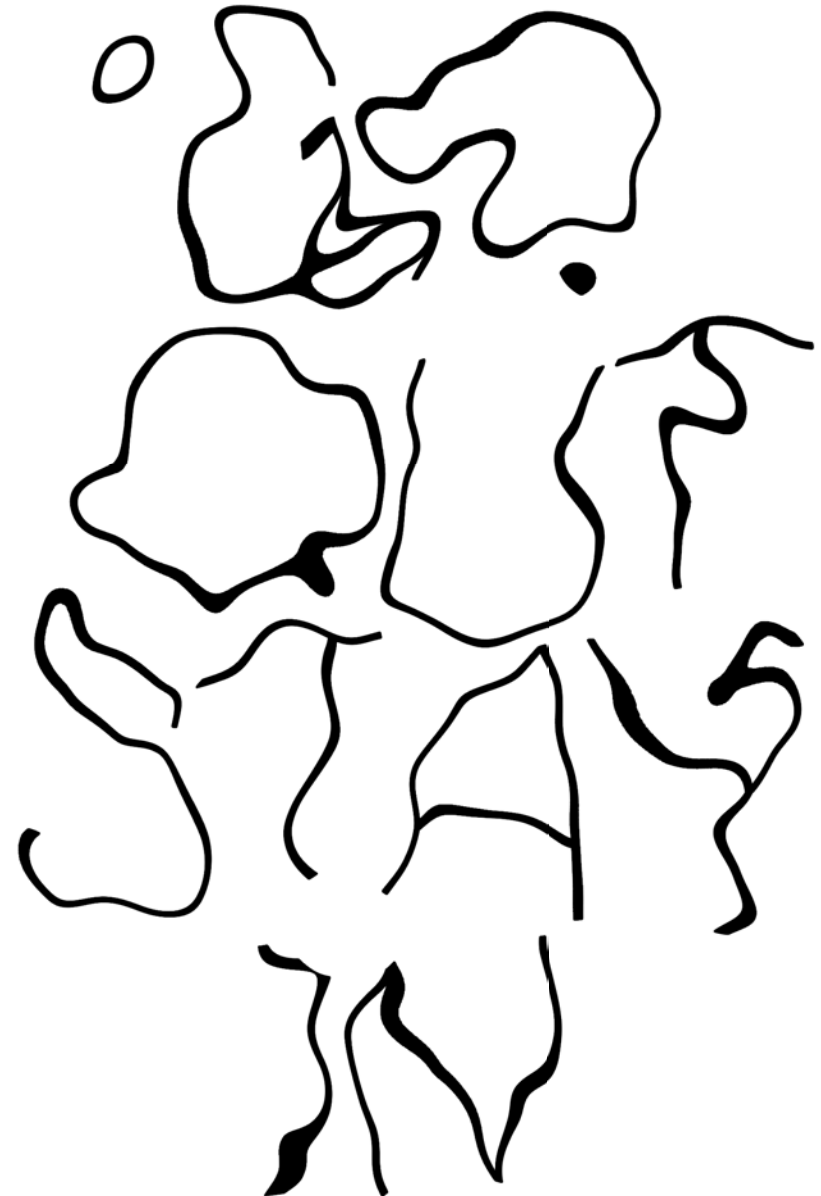
NC [No answer]

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

NC I also don't like indeterminable things. But unfortunately, there are always things that are not controllable. The aim is to have a balance between control and losing control. Art only plays the role of holding this balance.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

NC P70 PRO Geburtssimulator
Thermocult Bakterienbrutschrank T45
N06AX05 Trazodon





Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

IC I don't know how seeing the world lately has affected me. I sometimes feel lucky to have an artistic practice that can help me interpret things. I have to take a lot of breaks and make space for jokes.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

IC Uncertainty makes working more difficult and more meaningful to get through.

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

IC I want to sleep and listen to music more, to feel lighter while I'm awake.



Looking at the established sex-designs, they consist of a set of components. In order to categorize the bodies they see, humans check certain codes. On account of the presence or absence of codes they assume that the body they are looking at consists of the components they imagine to be characteristic for a sex. The interpretation of the codes seems to be a very spontaneous process most humans are not aware of. Now one could think that recognizing only two sexes is due to a poor programming of humans. But in fact, they process a lot of information just in order to come up with this simplification to the binary order. As many individuals show, humans are capable of processing far more complex categorizations. Though, the reflex to simplify things seems somehow part of the programming of humans. The question is: How can they be reprogrammed?

princess d, *Your Sexes Were Not Designed For Me*.



2



1

1,2. *Am Fall der toxischen Männlichkeit arbeiten (Work on the Case of Toxic Masculinity)*, 2018
Performance, 2'30'

3,4. *D is for Drive. M is for Magenta. F is for Fabulous*, 2017
Performance, 24'



3



4

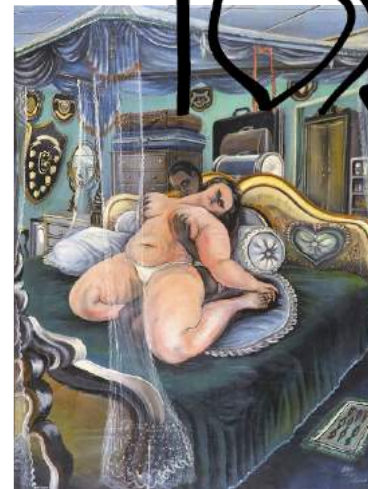
Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

PD I would like this page to be empty giving some space to think.



"IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO
DECOLONIZE THE MUSEUM
WITHOUT DECOLONIZING
THE WORLD."

— ARIELLA AISHA AZOULAY
IN GUERNICAMAG.COM



ADJI DIEYE



1



2

1. *Maggic Cube*, Sandaga, 2019
Installation view at Kunsthalle Wien, 2020
2. *Maggic Cube*, Circuit Fermé, 2016
Video, color, 03'03"
Actor: Alyuob Diouf



3



4



5

3. *Red Fever*, Dreamland, 2019
Installation view at Murate Art District Florence
4. *Red Fever*, March On, 2019
Video, color, 01'52"
5. *Culture Lost and Learned by Heart*, Memory, 2020

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

AD I won't hide it, to graduate in my living room with no access to a studio or a workshop for an entire semester felt like I was leaving this Master halfway trough. It was a good final push into the "real" world, where spaces, materials, and workshops are not simply handed out to you but nevertheless you've got to make it work.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

AD Art workers, curators, writers, PLEASE, stop making these kinds of wondrous, presumptuous, unspecific, abstract, and yet copy-pasted questions to artists. You don't even know what you're asking because you don't know who you're asking these questions to, yet here you are asking them to me. These questions are tautological. They don't need an answer.

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

AD Being ten times more prolific than now.



"HABITS SHOULD BE ILLEGAL."

HABITS SHOULD BE ILLEGAL



Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

BE Now that a worldwide catastrophe has happened, the future feels less like an approaching catastrophe and more like the immediate unknown. Recent events have exposed the absurdity and the instability of the world order very clearly. A lot fiercer struggles ahead are foreseeable and I hope they will lead to change. Trying to reflect and express through art, as well as doing research or inventing repetitive tasks help me stay in the moment. Yet at the same time I feel distant from everybody further than my immediate surroundings. I am looking for ways to overcome this distance in my life and practice.

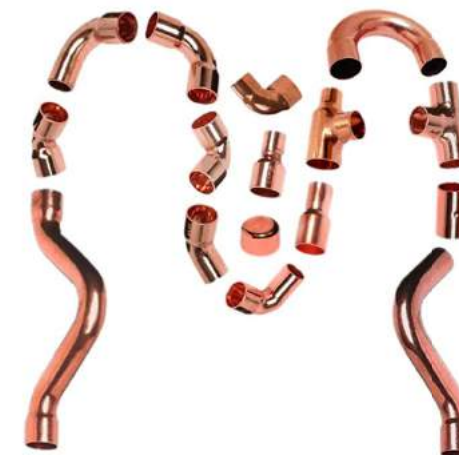
Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

BE I have been working with writing games, played collectively or individually and resorting to chance and randomness to deviate from habitually constricted ways of using language towards unexpected outcomes. Randomness creates possibilities to embrace elusive subjectivities, to play with and deform often repeated ways of saying, and initiates novel expressions related to thoughts, experiences and dreams which can be communicated in this way. I think art can bring about and commemorate solidarities, small in scale but adhering to bigger ones.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

BE Still, habitual, distant.

Baumarkt › Sanitär › Rohre, Anschlussstücke & Zubehör › Anschlussstücke

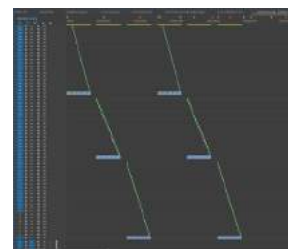


Für größere Ansicht Maus über das Bild ziehen



“DEAR D, TODAY I GOT UP, WENT HOME, WAS HUNGRY, ATE A LOT, ATE MORE, HAD TOO MUCH. FELL ASLEEP.

YOURS,
J.”



The British cultural theorist Mark Fisher describes the phenomenon of hauntology as the impossibility of a present. The past is no longer there, the future has not yet arrived, and the only way to deal with the loss is to repeat forever what once was, thereby composing it into a nostalgic and self-wearing permanent loop. What seems abstract in Mark Fisher's theory becomes concrete in the work *Sun has gone, night has come. Are you full of hope too?* by Jonas Etter and Julian Zehnder. The recordings of a fluorescent lamp lighting up confront me as a viewer with a memory that seems banal. I remember the sound the lamp makes; a lamp that I myself have switched on countless times in my life. But here in the exhibition it is not the lamp that is operated (in fact, real fluorescent tubes are hanging in the room), but a simulation is set in motion, a lonely fraction of a past present. My memories immediately get to semi-public spaces: work, school, studio, warehouse. Places where I am not alone. Right, even underpasses under streets, station platforms. I usually only hear the sound of the lamp when it is switched on for me, by me or for an occasion I am witness to. In the installation by Jonas Etter and Julian Zehnder I am constantly confronted with the switching on and off of the lamp. I have the feeling that the rhythm and the intervals at which the lamp, or rather its simulation, is operated want to tell me something. Here, too, I am immediately reminded of the pop-cultural retro machinery: in the television series *Stranger Things*, based on the 1980s, an absent protagonist trapped in a spooky parallel world communicates with his mother by sending her signals through strings of lights in her home. The ghosts of the past haunt me: in the variously timed, yet always identical recording of a single moment that in its origin has taken place in my absence. The sun is gone, yes. Regarding the night, though, I am not so sure.

Text by Johanna Benrath
Translation from German by Alan Roth



sun has gone, night has come, are you full of hope too? yours j.

Video 1	Channel 1	Channel 2	Channel 3	Channel 4	Channel 5	Channel 6	Channel 7	Channel 8	Channel 9	Channel 10	Channel 11	Channel 12	Channel 13	Channel 14	Channel 15	Channel 16	Channel 17	Channel 18	Channel 19	Channel 20	Channel 21	Channel 22	Channel 23	Channel 24	Channel 25	Channel 26	Channel 27	Channel 28	Channel 29	Channel 30	Channel 31	Channel 32	Channel 33	Channel 34	Channel 35	Channel 36	Channel 37	Channel 38	Channel 39	Channel 40	Channel 41	Channel 42	Channel 43	Channel 44	Channel 45	Channel 46	Channel 47	Channel 48	Channel 49	Channel 50	Channel 51	Channel 52	Channel 53	Channel 54	Channel 55	Channel 56	Channel 57	Channel 58	Channel 59	Channel 60	Channel 61	Channel 62	Channel 63	Channel 64	Channel 65	Channel 66	Channel 67	Channel 68	Channel 69	Channel 70	Channel 71	Channel 72	Channel 73	Channel 74	Channel 75	Channel 76	Channel 77	Channel 78	Channel 79	Channel 80	Channel 81	Channel 82	Channel 83	Channel 84	Channel 85	Channel 86	Channel 87	Channel 88	Channel 89	Channel 90	Channel 91	Channel 92	Channel 93	Channel 94	Channel 95	Channel 96	Channel 97	Channel 98	Channel 99	Channel 100
Ton 1	Channel 1	Channel 2	Channel 3	Channel 4	Channel 5	Channel 6	Channel 7	Channel 8	Channel 9	Channel 10	Channel 11	Channel 12	Channel 13	Channel 14	Channel 15	Channel 16	Channel 17	Channel 18	Channel 19	Channel 20	Channel 21	Channel 22	Channel 23	Channel 24	Channel 25	Channel 26	Channel 27	Channel 28	Channel 29	Channel 30	Channel 31	Channel 32	Channel 33	Channel 34	Channel 35	Channel 36	Channel 37	Channel 38	Channel 39	Channel 40	Channel 41	Channel 42	Channel 43	Channel 44	Channel 45	Channel 46	Channel 47	Channel 48	Channel 49	Channel 50	Channel 51	Channel 52	Channel 53	Channel 54	Channel 55	Channel 56	Channel 57	Channel 58	Channel 59	Channel 60	Channel 61	Channel 62	Channel 63	Channel 64	Channel 65	Channel 66	Channel 67	Channel 68	Channel 69	Channel 70	Channel 71	Channel 72	Channel 73	Channel 74	Channel 75	Channel 76	Channel 77	Channel 78	Channel 79	Channel 80	Channel 81	Channel 82	Channel 83	Channel 84	Channel 85	Channel 86	Channel 87	Channel 88	Channel 89	Channel 90	Channel 91	Channel 92	Channel 93	Channel 94	Channel 95	Channel 96	Channel 97	Channel 98	Channel 99	Channel 100
Video 2	Channel 1	Channel 2	Channel 3	Channel 4	Channel 5	Channel 6	Channel 7	Channel 8	Channel 9	Channel 10	Channel 11	Channel 12	Channel 13	Channel 14	Channel 15	Channel 16	Channel 17	Channel 18	Channel 19	Channel 20	Channel 21	Channel 22	Channel 23	Channel 24	Channel 25	Channel 26	Channel 27	Channel 28	Channel 29	Channel 30	Channel 31	Channel 32	Channel 33	Channel 34	Channel 35	Channel 36	Channel 37	Channel 38	Channel 39	Channel 40	Channel 41	Channel 42	Channel 43	Channel 44	Channel 45	Channel 46	Channel 47	Channel 48	Channel 49	Channel 50	Channel 51	Channel 52	Channel 53	Channel 54	Channel 55	Channel 56	Channel 57	Channel 58	Channel 59	Channel 60	Channel 61	Channel 62	Channel 63	Channel 64	Channel 65	Channel 66	Channel 67	Channel 68	Channel 69	Channel 70	Channel 71	Channel 72	Channel 73	Channel 74	Channel 75	Channel 76	Channel 77	Channel 78	Channel 79	Channel 80	Channel 81	Channel 82	Channel 83	Channel 84	Channel 85	Channel 86	Channel 87	Channel 88	Channel 89	Channel 90	Channel 91	Channel 92	Channel 93	Channel 94	Channel 95	Channel 96	Channel 97	Channel 98	Channel 99	Channel 100
Ton 2	Channel 1	Channel 2	Channel 3	Channel 4	Channel 5	Channel 6	Channel 7	Channel 8	Channel 9	Channel 10	Channel 11	Channel 12	Channel 13	Channel 14	Channel 15	Channel 16	Channel 17	Channel 18	Channel 19	Channel 20	Channel 21	Channel 22	Channel 23	Channel 24	Channel 25	Channel 26	Channel 27	Channel 28	Channel 29	Channel 30	Channel 31	Channel 32	Channel 33	Channel 34	Channel 35	Channel 36	Channel 37	Channel 38	Channel 39	Channel 40	Channel 41	Channel 42	Channel 43	Channel 44	Channel 45	Channel 46	Channel 47	Channel 48	Channel 49	Channel 50	Channel 51	Channel 52	Channel 53	Channel 54	Channel 55	Channel 56	Channel 57	Channel 58	Channel 59	Channel 60	Channel 61	Channel 62	Channel 63	Channel 64	Channel 65	Channel 66	Channel 67	Channel 68	Channel 69	Channel 70	Channel 71	Channel 72	Channel 73	Channel 74	Channel 75	Channel 76	Channel 77	Channel 78	Channel 79	Channel 80	Channel 81	Channel 82	Channel 83	Channel 84	Channel 85	Channel 86	Channel 87	Channel 88	Channel 89	Channel 90	Channel 91	Channel 92	Channel 93	Channel 94	Channel 95	Channel 96	Channel 97	Channel 98	Channel 99	Channel 100

Sun has gone, night has come. Are you full of hope too? Yours, J, 2020
Jonas Etter in collaboration with Julian Zehnder
8 channel audio / video, speakers, projectors
16'09", loop, dimensions variable
Excerpt of score, exhibition views

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

JE I wish they hadn't, but I am doubting... ;)

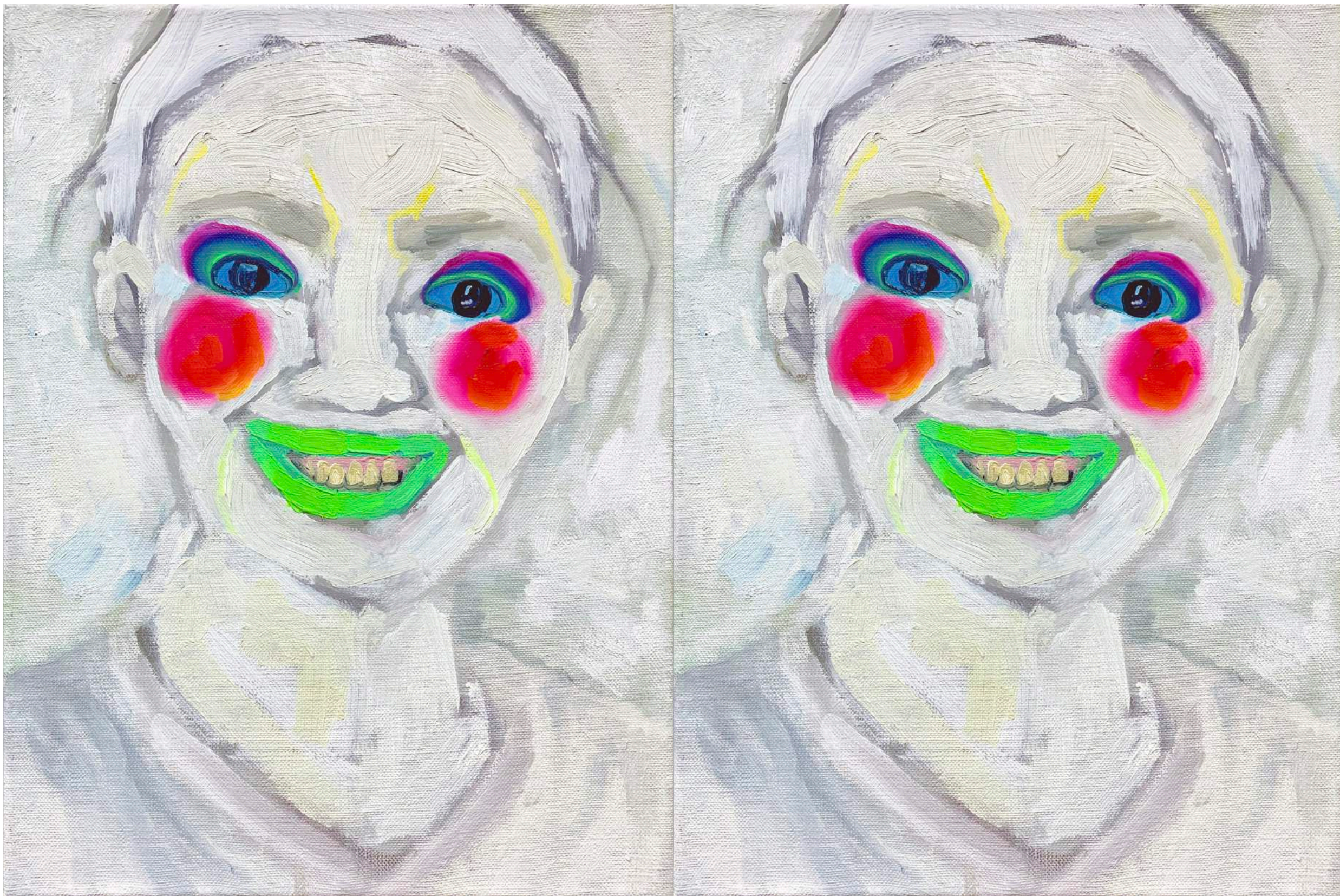
Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

JE It is explicitly what I am looking for in my work... I see it as a big thing art can entangle with.

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

JE I would like to do a 100-day journey through China. Every day I would write at least one entry in my diary. Every day I should have one idea for an artwork or else... one idea for what to do in life without art. A reenactment of R.H.'s journey to the land of unlimited possibilities...





Leaning In, 2020
Oil on linen
40cm x 30cm

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

JG “We don’t make mistakes. We just have happy accidents.”

— Bob Ross

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

JG “We tell people sometimes: We’re like drug dealers, come into town and get everybody absolutely addicted to painting. It doesn’t take much to get you addicted.”

— Bob Ross

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

JG “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.”

— Mike Tyson



“WHAT DO WE SEE?
WHAT DO WE NOT SEE?.”



Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

NG Being productive in my studio space or my studies wasn't really a priority for me in the last months. As a self-employed photographer and a mother, life was much more about being creative in everyday life. I somehow liked how the public and private spheres entwined during this time. The crisis brought a lot of problematic institutional structures to the surface, and it was a time to read, to process, and to take action. And of course, all these things going on around me had and will have an impact on my artistic work. For me, art is a way to reflect and to collect things overseen and to take them to a new stage in order to make things visible.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

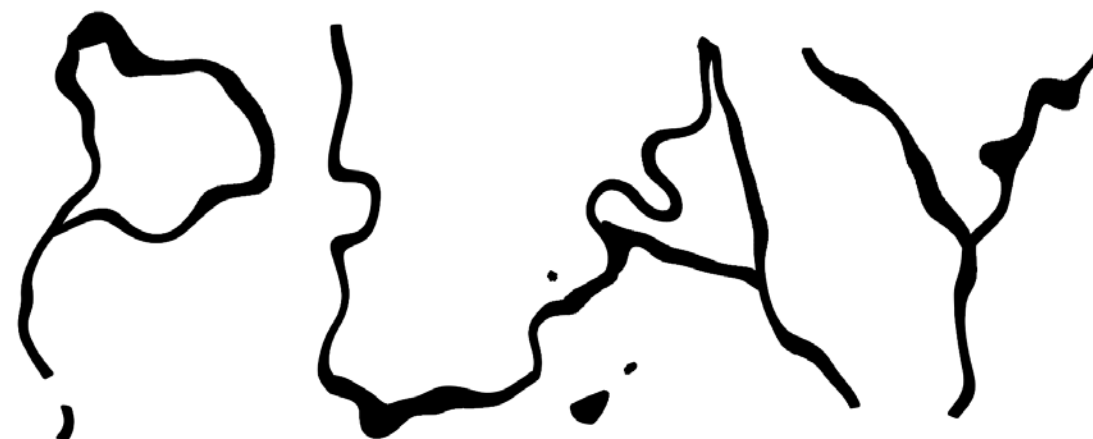
NG Art can make us feel something through the whole body, instead of just knowing something.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

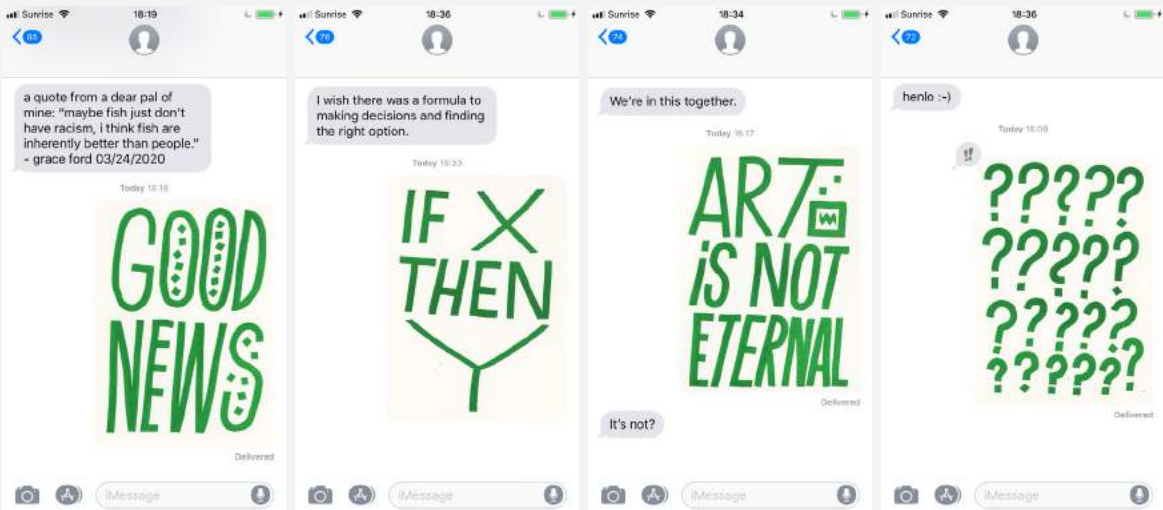
NG Disrupted lines. Abject. Imagination.



“PLAY.”



In response to Covid-19, I posted a handwritten text on Instagram saying: «Text Me, I'll Answer With A Drawing +41 76 22 00 555». To each one of the messages I received, I answered with a handpicked piece of my Manifesto.



LP iMessage interaction during Covid-19, 2020
Scanned risograph prints of Manifesto

RP How the Wild Flowers Grow, 2020
Ink on paper, acrylic on wood, LCD screens
42cm x 30cm
Installation view



"FEAR MY GLAMOUR.
I PUT ON MY ARMOUR OF
SATIN. AND THE WEAVING
SWORD IS MY WEAPON."

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

TG For me, the lockdown has been a very important time to reflect on my work beyond the framework of a degree show. In response to Covid-19, I posted a handwritten text on Instagram saying: «Text me, I'll answer with a drawing +41 76 22 00 555». To each of the messages I received, I answered with a handpicked piece of typographical drawing. I also did an online drawing performance together with five Oslo-based musicians through the Zoom app. The quality of the sound and image was low due to a poor internet connection, but that was not the point. I realized once again that limitations keep my art flowing in unexpected directions. I can't control everything, and that's great!

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

TG As an artist I reflect on what is currently going on and turn what I observe into visual poems. I see my art as a tiny voice in a huge orchestra. Exhibitions can get canceled, the art system might collapse, but uncertain times won't stop me from creating art. On the contrary, the time we live in inspires me to search for what is meaningful and communicate it through art.

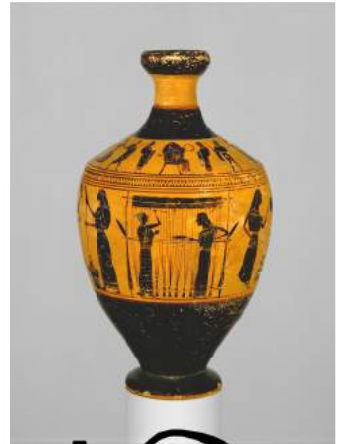
Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

TG A lot of ideas are bubbling in my mind that have to get out there. I am continuing to grow my archive of drawings and I'm looking forward to upcoming exhibitions.

[Silence]

Our planet is getting warmer and warmer. Insects are dying. The fear of a tiny virus freezes the whole world.

THE
WEAVING
SWORD
IS
MY
WEAPON





Penelope, 2020-
 Wood from Vétroz, wool (100%) from Switzerland, stones from the Morges river, cement from Jura,
 sand from the Rhône river
 Weaving performance
 200cm x 190cm x 25cm
 Vimeo-link: <https://vimeo.com/420287259>

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

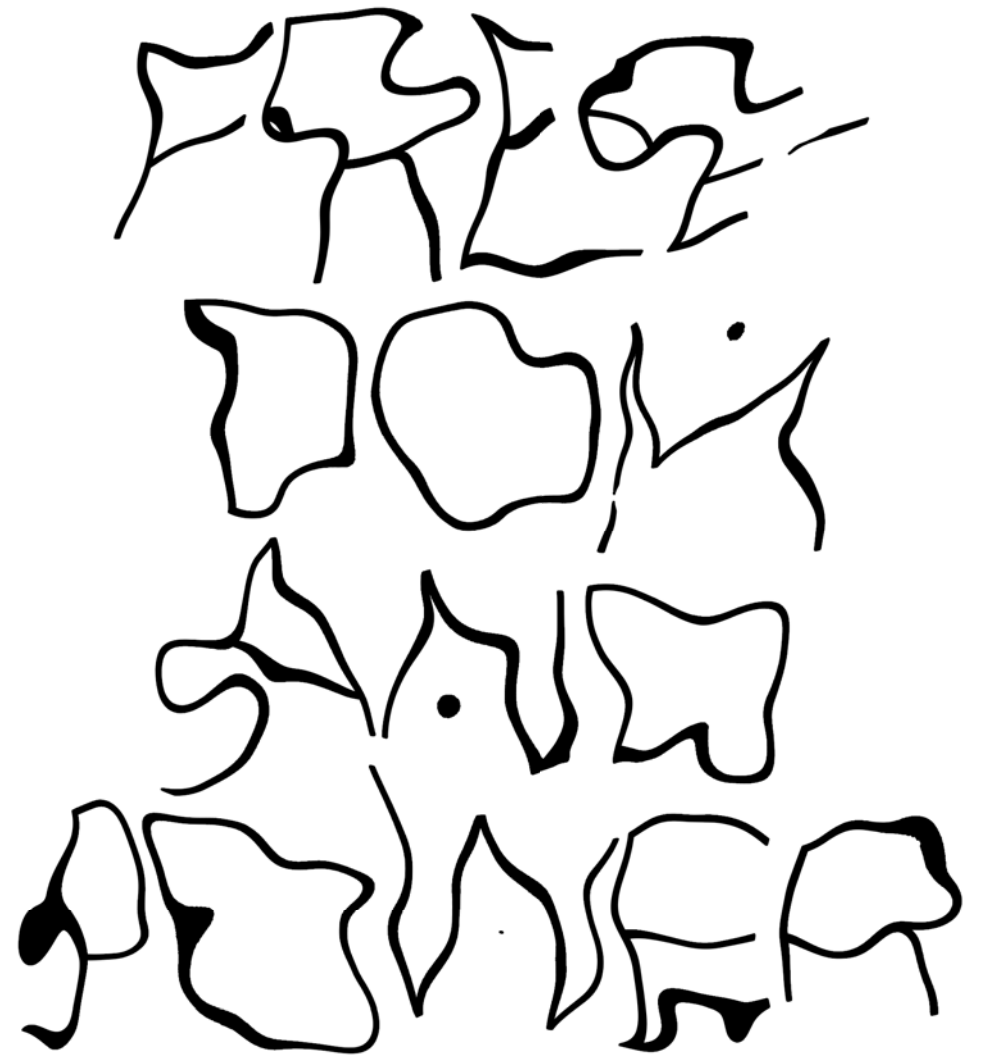
EH In any distressing event of my life, I somehow become overly productive. During the lockdown, the escape from the broadcasting media and social platforms fuelled my productivity. Like the queen of Ithaca Penelope, I isolated myself on my loom, pondering and awaiting the news to come. My entire focus was on my practice and the results of this productivity are rather evident. It is sad that the year of my graduation had to happen this way. All the social activities I was looking forward to for two years, such as the examinations, the ceremony of graduation and the Degree Show were cancelled or adapted to social distancing norms. I found a resolution, however, in thinking that we made it through difficult times and it makes us special. We graduated during a period that marked history.

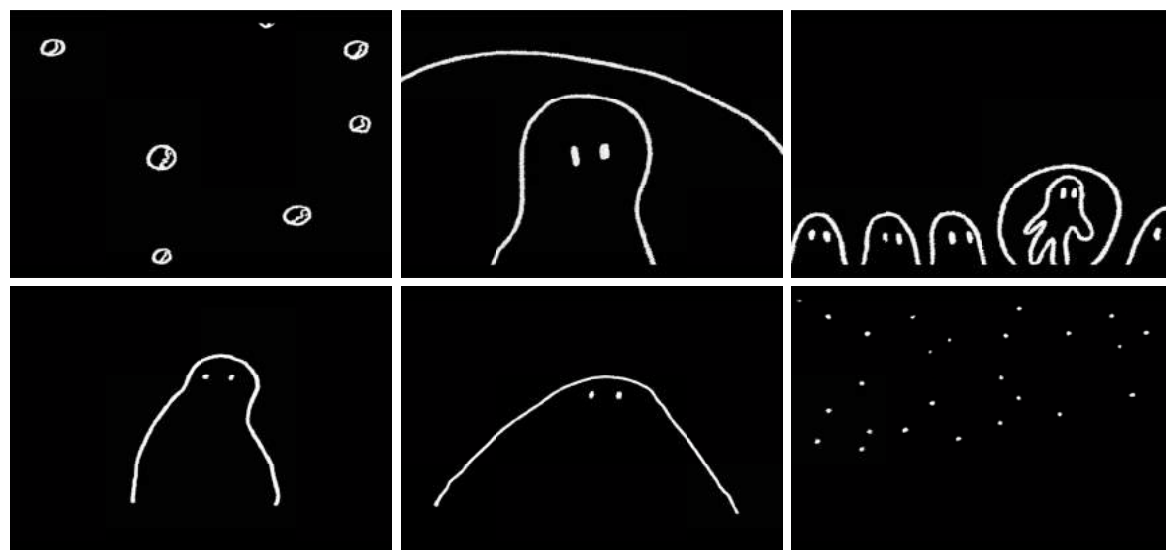
Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

EH Every art history student will go through the Marxist methodology of historical critique, which is a multifaceted way of gathering information. The theoretical side of my practice reflects on how to gather information through different forms of knowledge. How we use magic to justify something beyond human understanding. I firmly believe that mystery is key for creative expansion.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

EH It is only the beginning of the COVID-19 struggle. Instead, I am going to name three words to use as affirmations. In case of emergency repeat out loud in-between breaths:
I am Unique.
I Endeavour.
It is my Adventure.





Untitled, 2019
Audio recording, video, animation, 1'50"

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

SCH The world changes rapidly day by day, and has done so even before 2020. This year, things are getting more radical and drastic. We thought we knew the world, and it turns out we never did. All of a sudden, we have to move on and can never go back.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

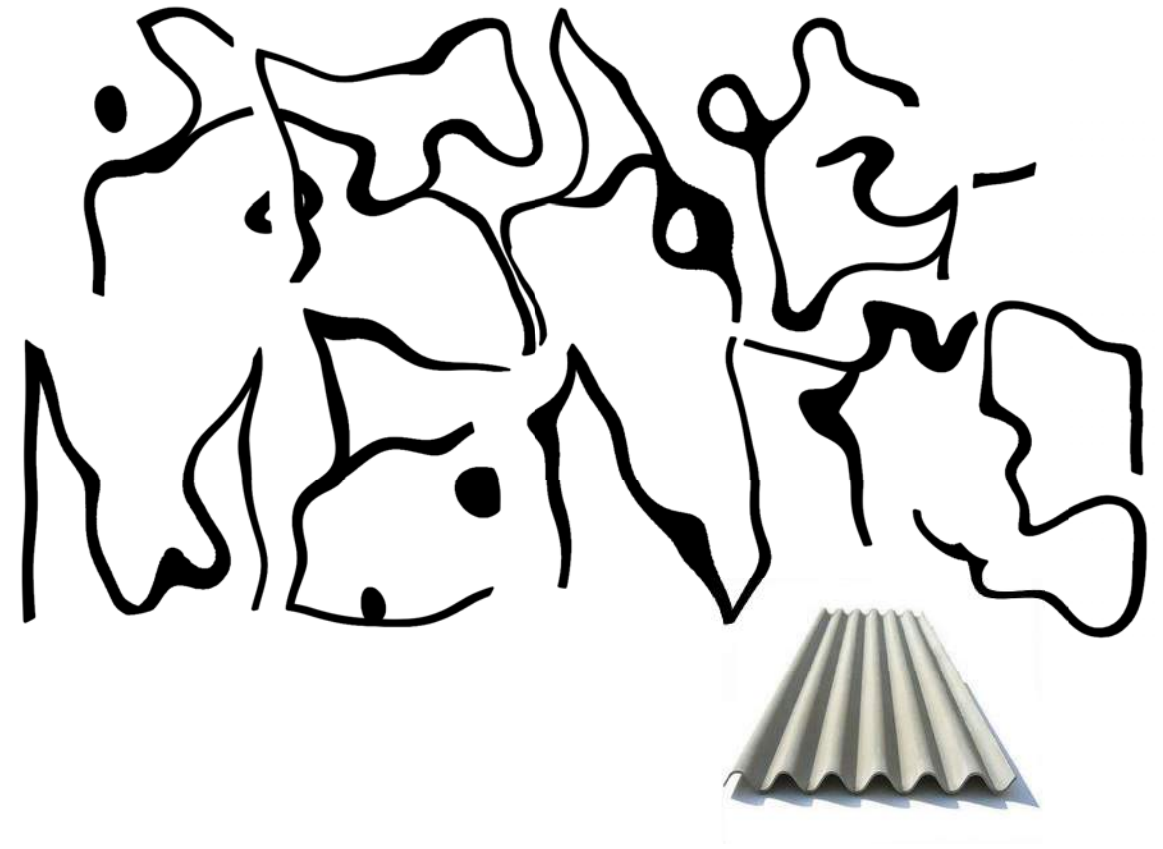
SCH We reflect on what is happening around us, in good times and bad times.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

SCH Let go, relief, brand new.



"FRAGMENTS OF THE MEMORIES."





1



2



1. Sculpture from installation *Watching the Waves*, 2019
Marble Carrara
30cm x 25cm x 25cm

2. *On My Wave Back*, 2019
Video, 15', sculpture marble Carrara, plastic flower
Exhibition at Kali Gallery Luzern

3. *Caladium Bicolor*, 2018
Oil on canvas, a crystal relief
80cm x 35cm
Raum VIII, Switzerland



4



5

6



4. Sculpture *Marble Moon with Hopper*, 2019
Marble Carrara, bronze
65cm x 40cm x 7cm

5. *Tapestry Triptych*, 2019
Detail, *Marble Moon*, material fleece
140cm x 90cm

6. *Tapestry Triptych*, 2019
Marble Moon, blue ribbon, corrugated roofing, material fleece
140cm x 290cm

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

MJ I believe that ending something is always a beginning for something new. Getting further and beyond different boundaries is important to me. Learning new things always makes sense. That's why I see the completion of the Master's degree during COVID-19 in 2020 as a great privilege.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

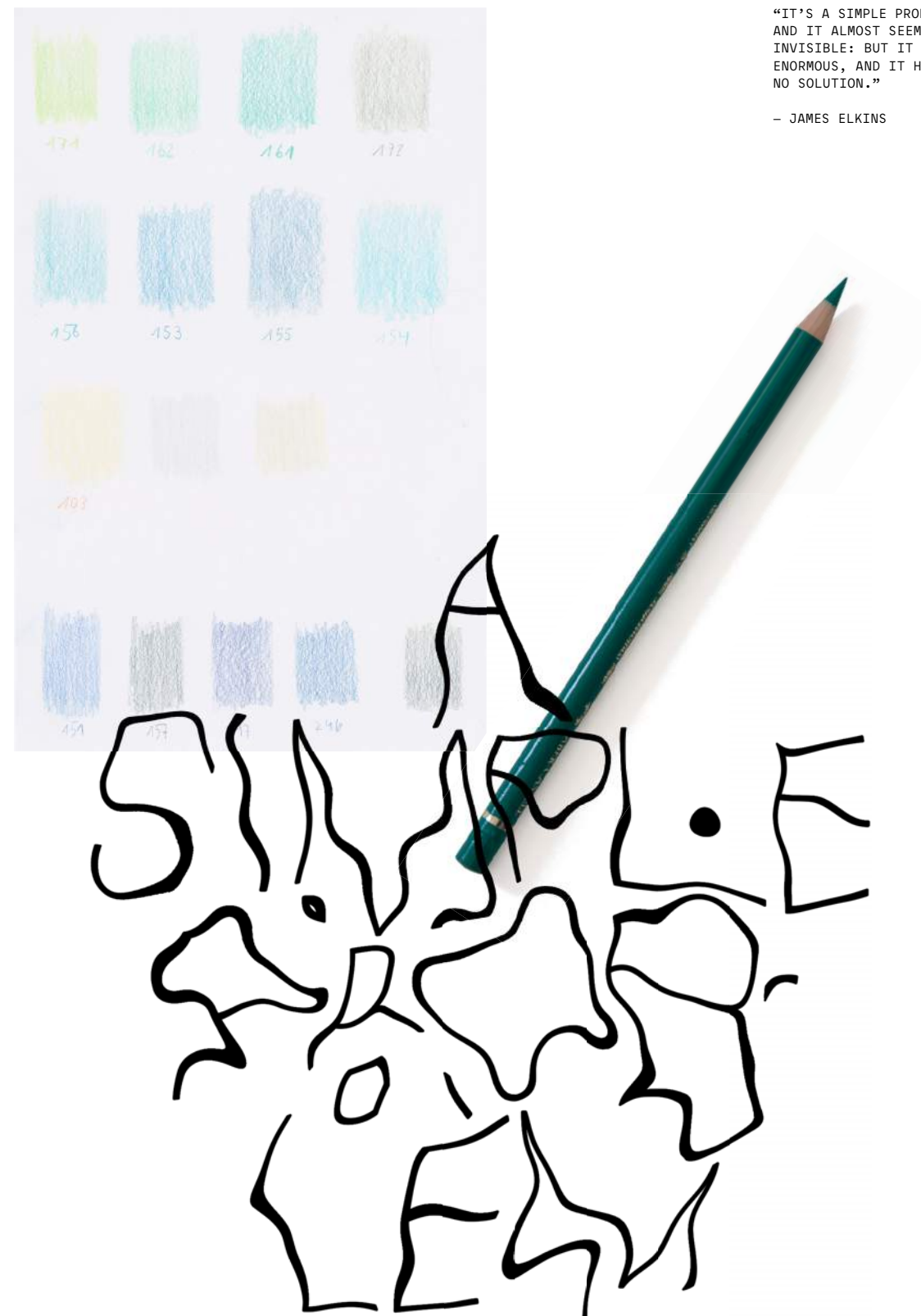
MJ I don't think it's important to discover or clarify anything with art. It is certain that the artist sees things maybe differently than the average viewer, and therefore in my case it is about knowledge, intuition and associations of what I have experienced and I want to pass on. It's about storytelling of my personal interpretation of the specific periods, places and situations in which I grew up and which I see as important to save and pass on to the viewer through art.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

MJ ... environment, materials, associations, and memories.

"IT'S A SIMPLE PROBLEM,
AND IT ALMOST SEEMS
INVISIBLE: BUT IT IS
ENORMOUS, AND IT HAS
NO SOLUTION."

— JAMES ELKINS



Already the mere name of this place speaks of the colonial legacies of the past while echoing their constant reproduction in the present-day world: “Amazonia” is the term that is used in large parts of the world when referring to this forest that was denominated after Greek warriors by European explorers 500 years ago when an expedition troop of Francisco de Orellana was allegedly attacked by a tribe of fighting women. The name thus refers to the Amazons of Greek mythology, a tribe of brutal female warriors whose main concern in life was supposedly war. Taking as a starting point different practices of territorial appropriation that currently occur in the Peruvian Amazon – such as land-trafficking, auctioning oil-block concessions, formalizing mining activities and the zoning of state-protected areas – “*Amazonia*” draws from research I carried out in the span of two years in Switzerland and in Peru, investigating how the landscape in Amazonia is transformed and operationalized as a consequence of these practices. The work consists of a multimedia installation that incorporates drawing and video. The series of large format drawings does not attempt to show the realities of the places depicted, but to evoke an idea of them in the here and now. The drawings are juxtaposed by the video **A-ma-zon being possibly derived from the Iranian compound ha-maz-an for “fighting together”*, which consists of text fragments from dialogues between me and the people I encountered while working in and travelling through the rainforest. The dialogues range from seemingly impossible intercultural conversations and conflicted discussions to the telling of anecdotes and the narration of events.



**A-ma-zon being possibly derived from the Iranian compound ha-maz-an for “fighting together”, 2020*
Single-channel video, no sound, loop, 10’47”
HD video stillframes



Park rangers are not allowed to carry guns, 2020
Coloured pencil on paper
Detail view, original dimensions 144cm x 180cm

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

SJ I think it is an interesting moment to leave the institution after many years of study. I have the feeling that the world I was prepared for during my education has changed and is changing so drastically in many ways that I have to reconsider everything again. Fortunately, as an artist, I can spend my whole life dealing with this.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

SJ My work is an engagement with places that have a special meaning to me. In the last ten years, I have lived between Switzerland, Mexico, Norway, Peru and Chile. Consequently, I have moved between diverse cultures but also very different social classes. The indeterminable and uncertain plays a central role not only in my work but in my life in general, insofar as I constantly live in this multiple space between different languages, world views, realities and ways of thinking and feeling. Especially here in the West, we are trained to fill the void of non-knowledge rather quickly with something. I find it a beautiful aspect of art that it does not dismiss non-knowledge as a weakness, but recognizes it in all its uncertainty.

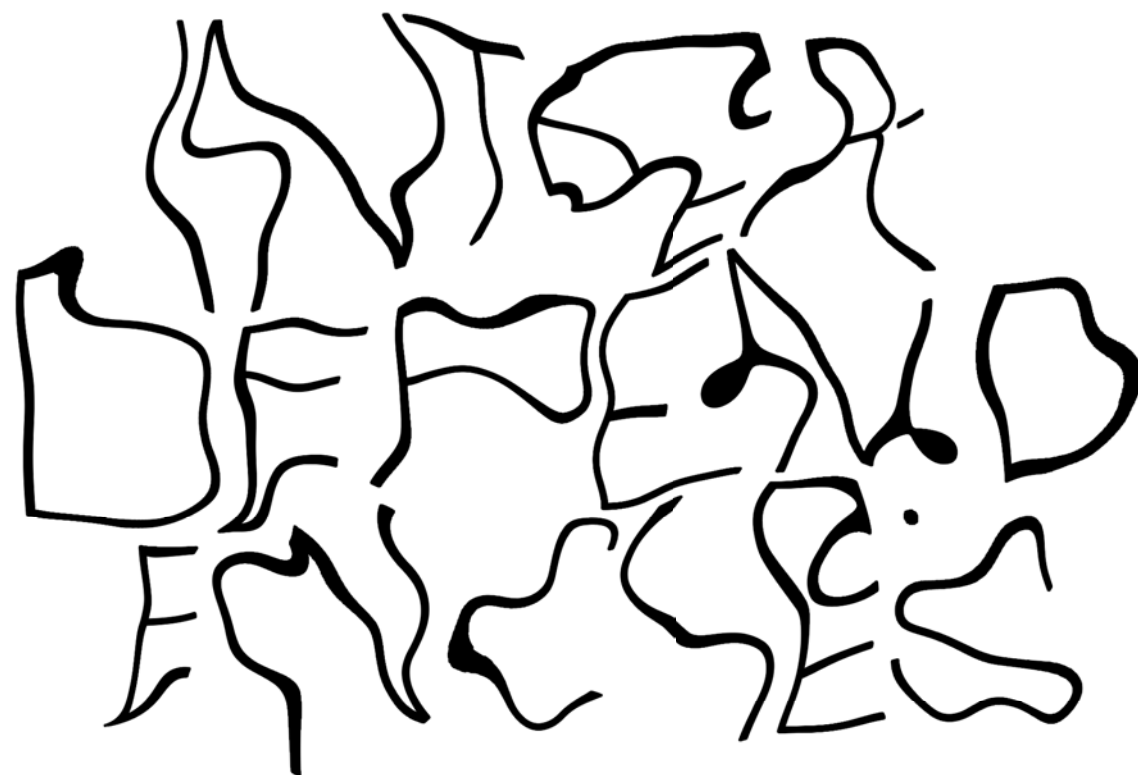
Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

SJ Soft, tranquil, introverted.

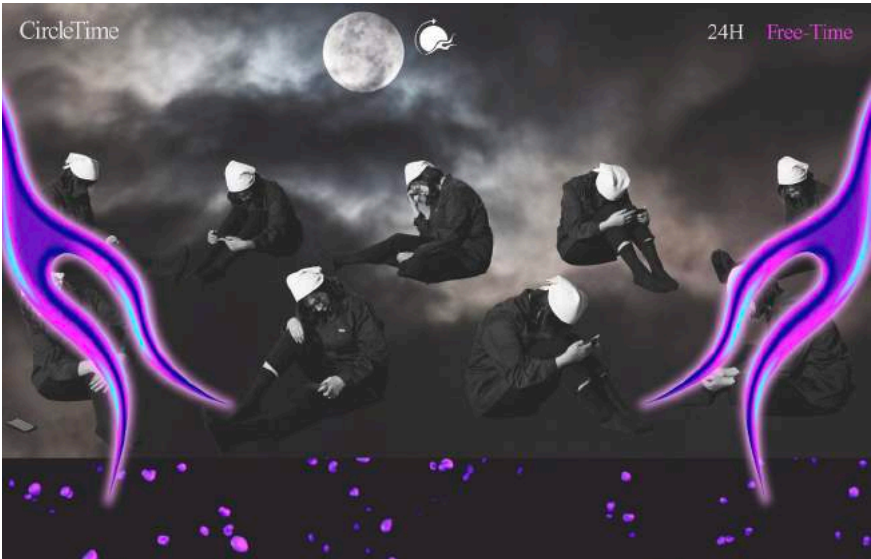


“THE WORLD IS MADE UP OF INTERDEPENDENCIES OF OPPOSITES. IT IS ALWAYS VARIABLE AND TEMPORAL. IT IS LIKE NATURE.”

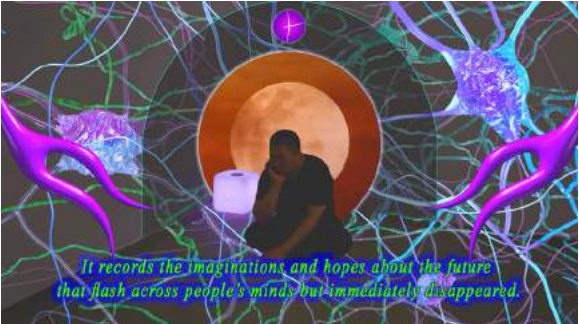
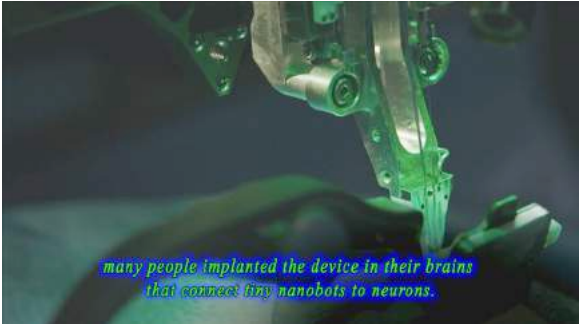
– AFTER LAO TZU, BASED ON JIN-SEOK CHOI, POWER OF THINKING, LAOZI HUMANITIES (2015; IN KOREAN)



It is a fictional platform company, *Circle Time*. The company makes a perfect circle by working 24 hours without a gap. The website introduces the company's services. The platform company provides *24Hour Service* and *Free-Time Service*. In the installation, along with the *Circle Time* website, the office space, fake CV, *Data Lake* and sound pieces are displayed together.



Circle Time, 2019
Installation with the website
Website screenshot, installation view



The video depicts people trapped and works in the *Platform Desert* in 2040. Most people have an unstable job on the platform. People live in a lack of sleep, segmented work, and always-connected Internet environment. They have a fear that their mind is being automated. There is one activist who is a platform worker. The activist tries to create a Brain-Computer Interface program to counter this situation.

Writing Future Scenario: Platform Desert II, 2020
Digital animation, 13'22"
HD video stillframes

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

HYJ In the situation of COVID-19 in 2020, as an Asian living in Europe, I suffered strong racism that was latent in European society. The hidden dangers and violence were revealed quite quickly in a world where it has become common for everyone to be potentially wary of each other. Finishing the semester in summer 2020 required me to overcome fear and anxiety. As an artist, I was able to see how anxiety and hate have been created and spread within this event. I felt that it is also related to history and consciousness. In my work, the latest event has made me more interested in the colonial legacy that is still present. At the same time, I witnessed an interesting change in the world, of moving to the digital realm. It has kept me continuously interested in the expansion of the virtual that I have dealt with in my practice.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

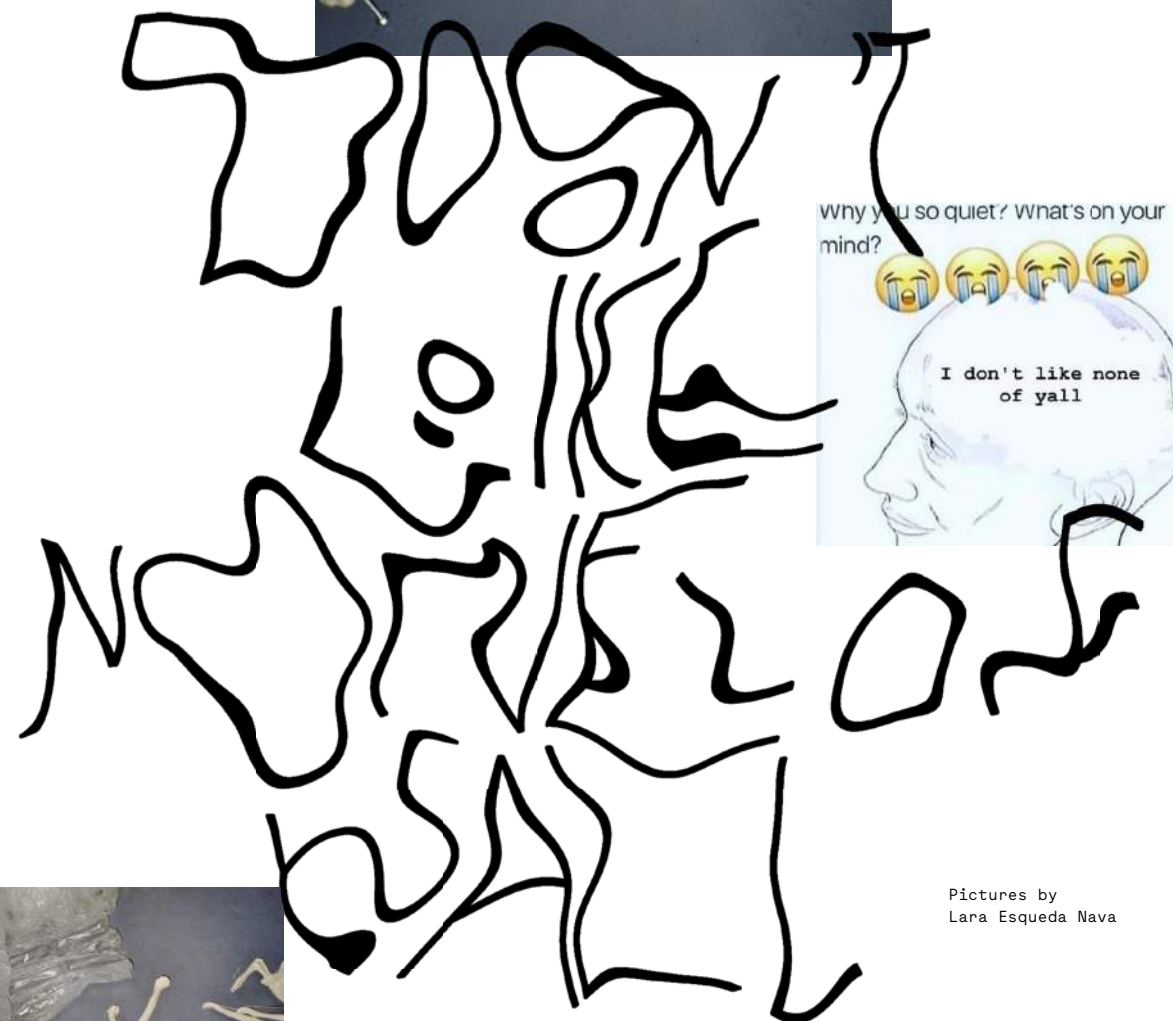
HYJ One of the greatest characteristics of art for me is that it can contain uncertainty, and sometimes it must include and convey uncertainty. In my work, the uncertainty creates a space where various viewers can project themselves, and makes it possible to include unexplained dangers or invisible possibilities that cannot be conveyed with systematically organized information. In a space of void of non-knowledge, art can relay experiential knowledge that is not structured in the form of language or academic knowledge to people.

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

HYJ I am currently working on a form of fiction that consists of stories of reality, technologies, and emotions of expectation and anxiety. The next work will also be a fictional narrative video work. It will be a story about a new form of labor, a history of South Korean labor, and Asian thoughts such as reincarnation of nature and humans.



"I DON'T LIKE NONE OF YALL."



Why you so quiet? What's on your mind?



I don't like none of yall



Pictures by
Lara Esqueda Nava

How much of your dog's violent history
do you inherit?



German Shepherds Need Heroes Too, 2020
Video, sound, colour, 12'49"
HD video stillframes

How much of your violent history
does your dog inherit?



Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

RSK Golla, all to a suddin I find out that I'm all alone by myself – alone – would you rillze that?

— Krazy Kat

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

RSK Look Ma, no hands! / Allah, take the wheel.

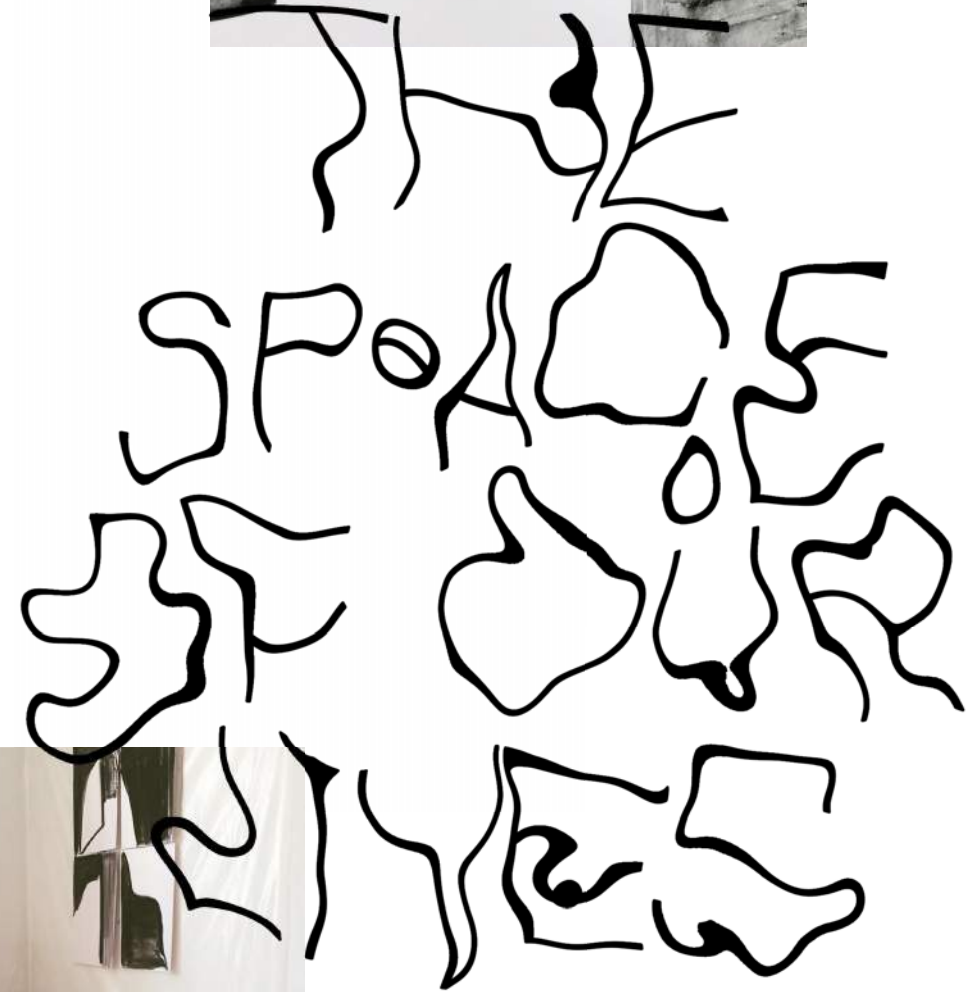
Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

RSK Aloha from Hell.

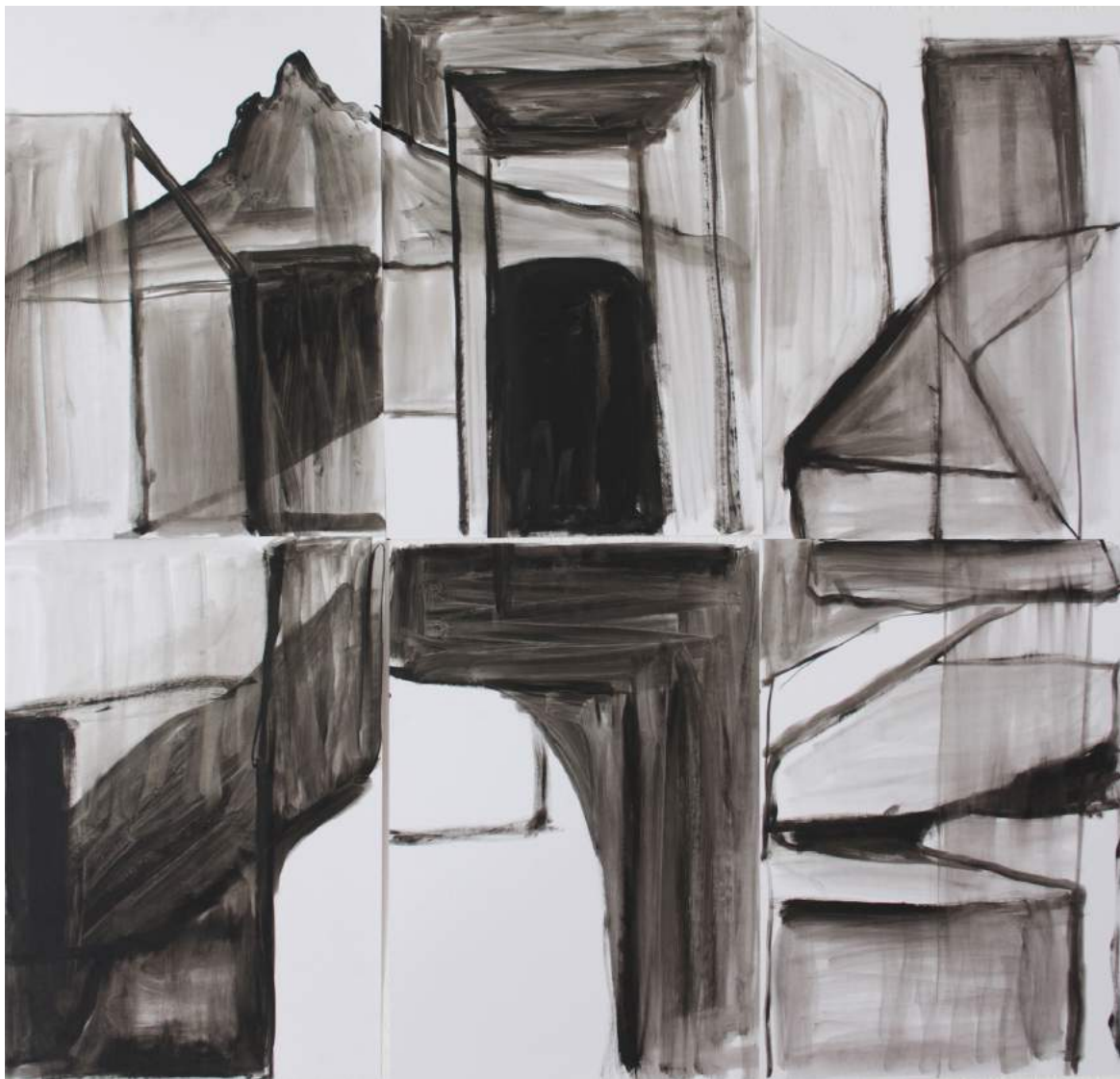


“THE SPACE OF OUR LIVES IS NEITHER CONTINUOUS, NOR INFINITE, NOR HOMOGENEOUS OR ISOTROPIC. BUT DO WE KNOW EXACTLY WHERE IT BREAKS OFF, WHERE IT CURVES, WHERE IT DISCONNECTS AND COMES TOGETHER?”

– GEORGES PEREC, SPECIES OF SPACES AND OTHER PIECES.



SIBEL KOCAKAYA



1

1. *Fragmental Spaces*, 2020
Oil on paper, 6
42cm x 30cm

2. *Walls*, 2020
Clay sculptures
7cm x 4cm, 6cm x 5cm, 3cm x 2cm
With a stone from Ticino

3. *Untitled (A rocky mountain's detail of Ticino)*, 2019
Oil on canvas
24cm x 30cm



2

3



Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

SK Finishing my fine arts studies in the summer of 2020, I had a sense of a gap in the perception of space and time, but it meant a lot to me to fill the gap with the latest unexpected event by experiencing it. This process had an impact on my work, as it prompted me to find new forms and ask new questions in my artistic practice. I have been working on the context of dwelling, through materials used and form, spatial conditions and body_space relationship. Thus, the latest event has been another base for my work.

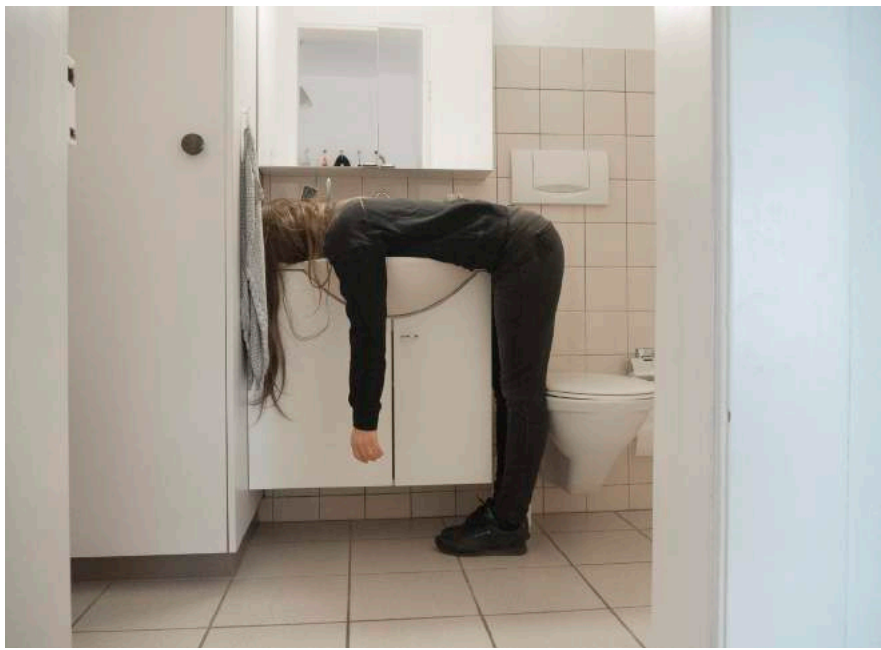
Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

SK The indeterminable comes out in my work through an awareness of the facts that need to be visible, such as known, defined or undefined. At this point, experience plays a strong role through the realization that one must be aware of it, and uncertain things always lead me to ask new questions and put them into practice with my skills. This is a kind of scientific process in which art probes the void of non-knowledge in an explorative way through awareness.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

SK Curious, excited, thoughtfulness.





Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

CLF Overwhelming – busy – care work – no time for art – no space for art – art is still present – homeschooling – cooking – washing – cleaning – trying to read but can't focus – laughing – madness – confusion – sadness – where do I fit in? – adapting – reducing – combining – merging – focusing – distancing – finding temporary and flexible strategies that may endure.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

CLF Let me respond to this question with a movement: both arms, stretched out, reach to the left side of the body, guided by "searching fingers", direction of feet and knees remains the same, heels lift up, shoulders and upper body turn (like a spiral) to the front. The fingers guide the movement back and pull the whole body into a turn from the right side to facing left.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

CLF squashed lemon (& excited!).



"VADA, VAL, VALEA,
VALENTINE, VALO,
VANJA, VESA, VILDAN,
VIVIAN, VIVIEN ARE
GENDER-NEUTRAL FIRST
NAMES FOR VALENTINA."



VALENTINA MINNIG



Deli Chews, 2020
 City Salts
 Installation detail
 Birsfelden, Canton Basel-Land

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

VM This degree has as much value as the people involved in it give it. Thanks for the pumpkin seeds! I shared them with Gamba. But she found them too sticky on her tongue.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

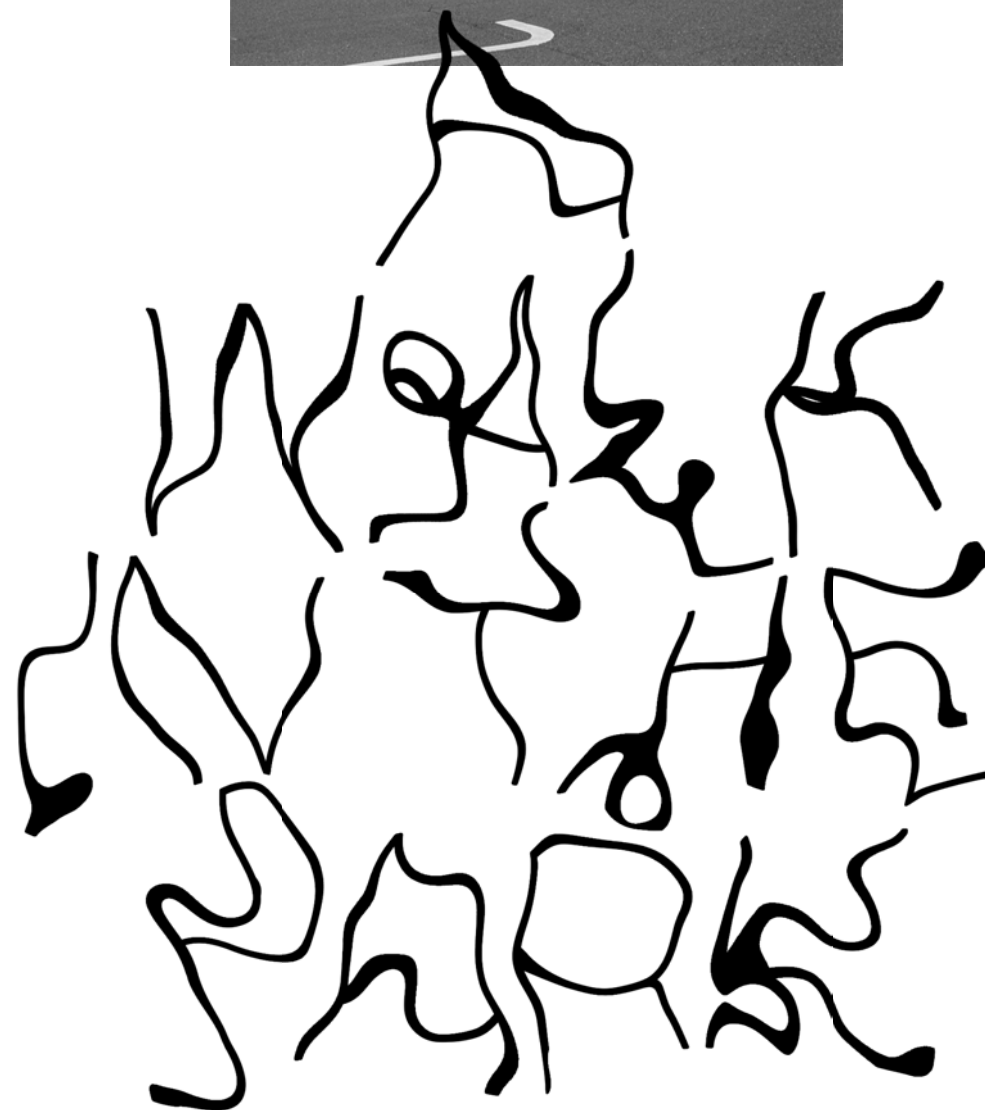
VM What I like about it is that I let others decide a lot of things. So, in my next work the color selection was made to match Gamba's perception. Dogs see the color spectrum completely differently from humans. The shape was given by my quails.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

VM Cross, before, grid.



“PEOPLE TAKE A WALK IN THE PARK AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED, OR PRETENDING THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.”





Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

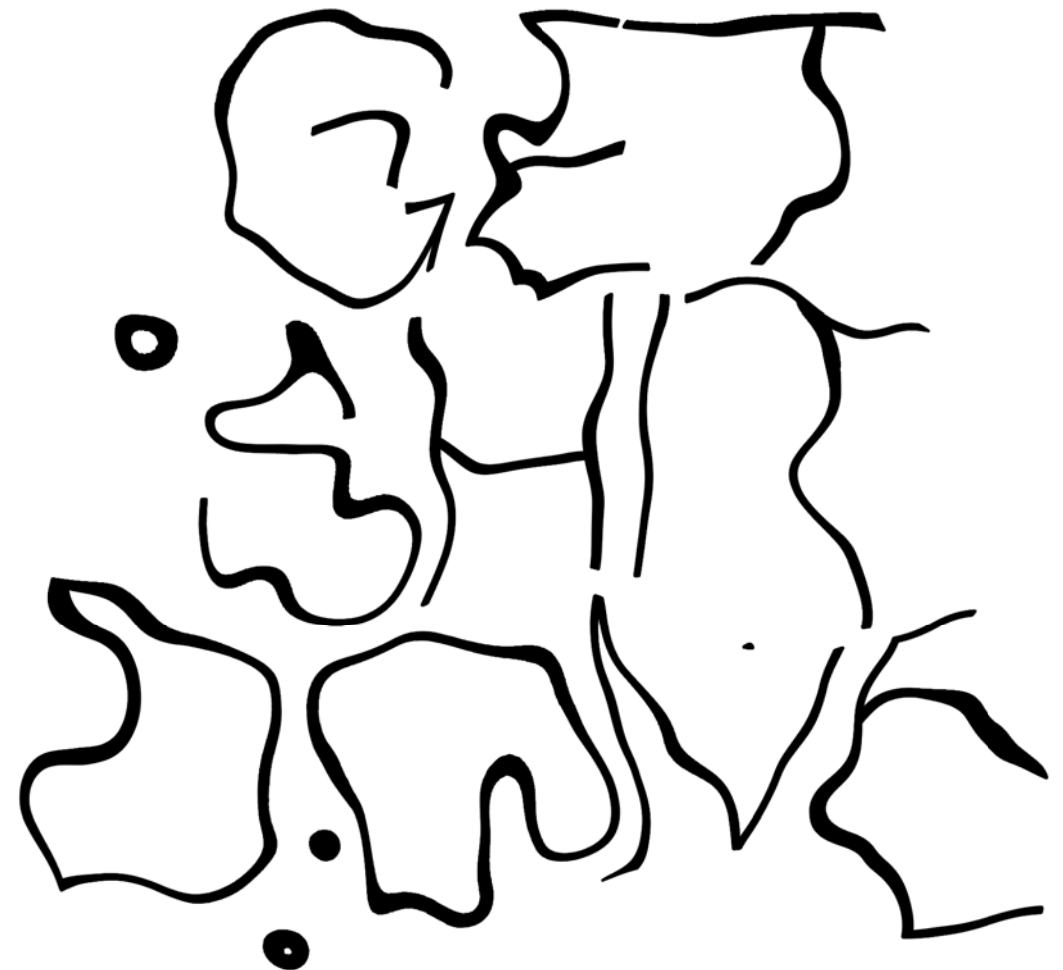
EM As you know, I stayed in Europe during the pandemic. Being East Asian, this was quite a challenge. Individualism is so profoundly anchored in European society, a reality that was brought out vividly by this pandemic. Life is different in every country. I hope the pandemic may offer an incentive to Europeans and others to question the Eurocentric world view a bit. Also, I hope the world will become less individualistic. I hope I can fight against these things through my creativity and daily life.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

EM The Eurocentric world is still present in people's minds. At the same time, the East Asian economy is rising and changing the make-up of the world. It is helpful to have insight into international relations from a different perspective, to have exposure to artistic work from different countries and read literature from different periods. Otherwise, you are likely to miss the point, fail to grasp essential developments, and make mistakes. What I am trying to do is show a complexity that most people will likely ignore as they are busy making a living.

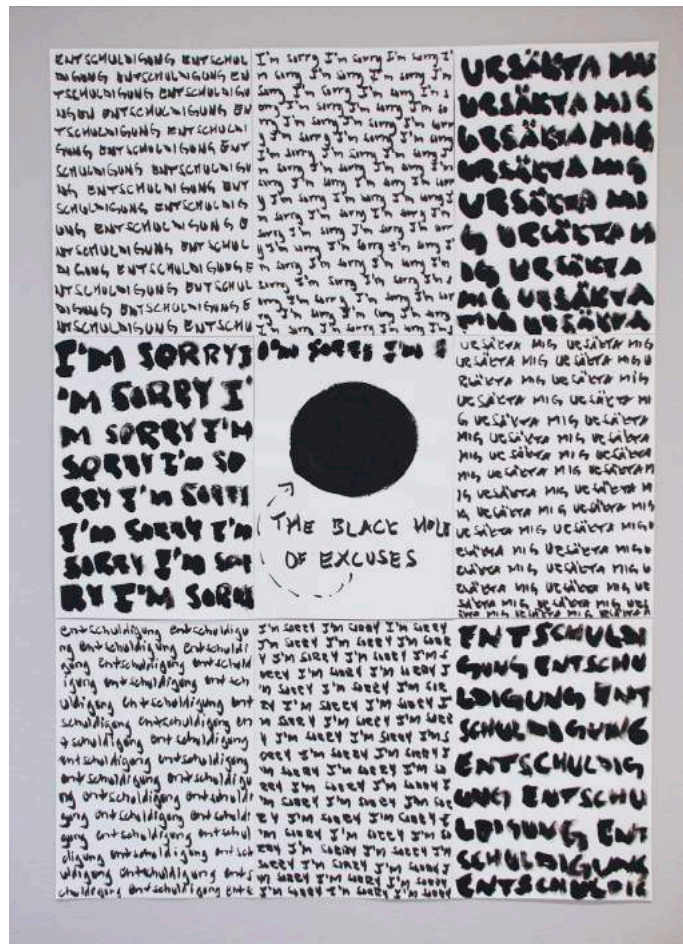
Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

EM Read, write, think.

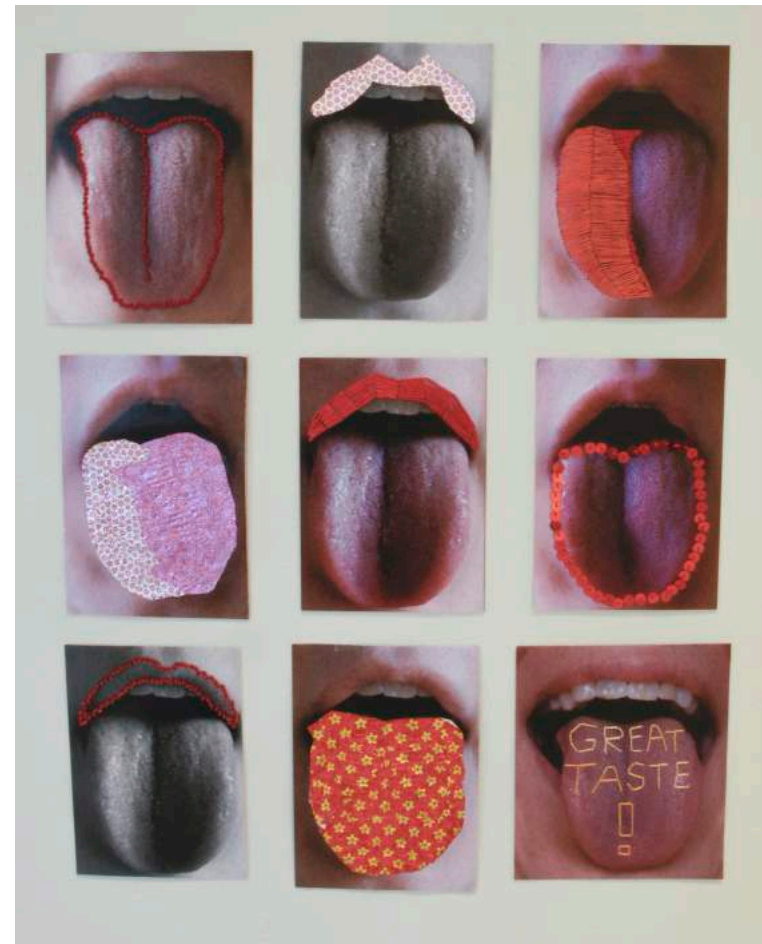




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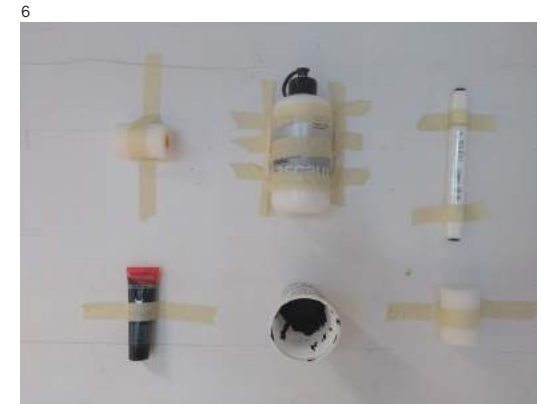


1. A as in Artist, 2019
Video published on Instagram
Part of the series Artist Alphabet



2. I'm sorry/Ursäkta mig/Entschuldigung, 2019
Acrylic paint and felt pen on paper
76.5cm x 54cm

3,4. Studio intervention, 2019
Documentation of a performative action



5. Tongue experiments, 2020
Photographs modified with sequins, candy wrappers, rocaille beads and cotton thread
Dimensions variable

6. Assemblage on studio wall, 2019
Foam rollers, acrylic paint tube and bottle, felt pen, plastic cup with acrylic paint and masking tape

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

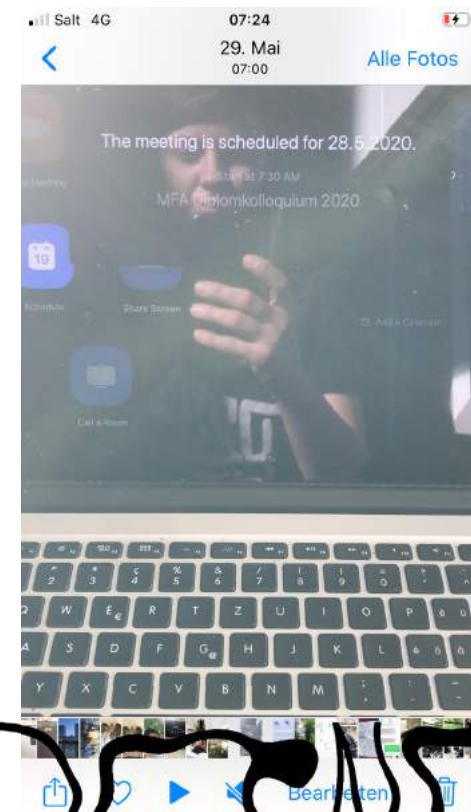
MN When the lockdown first happened in Zurich, I tried to take a business-as-usual approach to my artmaking. But of course, the reality of the situation crawled into my consciousness and couldn't be ignored. The answer for me was to examine what was happening in the world through my work. I wrote poems. I took pictures. I started thinking about forced domesticity from both contemporary and historical perspectives. By combining my modern-day writings with antique embroidery patterns, I tried to merge these different temporalities. I'm planning to cover a nightshirt I basically lived in during the first weeks of the lockdown, with my embroidered poems and other motifs. This work is still in progress, but the pandemic doesn't seem to be ending anytime soon, either.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

MN I often use and play with language in my art. Language is such a double-edged sword: something that is literal and specific, but also holds the capacity for obtuse metaphors and meandering thinking. Language can be viewed as something very straightforward, but there are lots of nuances to be found in how we express ourselves through words. We mostly think about language as a tool for the construction of meaning. Can this condition be reversed? Can language, and art, be used as devices for creating voids to be filled with non-sense? In my art, language shows up in a multitude of ways: as performative poems, words embroidered on fabric or the written concept behind a piece. I also think art always produces something, whether that's a physical object or something more intangible like an affect. Art for me is never completely ephemeral.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

MN Direction – where to go from here.
Rest – taking time to gather energy.
Expansion – preparing for growth.



"I DON'T NEED
ANOTHER MASTER."

I DON'T
NEED
ANOTHER
MASTER

Q1 What is your name?

KN and thus i feel it must have been wider systemic influences that prompted me to narrate myself with specific descriptions and categories today. so, for instance. hey there. i'm "kaška". i'm a "natural scientist" slash "conceptual artist". if you have a will to know my "identity" along the "professionalization" line. but no. i don't work in "industry". nor do i work in "academia". i know it's weird. after all these years invested into an "academic career". i discontinued my "academic career". why? there are many reasons. and i'm "precarious" now as most "artists" on the "neoliberal market" are. so, i don't have "job security" as such. but in fact. i don't know who i am. is it that important now? "scientist" or not "scientist". "artist" or not "artist". papers don't matter to me that much. i consider them inflated. but anyway. i'm "highly educated" on the surface of paper. i have many papers formalizing my education. in the effect of the "upward economic mobility" thanks to the "transformation" spirit and "socialist" slash "capitalist" premises. plus "global competitiveness". i had access to the higher education with no privatized glass ceilings. and so i don't come from the so-called "bourgeois class". my surname "nowak" testifies to this one. "nowak" can give you some images of my genealogies if you "google" it up. but so, i'm highly educated and privileged anyway. this privilege of "higher education" fluctuates from one country to another. as i'm a so-called "economic migrant". and as i travel, i'm not treated equally everywhere. so, "higher education" is not a direct ticket everywhere, as it were. no educational barrier doesn't equal no occupational barrier. and some papers and "passports" are better than the other ones. and still, i feel that i'm privileged in "europe" because "poland" still belongs to the so-called "european union"... and as you can infer from my skin. i'm so-called "white". though, to be honest, i feel rather like i'm light beige, in fact. and i originally come from so-called "poland". as i've mentioned above. if it's important to you to know this "original nationality" now. as you may hear from my so-called "east-european" accent. my way of speaking and the melody of my voice testify to that each time i open my mouth. so, my tongue acts as my "sound-wave passport" at all times. and i'm not originally from "here". i do not "originally" belong "here". in fact, anywhere but in "poland" i'm thought of as not being "originally" from "here". however, because of my "migrant background" i extend my social location a bit. i tend to speak up not just when it comes to the so-called "polish cup of tea". and in doing so. no. i'm not a thief like some stereotypes about "polish people" would depict. generalizations are indeed degenerations. so, i'm not stealing any land by extending my social background. to gain global stage and audience right now. i just don't myself believe in imaginary lines on the maps. and i'm a "kind person", per the historical narratives of so-called "poland" that continue to have currency today. and as some people tend to generalize. but i'm not myself a "communist". as some people tend to believe as well now. or they simply mix up "communist" and "socialist". i tend not to have illusions about communism. this experiment has been a dismal failure. as has been capitalism. and because history says. "poland" hasn't invaded anyone in recent times. this acts like a shield of collective good conscience now. so, the so-called "polish people" tend to project themselves as victims. even more so as they were barred by moscow from the so-called "marshall plan". in remaining victims, "polish people" are re-victimizing themselves because of the oppressive histories and collective memories. so, don't you dare say that "polish people" participated for instance in "antisemitism". it was about "anti-humanity". but anyway. this way or another. this history lies in the shadow and in silence. and thus, in the collective unconsciousness today. even if "polish people" are wanna-be oppressors themselves, which is evident in how the radical national movements talk and mobilize nowadays. all "polish people" remain innocent because of this collective memory. they are never guilty in their

own eyes. they are just "catholic church followers". but no. this shield of good conscience is not called "post-colonialism". different words are used in the "polish context". "poland" disappeared from the maps, and "polish culture" was being eradicated not because of "colonialism" but because of the so-called "partitions" and "world wars". but so, one doesn't speak of "post-colonialism" in the context that is a "polish" one. just as one speaks differently about "nazi" and "bolshevik" invasions in the other so-called "european" countries now. except for frantz fanon, i haven't heard anyone call it this way. and so, this term of "post-colonialism" is reserved for certain specific histories, as it were... and because of diligent "scientists of sex" and prevailing categories out there. i used to define myself as a so-called "homosexual" for people to understand. because i'm regarded as a "woman". and people i'm attracted to are labelled women as well. according to my own "sex" i describe and define the "sex" of my potential would-be partners, as it were. my "gender" and the "performance of my role" were already constructed and anticipated by my name. and so, "kaška" since my birth. my name was chosen based on what "phenotype" i apparently showed to some doctors that i don't remember myself. based on their observations of my "genitals" and my "sexual organs". i had my "sex" assigned as "female". it entailed that i was brought up as a "female". and was supposed to wear "long hair" and "feminine clothes" as a "girl". my demeanor was expected to be "female". after some time i realized that "sex" and "gender" are not that important to me. and so, i thought i could get rid of this "f" in square brackets on the whole. but that confuses people. they expect me to describe myself through the "binary" categories that they know and are familiar with themselves. if not [f], then surely [m]. in any case, either this or that. sort of softness and hardness complementarily melting into the whole. in a yin and yang way, as it were. so, i sometimes play with that. i sometimes joke that i'm straight. it's "queer". it's a double flip. i have to explain. and so, i say. i'm not a "feminist", either. if anything, i'm a "kill-joy". and no, i don't have kids even if i'm thirty-six. and although i look as if i was meant to be a good vessel for starting "reproduction" and "family". i'm messing up this "heteronormative" script predicted for me by priests. to prolong "white" "catholic" kinship lineages. at least i look young. so, i'm informed that i still have time. just as i'm messing up the position of a servant as a "wife" and "housewife". that was somehow anticipated for me at my "husband"'s side. by the "patriarchal" preachers now. to subsidize the "capitalist economy" with my care. that is to say, with labor that is unpaid... and so on and so forth all the time. as i narrate myself. i make myself up. at a given time with the critical inner voices that are still acting as a very permissively and repressively affective gps in my mouth. even if i try to re-describe myself. it doesn't work in the long run if i stay myself in the realm of the old descriptions and categories right now. and we are all doing the same while having monologues with ourselves. while having conversations with one another. we are making up ourselves and one another. we affect ourselves and one another. i feel it's very important to understand that in these very basic passport-like small talks. what's your name? so, where do you originally come from? we reproduce the violences of the politics of dominance. by linguistically reproducing binary antagonistic oppositions ourselves. we reproduce racism every day. because our minds are endo-colonized with certain descriptions and categories that are hegemonic ones. the identity problem just as the species problem was conceived ex post facto as such. and so, as a task to be solved somehow in advance. a disembedding liquid modernity engendering a puzzle that, be that as it may, needs to be put together at all times. and through these descriptions and categories we objectify ourselves and one another. instead of creating, we box and classify ourselves and one another each day. source: "i don't need another master"

Q2 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

KN set the alarm clock (exam performance 29.05.2020) hello everybody, and welcome to my examination. i prepared a speech in advance to present my portfolio and my master thesis to you now. so, i wrote some sentences down that i'm reading to you now. the reason for this is that the time frame designed for each part is ten minutes. and i'm really not thinking straight and logically. especially under the circumstances of compressed time and under the pressure triggered by this squeezing frame of time. and i bluntly assumed that i'm expected here in this examination setting to make some linear sense that is subordinate to western logic, as it were. but under such stress. i am taken over by emotions. i can hardly make any sense and utter sentences. in such a way that they would follow this logic in some way. words flee from my direct memory. aren't at my immediate disposal and at hand. i stutter. «ums» proliferate in my speech. and to put it simply. i feel stupid. i feel overcome by emotions. which obscure any reason of mine. if there is some left at this time. it feels to me as if i was regressing. on the darwinian evolutionary axis. to some backward state. in any case. in the opposite direction to the uni-directional development, as it were. so, to avoid feeling retarded and regressed. i wrote these sentences down, as i said. and those i'm reading to you now. under circumstances in which i had more time to reflect. and i'm sure that everybody is doing that. that kind of meticulous surgical preparations in advance of their presentations. they just don't say it out loud. so, the simple question would be, why? why am i saying all of this now? why would it be relevant anyhow to talk about the compression of time by the acceleration of the pace of life? it is not only about me unpacking some space and time for myself and putting my thoughts neatly together right now. it is also because the acceleration technologies brought us together here. to this zoom examination room. and more specifically to the corona crisis. the corona emergency, or the corona regime, if you like. has in any way thrown us out of «THE normality». narrated as this very normative reference point of reality. which shall be striven for at all costs? and just as paul virilio. i am against the acceleration technologies. because by accelerating our pace of life. we not only break time and space to extract the most productive forces. we also accelerate the catastrophes. and if catastrophes are happening that fast. that we have no time for reflection. democracies are jeopardized. just as we saw with switzerland turning overnight from a direct democracy into the authoritarian system of bag. and it is even worse, because we want this authoritarian system for our own protection and health. and just as we are sitting here together in a zoom room. virtually. not physically. i would like to stress. the possibility to conglomerate is reduced. the possibility to mobilize is reduced as well. because closeness is needed for all of that. and not alienation under surveillance. and just to say. we are in the highly surveilled zoom room right now anyway. with very dubious policies of data protection. and why do we still use it despite that? because everybody else is using it as well. and it is easy to handle. and yet we care to say that the meeting shall not be recorded anyway. and with this i zoomed out a bit because it is important for me to think about the broader context, wherever i am and whatever i do.

Q3 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

KN and i allowed myself to conceptualize the time division of this examination a little bit differently than ten minutes for portfolio. ten minutes for master thesis. i pulled these respective ten minutes together into twenty minutes. and i'll present my portfolio

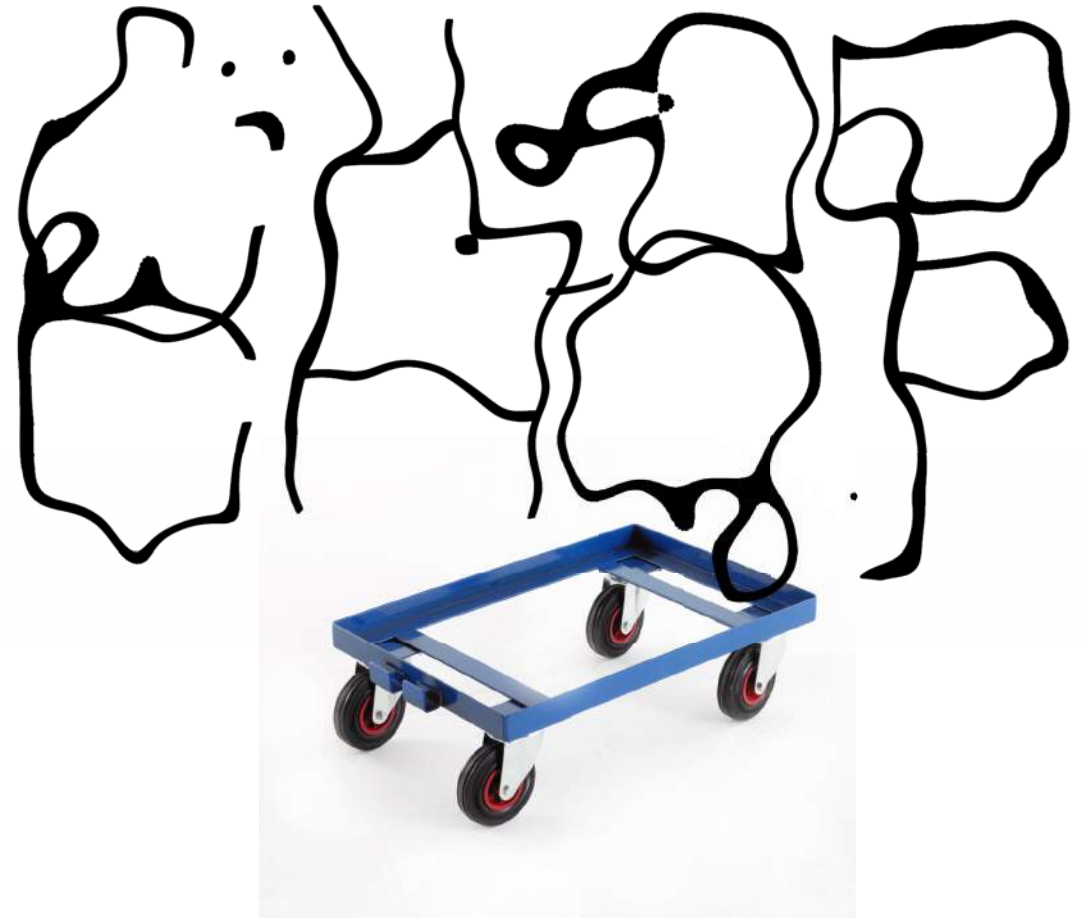
and my master thesis in one run. because they are connected, and i don't want to treat them separately right now. and then we can discuss. i've set the alarm clock right in the very beginning. and it will ring after twenty minutes. the reason for this is that there is a red thread running through my work. and in these twenty minutes. i would like to focus on this red thread. this red thread is not so much textual. though it is that as well. but first and foremost, it is operative and conceptual. meaning in my work. i have a certain approach, which is to question the approach. and if i shall define what i like to question. it is THE scientific paradigm. THE episteme, to borrow michel foucault's term. underlying THE scientific method and more broadly, THE research. or even more broadly, THE cultural hegemony, to borrow antonio gramsci's term in such enterprises as THE educational. THE professional. THE public and THE private. so all the ideas and beliefs that unconsciously or, to a lesser extent, consciously influence our actions. so, the corresponding habitus bubbles, to borrow pierre bourdieu's term. the identities that are constructed on these ideas. beliefs or symbols if you like. and are not created by us but given to us by society. the identities that we tend to adopt and express as we walk through different settings in our lives. that are composed of the web of symbols that dictate our behavior and actions and are embedded in power structures. and so, this is like a huge umbrella of ideas right now that i would like to challenge with my arts. not altogether. not all at once, but different ideas in different settings at specific moments in time. so, my work is bound more by the strategy that i would altogether call the obfuscation strategy. because i don't have any single strategy as such. i have many strategies depending on the given context right now. and obfuscation, because it is about blurring and clouding, if you like, of one's own agenda as well now. so, there is always this element of surprise and what bertolt brecht would call verfremdungseffekt. but as i said. the purpose is always to question. to put the power structures into the spotlight. to confront the codes of conduct that are expected in certain circumstances but not in other ones. and as i said. i have many, many strategies, but what connects them is that they are always meta-referential. with respect to the media. formats and processes that i'm involved with and in. like i spoke about the examination format in the very beginning. and just to be clear on that. i cannot free myself entirely from cultural hegemony at any point in time. which was very much the topic of my discursive work and «i don't need another master». you have received around sixty pages out of four hundred. which i have actually written in order to find some space for the subjectification processes and for myself. and there was no end to that. but so, i tried to free myself from the cultural hegemony of hegel's master/slave dialectic, as it were. in terms of what i see as «personal self-struggle». and which i understand as the struggle against the master template of cultural hegemony. so, happening within oneself. and in terms of « interpersonal self-struggle». which i understand as the struggle against having to be recognized by the other. in order to become an independent subject oneself. so, happening without oneself. and in doing so, i was trying to see and deconstruct how some internalized ideas influence my actions. in order to ultimately find some core self or authentic self of mine. but i haven't found or haven't reached any core of myself as such. because as soon as i tried to deconstruct one idea. i would find myself subjected to yet another one. that i identify with, perhaps. welcome and use as my strategy. like, for instance, a deconstruction strategy. but at least with my approach of writing. i could come closer. not to the authentic self. because i realized that it doesn't exist in the end. but closer to the state where i can influence my actions more deliberately and become more open to other ways. i called my strategy of writing the "writing with hovering attention strategy". which sounds like a very egalitarian one. with respect to my thoughts now. because i would not give my thoughts any hierarchies while writing them down. this is not the same as the stream of consciousness. that, for instance, virginia wolf would

use for a fictional purpose. because it was a semi-directed way of writing, in fact. i would imagine the idea of what i would like to write about. but also listen to all the thoughts that i might otherwise have considered tangential. that i would otherwise discard in a linear way of writing, and not even reflect on that act in terms of why. so, i was able to stop and listen also to my side thoughts and consider where they have come from. and the more i was following them. the more i was becoming aware of some internalized ideas that would otherwise have unconsciously influenced the way i write, and surely i would have eventually cut this stuff out. because i would never give them a second thought, or just treat them as insignificant noise. this realization about deconstructing the ideas of cultural hegemony came later. and was retrospectively verbalized as such. so many times, i'm doing something driven by intuition of some kind and yet i'm not conscious exactly why. the involvement with the process gives me this realization. and i like to underline this process in my work. because realization is a process and not genius as such. involvement with the process is very crucial for my work in arts. it is perhaps far more important that any result at any time.

Q4 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

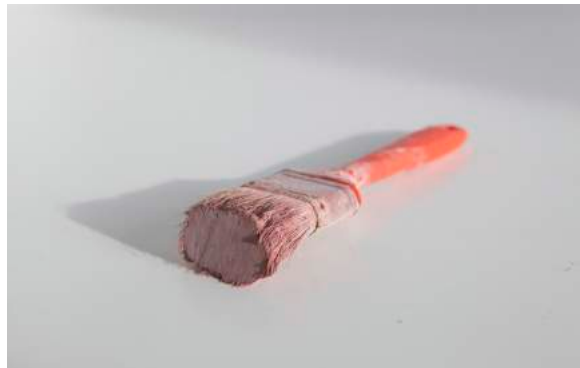
KN and so, i could summarize my master thesis as an attempt at unpacking more space for the subjectification and myself. by challenging the linear logic of thinking and writing. going beyond the order and structure that would have been dictated by such a logic. and writing in an associative way. but not only. building new levels of involvement with my text by associating it with quotes of other thinkers. about which i was thinking in associative ways as well while writing my text. trying to avoid beginning and end in this text. having an open end. this open end is yet again something that is very important for me. in my life. in my work. i don't know if i could involve myself with anything and stay curious. if i had a ready-made plan in advance. and clear-cut stages and goals in my life. in my career. in my love relationship, or in being an artist, to put it way too simply. which brings me in an associative way to the portfolio itself. but before i zoom in into the portfolio this way. i would like to give some examples of my strategies first. how i deal with the cultural hegemony as i make my way through day-to-day existence. cultural hegemony is omnipresent. there is no outside to it. but i can see it at play when i am prompted to switch my code of conduct. while switching between the habitus bubbles. switching between identities, as it were. which i would recognize as leading multiple lives, in a way. these switching moments are for me these liminal spaces that open for my artistic practice spaces for intervention. and when i say that i intervene. i don't mean that i turn into some kind of activist. in my understanding, one has to have a particular agenda and disseminate it as such. point out directions and ways. and to point out directions and ways for me assumes patronizing, on the one hand. and the universalism of one's own concepts, on the other hand. universalism spanning different contexts. however, i am myself as well part of only some specific socio-geographical context. my ideas that work for me. do not apply universally to everybody. which doesn't mean that there is nothing to do or to change in a given situation. there is a whole lot to do and to change. everywhere. but there are many ways. and i find it more important to put certain things into question than to provide solutions that are ready-made. i find questions more inviting to reflection than solutions themselves. so, to put the habitus bubbles into the spotlight and question. confront the codes of conduct. i have various ways. for instance, refusing to fulfill certain requirements expected in a specific context. refusing to switch the code of conduct from one habitus bubble to another. and rather maintaining the code of conduct from the private bubble to the formal bubble. let me say. not switching from informal to formal language upon switching habitus bubbles on my way. another way could

be fulfilling some requirements in an over-submissive way. to point out the technologies of domination at play leading to objectification in the long term. so, for instance, when asked to define myself as such and such an artist. make the artist's statement. i would use a very blunt, trivial sentence: "i am an artist interested in urbanization". to evoke an area of interest which is so broad that it could mean anything and nothing. so, pushing myself into some position. yet blurring this position by using irony as a rhetorical device. because this sentence is meant ironically as such. which implies that what appears on the surface differs from what is actually the case. and yet the opposite is not entirely the case, either. this rhetorical device allows me to blur and hold together these contradictions of true and false. bring them into play. what donna haraway would call binary oppositions, as well. "that as such do not resolve into larger wholes even dialectically. irony is about the tension of holding incompatible things together. irony is about humor and serious play. it is also a rhetorical strategy and political method. one i would like to see more honored within socialist feminism". and this was what donna haraway would say. and i'll come back to the last sentence of this quote at the end. so, again, why all this? what is at stake with all this questioning and spoiling the game? and i very much think that freedom is at stake. shedding off ideas and beliefs of cultural hegemony and having more space for one's own imaginations and living ways. resistance to the technologies of domination. decolonization of one's own thoughts. impacting one's own actions and doings in a more deliberate way. by exposing the technologies of domination. i would like, as much as possible, to raise awareness of these rigid structures that are produced by these very technologies and entrap our mobility in terms of the social and the self. the portfolio is one such private trap. describing oneself as this or that. and it only made sense for me to prepare one in such a way that the goal was not to describe myself as this or that artist. and carry then these loose pages wherever i go to promote myself as this or that. because needless to say. i'm changing as well. i'll think differently in one month or even a few days. and a different situation. there would be a different portfolio then. and so, this response is first and foremost a response to the requirement of submitting a portfolio for the graduation of these studies this year. it is a portfolio that shall be understood as a reflection on the portfolio format itself. while still having my works embedded within this format itself. but i chose only those that i felt are relevant to this intervention and my purpose. so, i tweaked the portfolio here and there to make it meta-referential in nature. so that it draws attention to and invites reflection about the portfolio-related issues themselves. hopefully triggering some awareness of this medium in you as a recipient. so that you may become more aware about its constructed status rather than only about the hetero-references to my works outside of this medium and represented in this medium itself. and you required the portfolio from me in this corona crisis to graduate from my arts studies. so, by submitting my portfolio. it is a form of exhibition for me. it is this liminal space whereby i have to fulfill certain requirements and where i can intervene artistically. i do not require a white cube. but if there was an exhibition in one. there would be meta-references to the white cube right now and a differently embedded work of mine. and now, to come back to the last sentence of the quote by donna faraway. sorry, autocorrection. donna haraway. which maybe will open some idea for our discussion in a minute. "one i would like to see more honored within socialist feminism". end of quote now. and this is an associative leap now. but how to avoid the descriptions and categories which end up in objectification and were produced by the very technologies of domination? and how at the same time produce situated knowledge while involving one's own social location? and with this. i would like to finally finish my frontal presentation. open it to the conversation...

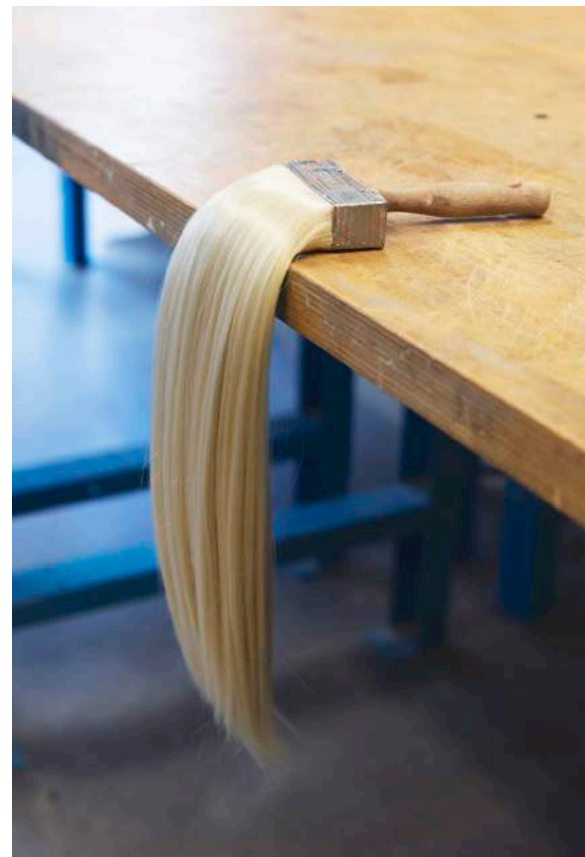




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3

1. *Dozens of Clothes Pegs*, 2014-2020
Clothes pegs and plastic wrap
25.5cm x 30cm x 27.5cm
2. *The Venetian Concealer Brush*, 2019
Found paintbrush
3cm x 19.8cm x 5.2cm
3. *Bauhaus Vagina*, 2019
Marcel Breuer black leather cantilever tubular armchair
78cm x 60cm x 55cm



5



6

4. *Great Hair*, 2019
Used paintbrush and synthetic blond wig
Dimensions variable
- 5,6. *Under The Table*, 2019
Birchwood, lochplatte, salvaged offcuts and cable ties
82.5cm x 160cm x 80cm

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

HP Domestic.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

HP Artistic attitude, in the broadest sense, is all about uncertainty. Challenging, speculating, manipulating and self-reference are all typical of art. Investigating and analyzing in this way, is knowledge production in itself.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

HP Erase, replace, embrace, new face.



“VISIBILITY REDUCES
THE APPEARANCE.”

– ELIZABETH LEBON



ESTHER SCHENA



1



2



3

1. *Invisible, 2020*
Discursive work, booklet overlay of terms on tracing paper
2. *Invisible, 2020*
Discursive work, booklet image overlays on tracing paper
3. *Shadow, 2020*



4

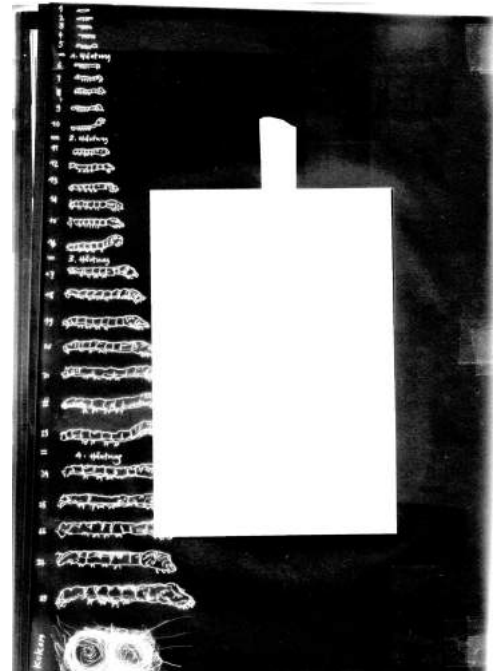


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- 4,5. *Silkworm breeding, 2020*
Mulberry leaves, silkworms, nylon fabric
6. *Untitled from the series ta pete -ete pete, 2019*
Silkscreen on digital print
22.5cm x 31.5cm
7. *Bombyx mori, 2020*
Digital print on paper
22cm x 30cm



6



7

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

ES hide: A cloud hides the sun. To be placed in front of something in such a way that what is behind it cannot be recognized. Camouflage, cover, paste over, blanket, mask, veil, conceal, hide, overlay, tape over.

overlay: Physics, technology: Interference of two or more waves. Intersection, of real objects, but also of interests or claims. To lie on top of something "rock covered by lava". Overlap in certain areas; partially overlap "the transmitter is gets interference from another".

penetrate: penetrate + through. Penetrate through some covering or similar. Penetrate into all parts of a body or space due to its strength, intensity or similar.

depict: Show or display something visually, for example in a photo or a drawing. To depict someone, an object in a lifelike way.

disappear: These perspectives do not disappear but remain crucial. Yet there is a whole range of new topics and problem areas that do not simply follow the right-left pattern.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

ES overwrite: I overwrite, you overwrite, we will overwrite.

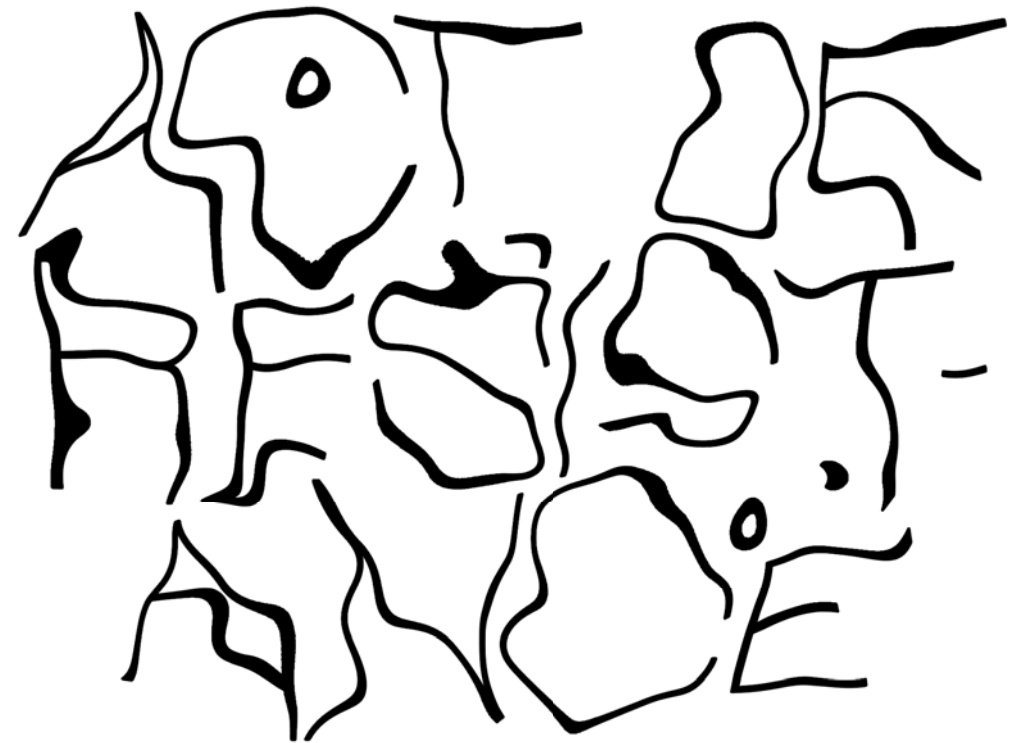
Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

ES Past, present, future.

*I answered the questions with words that are part of my artistic approach. In this connection I have chosen example sentences suggested by the following spelling sources: [duden.de](https://www.duden.de), [wiktionary.org](https://www.wiktionary.org), [dwds.de](https://www.dwds.de), [collinsdictionary.com](https://www.collinsdictionary.com), de.wikipedia.org



"A WORK OF ART IS NOT AN INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNICATION. A WORK OF ART DOES NOT CONTAIN THE LEAST BIT OF INFORMATION."



DIMITRINA SEVOVA

“A work of art is not an instrument of communication. [...] A work of art does not contain the least bit of information. In contrast, there is a fundamental affinity between a work of art and an act of resistance. It has something to do with information and communication as an act of resistance. [...] Malraux developed an admirable philosophical concept. He said something very simple about art. He said it was the only thing that resists death. [...] Whence the close relationship between an act of resistance and a work of art. Every act of resistance is not a work of art, even though, in a certain way, it is. Every work of art is not an act of resistance, and yet, in a certain way, it is. [...] What relationship is there between human struggle and a work of art? The closest and for me the most mysterious relationship of all.”

Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York and Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006), pp. 312-324.



Topography of the Ego, Inspired by the Deep Psychology of Carl Gustav Jung, 2020
Photograph of the old botanical garden in Zurich
Sculptural objects, porcelain ceramic, glazed
Charcoal and oil on canvas
Work in progress, 120cm x 100cm



1

1. *Alien Phenomenology and the Porcelain Workshop of Things - the fragility of things that form in nature and culture, 2019*
Immersive sculptural installation consisting of cast and hand-built porcelain objects, raw clay, slide projections, stage lights with color filters, tables, appropriated objects
Dimensions variable
It is a study of weird realism striving to develop an ecology of practice that engages with the power of the allure
Installation view, Werkdiskurs, ZHdK



2

2. *They Withdraw, They Wing, They Eye, 2019*
Sculptural installation, cast and hand-built porcelain objects, slide projections of NASA's first satellite images, stage lights with color filters, Kodak analog Carousel, table
Dimensions variable
Installation view in Reta exhibition space, ZHdK



Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

DS In the first days of the lockdown I felt like the protagonist of a sci-fi movie in which anything could be expected, like aliens had just landed... Something erotic lies in the horror and fears; the sublime somehow elevates us. This ungrounding is an opening to metaphysics. It is quantization and virtualization. Graduating right now, of all times, is a moment in contrast to imaginary time, as perhaps real time is a human invention and does not exist beyond our systems and models. The pandemic inscribes itself into the endless crises of the present, and makes palpable to what extent we live in a constructed world, unable to call into existence other futures, and end up in a chain of crises, from systematic inequalities and climate change to care crises and others. The swift liquidation of space-time, which is also a liquidation of material culture and the physical body, troubles me, and from my point of view, art is very much about their production in resistance to these developments. Under the conditions of digital time, even value and meaning shrink to a very tiny moment in which with a click we consume everything, including art and interhuman relations, immediately online in "real time." There is no before or after, just the right now, a now in which we have been stripped of any sense of historical time and poetic time.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

DS There is a distinction between the epistemologically conditioned and epistemologically unconditioned real, and the metaphysical void of the real, between scientific realism and realism in art and philosophy, that allows for emancipatory practices. The void has the philosophical status of the ontological event. So, the non-knowledge of the void is the no longer ironic but tragic detachment in the comeback of the real, which is about (in)existence and the nature of becoming rather than being. It is the transversal in the logic of sense that produces a specific knowledge of non-knowledge in logical discourse, as infinity is a human invention and a matter of imagination. The hazard of the infinitely empty void is the cosmic animal or stellar matheme, i.e., the whole chance of change so dear to art. It is also micropolitics and cosmopolitics – the alley to the pure outside and the play of forces, the invisible community in the communality of the virtual that brings about other distributions across time and space. It seems that crises and art are interdependent like trauma and catharsis, which is not exactly communication, but also transference of love, and moreover, a virtual force that traverses everything, a matter of resistance and surviving. Psychoanalysis and art share the desire to chart the void, to organize chaos in a chaosmosis, i.e., to find a pattern, a repetition in which love and the void come together. Blindness and intuition are an intrinsic part of visual art. Art fakes reality, disenchanting it. It does not create illusions but artifices and metamorphoses. In Lacan's *S.I.R.*, the vase in its "signifying function" is only characterized by the void it creates. In a certain way, this applies to all art, is its starting point. Uncertainty is the principle of the universe, as a certain randomness runs through any system, undermining the idea of universal laws. That is why we build concepts, structures, and models, to deal with the fear of facing the unknown. The void of non-knowledge determines both disruption and creative process. Rigorous sciences aim to exclude inconsistencies. By contrast, in the history of art, achievements have been perceived as irregularities. The history of art is not one of linear progression. Indeed, art makes speculative use of inconsistencies and intensifies them. In the archeological excavations of sciences' obstacles, I find the speculative futures of art and its relation to knowledge production fascinating.

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

DS precarity, care, love – three verbs that sustain my art practices from one day to the next, that keep me going on. Let us not forget that art is a practice, very concrete, even if it deals with abstraction and voiding. With this, I would like to boldly say No, which is an ascetic Yes to the future.



"DIGEST EXPERIENCES
AND COME UP WITH A
NEW LANGUAGE."





Yokohama BayStars I&II, 2019
Photography
40cm x 50cm

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

BKS I feel very privileged to be able to finish my studies in times like these. We just switched to online courses as if there is nothing to it. Sadly, we all need to learn how to debate on a platform where we are speaking to and looking at everybody at the same time. We need to be kind to our language.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

BKS I work mainly with pictures, my own photography or any kind of appropriated pictures, so there is always in a way a kind of certainty expected of or falsely interpreted into a photography. Art has been working with uncertainty for a long time, coding itself into a mere representation of the void. Is certainty even a thing in a time in which there is no truth left?

Q3 Name three words that define your current state of mind.

BKS Respect, positivity, unity.



“CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES
WISELY AND YOUR
COMPROMISES EVEN MORE.”

– PAPA SAVA





This brick has been crocheted by Vesna Stojanovic, Stefan's mother. As a fifty-year-old woman living in Serbia, Vesna has been adversely affected by the politically corrupt labour market's preference for an unskilled, inexperienced, disposable, cheap and autocratically oppressed workforce. Vesna resisted and refused to take part in certain imposed political activities, such as having to enroll and vote for the current president's political party (Serbian Progressive Party) in order to keep her job as a nurse in a medical spa. She became unemployed and was left with limited options to sustain herself. Temporary heavy assembly-line work in countries like Czech Republic or Slovakia became one of her only options. Being forced into economic migration in her fifties, Vesna would have become a cheap labour force serving the neoliberal system at the periphery of capitalism. As an act of resistance, we decided to develop an artwork together in which Vesna would be paid fairly for her (art)work: interdependent collective support. Currently, two bricks have been crocheted in the series. "We aim for the walls to be more flexible, adapted to the various needs and shapes of society and not the other way around."



What if the walls were more flexible?, 2020
 White cotton rope
 13cm x 26cm x 7cm
 Collaboration: Vesna Stojanovic (crochet), Danica Milosevic (performer), Stefan Krecmar Krstic (photo)

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

SS (In)visible structures became more (in)visible
Being more (inter)connected, (inter)dependent,
(co-)Acting together.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

SS Re-questioning the certain
Exploring the (as yet) unknown
By improvising (or playing)
By embodying sensorial experiences
Non-knowledge = knowledge?

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

SS Materialize concepts
Into situations, performances, words and objects
Explore the boundaries between art – activism – society
By using transdisciplinary processes based on
interdependent relations
By using collective approaches
Regarding social and structural issues; what about the
art system?
Let's call its reality into question
With the goal
Of broaching the issue of
fairer and more sustainable working conditions.



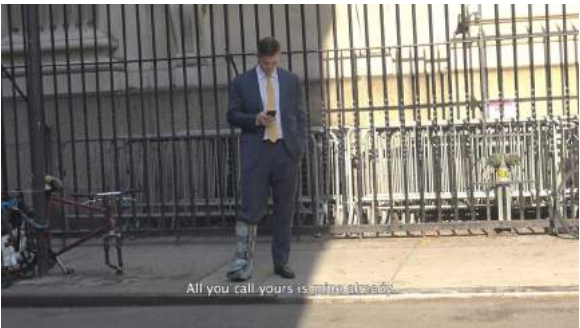
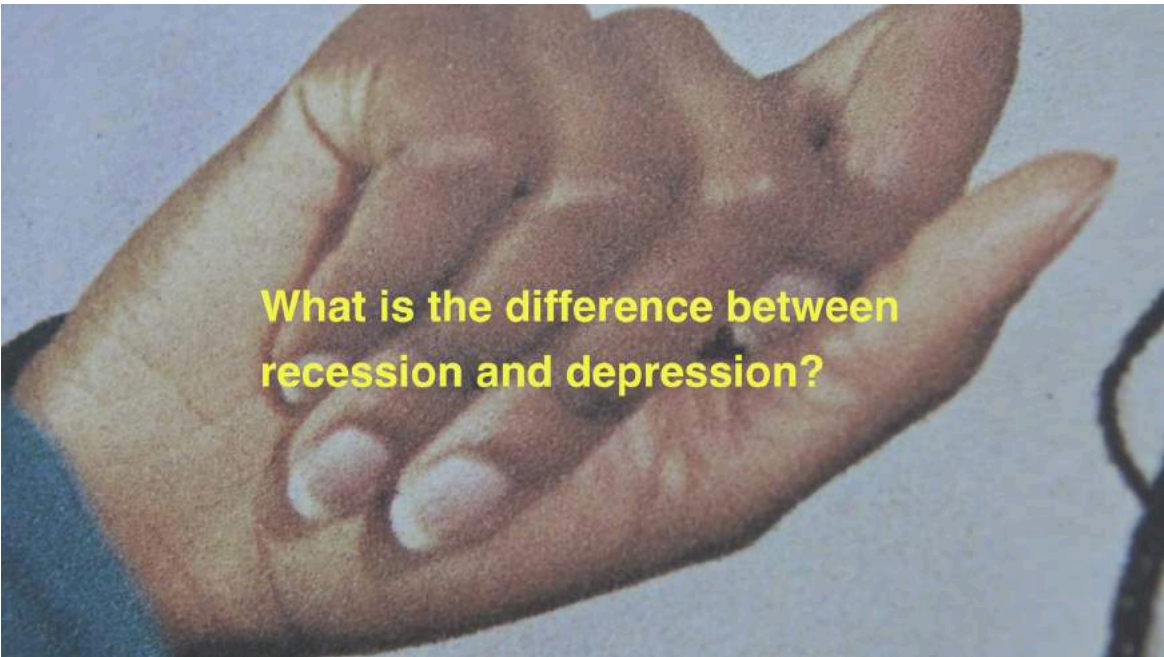
"IN THE MORNING THERE
IS MEANING. IN THE
EVENING THERE IS
FEELING."

– GERTRUDE STEIN



JIA JIA ZHANG

Meaning is situational and, unstuck, it can evolve, change, deteriorate.



LP Floaters: Hairy Pig, Bear, Tiger, Pig, Doll, 2019
Ceramic piggy banks attached on glas
approximately 20cm x 10cm each

RP Quarantine Questionnaire, 2020
From the ongoing series Dairy Notes
HD Videos, 49'
HD video stillframes

Q1 What does it mean to you to finish your fine arts studies in summer 2020, right now of all times? How do you perceive the latest events? And do they have an impact on your work?

JZ It means mainly a constant re-positioning in the world, as an artist, as a citizen, as a consumer, as a human. The latest events encompass such a vast variety of things. Black Lives Matter, the Epstein scandal, the climate crisis, the new security law in Hong Kong, rising populism and the tendency towards authoritarian governments all around the world. Many of these issues can be directly linked to years and years of accepting existing wrecked social structures and overlooking inequalities and foul play. We as artists play an active and often quite public role in our communities. I cannot think of how this is not impacting anyone's work – directly or indirectly. Thinking about the process of finishing my studies in early summer 2020, I inevitably also have to think about the crisis within this very institution, its lack of transparency in school politics and miscommunications along the way. I also think about my personal curriculum, my detours and lived experience, about the value of an MFA in the current world, about the market, art in general and how I can contribute in meaningful ways.

Q2 What is the significance of the indeterminable and uncertain in your work? What role, do you think, can art play in this void of non-knowledge?

JZ I often work with a diary or the idea of a narrative. Both suggest facts and fiction and I am interested in the areas where the two overlap. It's a slippery field – no matter how slippery that field is. It is an area that resembles dreams, where fragments of 'reality' constantly collide and form new conditions.

Q3 What ideas and plans would you like to pursue next?

JZ I am organizing an artist lab at the Villa Bellerive in August where some artists come together to think and work along the practice of Maryanne Amacher and Bill Dietz. Both artists are interested in re-relating and re-positioning our bodies and instruments to an ever-changing environment, a sort of sensual politics. Throughout the summer, I will also continue with my ongoing diary series, which I will show with art space Cherish at Haus in Vienna in September.

COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS

Art is a constantly evolving and morphing animal which will continue to be, never mind its form or matter. Why not offer a frame, a canvas, an object able to embody and reflect our inspirations and concerns during this particular moment in time? A medium to reflect our shifting tendencies, our adaptability, our response to challenge and our responsibility before the facts. How has the new dynamics influenced the way we think and make art? How has it affected the way we share our selves and our ideas? Will these changes alter forever the condition of the arts as we knew them? Through the artists' works and their personal statements we aspire to briefly freeze the cosmology of thoughts, sensitivities and resistances which graduated under these unprecedented circumstances.

Sometimes it is all about receiving the paper, the endorsement, the title, the document that enables one to take a certain position and to perform certain activities. Art is like a vessel that contains our feelings, interests, fears, joys, fantasies, experiences, fascinations, abilities or thoughts. It mirrors a confrontation with life, with the physical and imaginative worlds of which we are a part, and with the things that happen in them. Indeed, the title has constituted us as a group, because we all aspired to the same one at the same time and in the same institution. But we don't really mind the title. Our aim has never been to collect the paper, but to share our art, for what would art be if we could not confront it with the worlds we engage with?

I see you behind the plexiglass, you see me, I am here, I am present, we are connected. We can see each other through walls, glass panes, across borders, but at a distance. The relationship between absence and presence shows a new reality because presence has become increasingly precarious. There is this other presence, at once invisible and visible.

Communication, easily transmitted from one place to another through new technology channels, eliminates the interpersonal and therefore inter-space distance, and creates a new virtual space. Did this virtual space, with the latest event, increase the significance of *where we really are*? My body connected to the one screen, seeing myself on the screen with the others during online meetings, as the phrase goes, I asked myself this question: *Am I in virtual space or in my physical space?* When I turned the screen off, I wanted to feel my corporeal presence. Redefining space and relationships is central to the architectural approach in my work. During the lockdown, being only at home, it was a kind of new aspect to deal with, and this situation affected my work as I started using tangible materials to take a distance from virtuality. Art has always been ready to raise questions about how we experience spaces and events by contextualizing them.

_____the purpose of these 520 characters is to
fit in where they fit in.

Not to fit the expectations,
Not to fit the requirements,
Not to fit the conditions,
Not to fit in the box,
Not.

What's in a negation? Empty space.
A much-needed reprieve. Quiet solitude.
I think about all the things I'm not. A list that
goes on and on but doesn't really say anything
beyond the obvious. I'm not a man. I'm not a
mother. We can say it's all semantics (as if that
really made a difference). We can say it's all
linguistic acrobatics. But there's always an
impact. There's always the point at which
something collapses into something else.
There's always a negation.

Fluss, garte, fluss, wald, fluss, garte, fluss.
Wait, what? It's cancelled? Limmatflüge. I
want to push these walls out with my elbows.
Zueständ gönd wieder verbii. R.I.P. musiksommer.
So viel offe grad. No spheres are separate
right now. This loft feels narrow. What do
we see? What do we not see? Laktation.
Ameisenstrasse. Breathe in air from far away.
Wir menschen sind keine inseln. Imagine. Wir
alle, an der kilbi. Dancing. I want to see city
lights all around.

“For the people, history is and remains a
collection of stories. It is what people can
remember and what is worth being told again
and again: a retelling. The tradition flinches
at no legend, triviality, or error, provided it has
some connection with the battles of the past.
Hence the notorious impotence of facts in the
face of colorful pictures and sensational stories.”*

... environment, materials, associations,
memories and imagination. What are our
roots, where did we grow up and what did
we experience? Why do I have the urge to
leave traces behind and draw attention to
them? Why do I associate and project myself
in everything around me and turn to the time
in which I grew up and how do I cope with it
now? Is this a message for the future or is it
just a personal urge to share what I perceive
and experience through art and the viewer?
It's my disability and I'm happy to deal with it.

It's a disability and becomes an ability. Being constantly in these flows of thinking and creation is a kind of absolute: to be like a sponge, like a photographic plate, let oneself be invaded by the matter. There's nothing you can do about it, it's haunting and obsessing.

If art does not reflect the present, it is also the other way of reflecting the present. I choose to exist with the wall without pushing it to establish the rigidity of the wall. I try to dance inside the wall.

A teenage girl is making a zine in her bedroom. To express her emotion with ignorance. From the wall, she heard something. She thought it would be so-called art, which people are talking about.

The loom finds itself in the upper chamber. Sitting down, I put my legs through the threads, my body interweaves into the warp. Well, whilst I weave in my space of woe, I reflect on the possibilities of conquering. My fabric is "delicate, exquisite and dazzling".

When You Have A Question, Go Out And Touch The Water.

I would like to see more sourdough parents talking about femicide while kneading, and discussing why certain hashtags are counter-productive when used. But in the meantime, they would like to see pictures of quail eggs and chicks.

as i interact with others. as i get to know others. and others like to get to know me as well. we narrate our stories to one another. we mutually describe one another. we affect one another. we make one another up by reproducing the top-down descriptions on the ground. according to the prevailing system of descriptions and categories. dos and don'ts conceived according to the spirit of space and time. and things and sayings that one shouldn't do or that one shouldn't say at a given space and time and now. i've been there. i've done that. and please feel free to replace "i" with "we" in this paragraph above. if you feel like it...

"Along with the sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and the father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel myself, I spit *myself* out, I abject myself with the same motion through which "I" claim to establish myself. That detail, perhaps an insignificant one, but one that they ferret out, emphasize, evaluate, that trifle turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that *they* see that "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it abreacts. It abjects." **

Neurotransmitters are chemical secretions released by neurons that behave as transporters, so that once they reach the membrane of another neuron, they can create a bond and establish an electrical signal. This causes one cell's electrical impulse to be affected by the electrical impulse of another through an intercommunicative network.

Collective thoughts

"Alternative history is usually conceived of in terms of binaries, and these are often projected onto a temporal axis in a way that renders the alternative narrative more progressive than those made earlier and more relevant to the contemporary. It also renders those who struggle against the archive as victims to be salvaged from the archive rather than as allies in a common struggle." ***

"In painting, you have unlimited power. You have the ability to move mountains. You can bend rivers. But when I get home the only thing I have power over is the garbage." ****

I haven't done an exhibition in three years, and I'm doing an exhibition at the moment. And I think it's going to be the best exhibition I've ever made [...] I really think it's the best exhibition. [...] I think you'll be fundamentally, like, knocked over sideways [...] I think you'll fucking love it. You'll just totally like it. You won't be able to not like it. You won't be able to question it and worry about it. It'll brighten your evening up. It'll brighten your life up. And the fucking things are for sale.

Certain things that start with super are more super. I like super glue and supermarkets. And buying things, call me superficial.

"Die Welt ist voller Texte (mehr oder weniger interessant); ich habe nicht vor, ihnen welche hinzuzufügen." This seems to be Kenneth Goldsmith's appropriate reaction to the current "terms and conditions" for writing. Instead of finding out where the connections to other thinkers, artists, authors, musicians, and scientists are, I should probably look for empty spaces. Black holes that have remained mystic and indescribable and then write about them. Why should I quote others? Why not say it with my own words? What's the epiphany of using references? My dear, quoting someone else other than yourself is sort of egocentric. It's like pulling yourself up by grasping someone's arms and stepping on others' shoulders. Well yes, if you take famous ones, they don't really give a shit. But you will give a shit! Promised. And that's why I think it's part of a machinery. An anti-social and anti-empathetic machinery. By willing to be a brick in this wall, to be part of it, one helps build these walls instead of tearing them down. Are we on the same page?

Collective thoughts

Yes, we are on the same page, but you don't see me. I am the shadow of your letters. I have a riddle for you: Who is more authentic, Quijote by Cervantes, or Quijote by Pierre M  nard. Someone wrote that the unconscious is structured like a language. The language possessed me nowhere, now-here. A black hole fits into the space between your letters. No need for further metaphors. Being a shadow I am flat, I don't have space, but we can enjoy being singular-plural in an endless conversation.

*Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 1989, trans. Alan Roth

**Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*

***Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History, Unlearning Imperialism*

****Bob Ross

WE ARE THE INSTITUTION

What does it mean to graduate in Fine Arts – precisely in June 2020, the year of the virus? The analogue world stood still for weeks. Borders were closed, people’s radius shrunk to their immediate vicinity. In the middle of this silence there were loud calls – protest. The slogans against police violence, racism and inequality resounded through the cities of the USA whose streets had stood empty moments ago, through social media and all the way to Switzerland. One question seems more open than perhaps ever before in our lives: what does the future hold for us? Even the art world, driven as it is by a striving for permanent presence, is in a state of emergency. It is taking a break from the “Terror of Total Dasein”, as artist and theorist Hito Steyerl has called the diktat of presence.⁷ The effects of this temporary withdrawal are being assiduously debated. Will “contemplative” isolation linger, or will rather the experience of art be strengthened online? Some conjure up a pure future full of opportunities, even if at the moment this seems as speculative as the negative scenarios touted by pessimists. Undoubtedly, art will “carry on”, and perhaps the art business will lose some ground. Artists, so I am told time and again, are well prepared for this situation anyway. Isolation, doubt, insecurity have always been part of their everyday lives. Be that as it may. It seems to me that there is a great danger of falling back on antiquated ideas that glorify a reclusive artist’s life in the studio. To become an artist does not mean to bid farewell to society, but – on the contrary – to make one’s way into its midst and contribute to communication between people. It means to enter into dialogue. This is why for me, the aim of graduating in Fine Arts is to unequivocally take this dialogue out of the sheltered setting of the school to the outside world. The

7. Hito Steyerl, “The Terror of Total Dasein”, in ead., *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*, London/Brooklyn: Verso, 2017, pp. 21-29. Cf. also Hito Steyerl, “The Terror of Total Dasein: Economies of Presence in the Art Field”, *DIS Magazine* <<http://dismagazine.com/discussion/78352/the-terror-of-total-dasein-hito-steyerl/>>.

format of the degree show has established itself as a rite of passage. It is a way of looking out for new dialogue partners and at the same time exercising the presence that the art field demands.

ART IN THE ETERNITY OF DISPLAY Portfolios instead of an Exhibition

What now, when due to the pandemic crisis there is no degree show? Instead of discussing the works of the diploma students in the original, we did so in their portfolio. In lieu of physical presence in the studios in the Toni premises repurposed as an exhibition space, virtual vicariousness prevailed. The communication, the collaboration, the means and the goal – everything was different and new. In the week before the lockdown I met a small group of the graduate class in their studios – the only physical encounter with the works of a few of the artists about whom I am writing here. From then on, everything ran online, just like, meanwhile, my entire working day. This called for a new way of seeing, reflecting and also speaking. So, instead of reflecting on how an artistic idea can be mediated in the exhibition space, we talked about portfolios, that unpopular yet inevitable by-product of the art world. Portfolios follow the logic of the competition-based system of art subsidies, which marks many artists' initial steps into "business", especially at the beginning of their career. Of course, those who wish to can escape this and look for other channels and ways, but for many, portfolios are a reality that accompanies them from project submission to project submission. Approaching an artistic practice via a portfolio is something I am familiar with. Swiftly, the eye wanders over the pages, skims the short texts, often skips over the long ones. Further clicks lead to videos and websites. An exhibition view reveals how an artist deals with space, while a glance at their CV shows where the person stands in their career. Stumbling blocks, missing information and inconsistencies are undesirable, unlike in the context of an exhibition, where it is precisely these gaps – the inexplicable

and the awkward – that often first arouse the viewer's interest. The outside view onto the production of portfolios brought me closer to why the documentations later look like they do. What was more interesting, though, was how talking about them – in many Zoom conversations from living room to living room – involved not only practical aspects of the portfolios but also coming to terms with fundamental questions.

As early as the 1970s, Brian O'Doherty speaks of art existing "in a kind of eternity of display".⁸ He describes the shift in critical discourse from the individual artwork in modernism to its exhibition – to the moment of its "becoming public" – of communication and encounter with the public. According to Umberto Eco, the form of the artwork becomes concrete "at the end of the interpretative dialogue" with the recipient.⁹ It is the recipient who completes the work and is thus an active player in the formation of artistic meaning. The format of the exhibition itself has undergone fundamental changes, too – first in the course of the expansion of the concept of art through new forms of expression such as performance, video and conceptual art, and later through digitalization. Today, exhibitions are more than a temporary presentation of selected works in a publicly accessible institution. Actions, programmes, publications and screenings can also function as exhibitions; exhibitions can take place outside, inside or virtually, ignoring the classical institutions. Even if physical exhibitions have remained closed in the wake of the pandemic, O'Doherty's principle seems to remain valid – as became apparent in my discussions with the diploma students – and even gain urgency. The state of emergency generates a different accessibility of the public. We must ask ourselves how we communicate (via) art – through what media and channels we reach our audience – physically or virtually, materially or immaterially, in writing or orally. For the following still applies: art exists when it is seen and communicated. It is thus all the more important to be aware of our counterpart and the contexts we operate in.

8. Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube. Notes on the Gallery Space, Part 1", in *ARTFORUM*, Vol. 14, No. 7, March 1976, p. 25.

9. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984 (1979)), p. 62.

10. Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique", in: John C. Welchman (ed.): *Institutional Critique and After*, Zürich: JRP|Ringier 2006, pp. 123-135, p. 133. Originally published in *ARTFORUM*, Vol. 44, No. 1, September 2005, pp. 279-283, p. 283.

11. Ibid., p. 134 (p. 283).

12. Cf. Daniel Völzke, "Alexander Kluge über Ausnahmezustände. Der blaue Frühlingshimmel dieser Tage" (in German: Alexander Kluge on states of exception. The blue spring sky of these days), *monopol – Magazin für Kunst und Leben*, 5 April 2020, <<https://www.monopol-magazin.de/interview-alexander-kluge-corona>>.

13. T.J. Demos, "The Great Transition: The Arts and Radical System Change", *e-flux Architecture* (Accumulation project), 12 April 2017 <<https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/122305/the-great-transition-the-arts-and-radical-system-change/>>.

WE ARE THE INSTITUTION

Some thoughts about the works of the graduating artists
/ A proposal for a brief tour of the graduating class

*"It's not a question of inside or outside, or the number and scale of various organized sites for the production, presentation, and distribution of art. It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to."*¹⁰

Andrea Fraser

Andrea Fraser, an important voice in the contemporary discourse of institutional critique, has repeatedly emphasized the role of artists in shaping the "institution". Her counter-proposal to the historical institutional critique, which appears to have "institutionalized" itself over the years, is the reversal of the terms to "an Institution of Critique".¹¹ Art as an institution of critique is not a "style", but rather an instruction for action. Fraser calls for an artistic attitude that defends its values, that is alert to the world and also to the power structures in the art world. At best, art can, in the words of Alexander Kluge, form "counter-algorithms". It can formulate alternatives to the official lines of politics and economics and to rigid ways of thinking.¹² The art theoretician T.J. Demos summons *Beautiful Trouble* – creative resistance – with a view to an endangered ecological future.¹³ He calls for art and activism to join forces to counterbalance the neo-colonial capitalist present. With this inventive subversive culture of the Resistance, he too advocates nothing other than art as an institution of critique. I see in it a possible approach to contemporary art-making that gives art the foresight it needs today, while remaining open to practices of all kinds.

Bearing in mind the above, let us now turn to the graduating class of the Master of Fine Arts 2020: thirty-one artists with most diverse practices, thematic approaches and backgrounds. Their works range from painting to performance, from drawing to installation;

from engaging with the material world of our everyday life to research in Hong Kong or Peru; from surreal dream worlds to documentary investigations. At first glance, their lowest common denominator seems to be that they graduate in art at the same time, in the same place and under the same difficult circumstances. In a position paper formulating demands regarding their current situation, they took account of this and came out with a common voice. The situation gave rise to a temporary collective that questioned the general conditions in which it had to operate. This was for me a compelling starting point for further reflection on art as an institution of productive critique and for asserting therein another possible common denominator of the group. For if we understand institutions as systems of order that guide the actions of individuals or communities, this implies the necessity to develop a critical awareness of the rules of the game. In my brief outline I shall thus try to identify some of the institutionalized thematic fields that the artists reflect in their work. Knowing that there would be many other ways, these terse attempts at grasping their works meander from questions of the standardization of the body to humans and their relationship to nature; from reflections on traditional behavioural patterns to the problem of representation; from the precarious relationship between reality and fiction to everyday life and its utopian potential; and finally to art as a means of communication.

The term "body politics" refers to the practices and strategies by which the human body is regulated and wrested from individual control. In her texts and performances, Noëmi Ceresola asks what, by contrast, an autonomous, female organism might look like. Feminist theory informs also Malin Neuman's practice. In her performances and installations, she develops narratives based primarily on her own (body) experiences. In her most recent group of works, Noëlle Guidon focuses on the female body of the mother. In her photographic and textual works, the personal is intermingled with the question of stereotypical ideas of motherhood and femininity between taboo and mystification. Balca Ergener explores complicity

as a productive means of feminist solidarity with her inventories conceived as games. In a performance entitled *User's Manual (Betriebsanleitung)*, princess d introduces herself. "Hello. I am princess d. (...) I am sexually disoriented; my sex is magenta." The body, activated by language and staging, serves her as material to question the binary order of the sexes as a product of a normative society. Under other circumstances, working with her own body is equally central to Cornelia Lüthi Fletcher. A trained dancer, she understands the body as a store of movement, which she taps into for her large-format drawings. The results are fantastic, meandering forms that propose an alternative corporeality to that of the human.

Biopolitical discourses on the body that determine gender roles are matched by attitudes calling for a fundamentally new relationship between humans, animals and plants – away from the concept of humans at the centre of the universe and towards the inclusion of non-human entities. This post-anthropocentric paradigm shift finds a lively echo in art when, for example, Roman Selim Khereddine analyses the trade in fighting dogs in a video essay and thus sets an example against a relationship between humans and animals marked by dominance and subjugation. In her installations, Valentina Minnig draws up models for living spaces that humans and animals could share equally. Learning from nature is her credo, which could hardly be more topical. In Amélie Bargetzi's documentary film essays, humans and their environment are also a recurring theme. In her current project *Là où nous sommes*, she uses a small port city in the south of France to show how industrial exploitation of nature is taking its toll on the population. In the face of an ecological crisis that is in some measure the result of centuries of colonialism, hers is a call for the liberation of nature from its domination by business and politics. Sarah Jacky examines the consequences of so-called planetary urbanization through territorial appropriation, using the example of the Peruvian Amazon region. Her drawings and films also include a plane of reflection on her own Western perspective.

Through historical, sociological or anthropological research, artists tackle geopolitical aspects of world history. They summon the spirits of forgotten and unresolved machinations of Western cultures to question concepts of identity, nation and border. In her photographic works, Adji Dieye, for example, deals with visual codes that show how deeply the colonial heritage has been inscribed into Senegalese visual culture. Eriko Miyata approaches the motif of the island as a political focal point and at the same time a place of reflection, starting from her homeland Japan. Video footage shot on one day in Uttar Pradesh, India, is the point of departure for Katarzyna Nowak's work *I am an artist interested in urbanization*, in which scrutinizing her own position takes on an important, if not the central role. In her installations of objects and her paintings, Dimitrina Sevova addresses questions of representation, aiming at a fluid handling of images in order to free them from their cultural inscriptions.

Reality versus fiction is another pair of concepts that serves as a projection screen. An incisive view on everyday life and emphatic proximity to what surrounds us have subversive potential, as Jiajia Zhang's *Diary Notes* show. These are short filmic novellas that succeed, as if casually, in touching upon major themes of human existence out of the intimacy of an imposed retreat. Bruno Karl Stebler is interested in the photographic aspect of a reality of exuberant images. He compiles snapshots taken in different places and contexts into conceptual photo series that question the way we consume images. The material plane of our everyday life forms the starting point of Hannah Parr's work. Often using raw materials from her own household, she creates objects that are exemplary of consumer culture under the sign of global flows of commodities. Isabella Costabile is interested in the stories inscribed in discarded found goods and brings them to new life in her sculptural assemblages. Magdalena Baranya also makes forgotten, "abandoned" objects the protagonists of her work. Deprived of their primary contexts of use and memory, Baranya collages them into new narratives in visually opulent installations. In comparison, the material

used by Jonas Etter for his works goes through far more steps of abstraction. He, too, draws on existing contexts – for example, the exhibition space constitutes the material for the exhibition taking place in it – but the focus is on the process that the artist initiates through conceptual or installative devices. Elena Hohl uses materials from the nature that surrounds her – wood, wool, stones – to build looms, which as *The Sourcing Witch* she transforms into magical tools and incorporates into her stories about mythological female figures. The visual language of Jürgen Baumann also caters to a fictionalized world, which sometimes appears surreal-fantastic, sometimes alludes to the exaggerated expressions of the Gothic and Baroque periods, or a comic aesthetic. The appeal of playing with a medley of pictorial sources is apparent in Jasmine Gregory’s painting. The recourse to the motif of the clown, which is in many respects demanding, serves as a basis for exploring strategies of “unlearning” and thus evading preconceived patterns of interpretation in painting. Fictions turned into installations, in this case looking out to the future, are offered by Hae Young Ji’s *Future Scenarios*, in which she deals with the expectations but also fears of an increasingly technological world.

Finally, let us turn to art as a tool of communication, as a means of narrating and recalling, for example when Sibel Kocakaya translates the experience of natural and built spaces into paintings and collages, when Marketa Jachimova seeks sculptural expression for childhood memories, or when Shu-Chi Huang tells her personal stories in the medium of animation. Drawing has established itself as a language in its own right in Tobias Gutmann’s work. He reacts to a concrete counterpart by drawing, or contemplates himself, his life and the world. Esther Schena is also interested in communicating through images. She conceives her paintings in series, in which gestures and elements interact with each other. My brief overview comes full circle with the dialogue that Nathalie Stirnimann and Stefan Stojanovic strive for in their collaborative practice. It is explicitly directed at us, the audience – but also their fellow graduates – and includes a joint

reflection on the structures of the art system from the perspective of a young binational artist duo at the beginning of their career. With relish, Stirnimann-Stojanovic criticize the mechanisms they are exposed to, broach the issue of the economic and social conditions in which artists live, or question the irrational logic of the value chains of the art market – a call for *Art as an Institution of Critique* paradigmatically manifests itself in their practice.

Translation from German by Alan Roth

POST-DIGITAL RELATIONALITY

Zurich University of the Arts

Early morning.

A long, brightly lit empty corridor. At the end of the corridor a large glass door. Behind it, more corridors branch off on the left and right. Equally long. Equally empty. Slowly and steadily I proceed. The echo of my shoes accompanies every step I take and breaks the deep silence for a short moment. Through one of the large windows that punctuate the massive reinforced concrete construction, I may have discerned a silhouette scurrying past on the other side, opposite, in a corridor that is just as long and empty. But perhaps it is only the play of a reflection brought about by a special incidence of light, where daylight and bright neon lighting collide.

I keep walking.

Although I walk these corridors daily, with their passages and turns and the countless white doors, a moment of disorientation takes hold of me in the face of the void and silence. Am I in the correct wing of the building? Might I have taken the wrong staircase, or a wrong turn? On these 92,000 square metres of floor space I suddenly find myself somewhat lost.

I am overcome with a feeling of uneasiness, even fear and anxiety.

What day is today?

What time is it?

14. Jürgen Habermas, in Markus Schwering, “Jürgen Habermas über Corona: ‘So viel Wissen über unser Nichtwissen gab es noch nie’” (in German: Jürgen Habermas on Corona: Never before has there been so much knowledge about our ignorance), *Frankfurter Rundschau* (10 April 2020) (<https://www.fr.de/kultur/gesellschaft/juergen-habermas-coronavirus-krise-covid19-interview-13642491.html>) (accessed 26.07.2020).

And does it really matter?

For several weeks now, ZHdK has been closed indefinitely.

All other (semi-)public and private institutions such as schools and universities, cinemas, restaurants, bars, museums, theatres, parks and almost all shops (except supermarkets) had to close, too; in Zurich, Switzerland, Europe and all over the world.

The year is 2020.

The world is under the domination of COVID-19 – a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that within a few weeks has advanced from an epidemic to a pandemic.

Since its emergence, millions of people have fallen ill with the virus and hundreds of thousands of deaths have been reported by now. So far, the disease is being treated only symptomatically, as no specific drug has yet been found, just as there is no vaccine against the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

In order to contain the spread of the virus to the extent possible, the heads of state of several countries decided to declare a national emergency and enact a series of measures. One of the most important among these: a lockdown. This mass quarantine and curfew led to sealing off areas all the way to entire countries and brought public life to a standstill. Social and public life, peppered with meetings, dinners, everyday office life, family outings, sex, religious rituals, and a host of other activities outside one’s own four walls, were prohibited until further notice as stay-at-home orders were imposed. For “in the fight against the pandemic, with regard to overwhelmed health care systems the most important single variable is the self-isolation of the individual”.¹⁴ Each nation had a slightly different practical implementation of its “lockdown”, which revealed major political disparities between nations. In all nations, however, the lockdown further exacerbated prevailing socioeconomic inequalities.

Thanks to a special permit I have access to ZHdK today. It is disconcerting to be outside my own four walls. Even if I only meet a few people and every one of them follows “social distancing” rules, the outside and the others are a potential threat, just as I am a threat to the others.

As I make my way through the endlessly empty and silent corridors of ZHdK, I stare, my smartphone at hand, at the latest case statistics, as if they might help me better understand what is going on, when in fact they have the opposite effect and only further expose my failure to grasp the situation. I look at numbers that tell me everything and yet nothing. They are beyond my horizon of understanding. I know about their meaning (key indicators of coronavirus infections and deaths) and yet to me they remain abstract combinations of numbers whose deeper meaning is beyond me. “Never before has there been so much knowledge about our ignorance and the constraint of having to act and live in uncertainty.”¹⁵ For like the virus itself, as Jürgen Habermas further describes, “an existential insecurity” spreads globally along with it “in the heads of networked individuals”.¹⁶ When I look at these numbers I am fearful and anguished. I am distraught.

My understanding of my failure to grasp the case indicators reflects the juxtaposition of a specific, identifiable fear and an indefinite, absolute anxiety, or its connection to something third, the “uncanny”¹⁷ as Paolo Virno puts it. “When *Angst* has quieted down”, writes Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time*, “in our everyday way of talking we are accustomed to say ‘it was really nothing’”.¹⁸ For the object of fear, “what *Angst* is about”, is “really nothing” in the world, but, Heidegger goes on, turns out to be “*being-in-the-world itself*”.¹⁹ Virno notes a destabilization of life forms in post-Fordism – as well as a dematerialization of our existential structures – which he also sees as being accompanied by a transformation of the dialectic of anxiety and security. One feature of this is the suspension of the juxtaposition of fear and anxiety, even their fusion in a fear that “is always anguish-ridden”.²⁰ The disturbing

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude. For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti, James Cascaito, Andrea Casson (Los Angeles/New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 33.

18. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany/NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 175.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Paolo Virno, *op. cit.*, p. 33. d.

“anguish-ridden fear” is a matter for the many – the “multitude” – and no longer for the isolated individual.

Perplexed, I lift my gaze from my smartphone display and look into the emptiness of the long corridor of this disused dairy processing plant, twice the size of a football field, converted into an art university. A building of the future.

I open the door to my workplace – a huge open-plan office. Before I even enter the room, the lights come on. I have to blink; for a moment I am startled; I had completely forgotten about the motion detectors. Slowly I make my way through the room to my desk, which is at the far end. I walk past the tables of my colleagues, on which things are scattered: Here a glass or coffee cup, there a pile of papers and lots of loose cables. All these lifeless things operate as signifiers of a present absence.

Just an instant ago they were still there. They have only stepped out for a moment and will be right back. Or they will be back in a perhaps different future.

I continue to stare at the many inanimate objects left scattered on the tables around me. The image of these arrangements resembling still lives dissolves before my inner eye into the filmic image of an empty department store. The camera pans over the merchandise display of a large department store, covered by a thick layer of dust and wrapped in cobwebs. The floor is covered with glass splinters and stones. Occasionally, there are sale signs still standing there from a distant past. In the middle of the displays, a Christmas tree stands half collapsed, decorated with garlands and baubles. A man in a white protective suit makes his way through this temple of goods marked by the erosion of time. Here and there he collects random samples of insects.

Time is oddly suspended. And we have fallen out of it. Trapped in an interim period that is not time.

The picture in front of my inner eye is a scene from the science fiction movie *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) by Terry Gilliam. The film takes place in 2035. A mere one percent of humanity has survived a virus pandemic in 1997 and now lives underground. Scientists are still searching for a suitable vaccine against the deadly virus. To this end, they send “volunteers” to the surface to take samples. James Cole (played by Bruce Willis) is one such volunteer, imprisoned underground as a criminal. He is offered a pardon if he travels back in time to investigate the origin of the virus. On his journey, he is repeatedly haunted by the recollection of a shoot-out at an airport.

Twelve Monkeys is based on Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962), a “photo novel” that tells “the story of a man, marked by an image from his childhood”.²¹ As part of an experiment, the man is sent on a journey through time – both past and future – to seek help for the survivors of the Third World War who live beneath the earth’s radioactively contaminated surface. After completing his mission, he manages to escape from the underground camp and travels back in time to meet the woman of his childhood memories, which he has met again during his time travels.²² With this last time travel the film returns to the childhood image. A shift has occurred, however, from the observing child to the adult man he has become in the course of the story. The man realizes that the image he saw as a child is the image of his own death, or rather his murder. The film comes full circle and the complexity of its time structure becomes clear: it is the story of a man fixated on an image of the past which only reveals its meaning through the future and merges with the present.²³ Chris Marker’s time theorem can be summarized as follows: “One must set oneself, *project* oneself into the future if one wants to properly see, that is, understand the present in the future (of the subject), which is only elucidated retrospectively, caught in the perspective of an inverted past, that is, as an *image*.”²⁴

21. Quotes from Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* were transcribed and translated to German by myself. The English translation follows (<https://www.markertext.com/la-jetee.htm>) (accessed 2020-07-26). The French script is available at (<https://chrismarker.org/chris-marker/la-jetee-commentaire-chris-marker/>) (accessed 26.07.2020).

22. Cf. Barbara Filser, “Markers *La Jetée* – ‘Photo-Roman’ oder ‘Ciné-Roman’?” (in German: Marker’s *La Jetée* – ‘photo novel’ or ‘cinematic novel’?), (http://www.fluctuatingimages.de/wpcontent/uploads/2018/12/05Marker_LaJetee_Filser.pdf) (accessed 15.06.2020).

23. Cf. Philippe Dubois, “*La Jetée* de Chris Marker ou Le cinématogramme de la conscience”, in *Théorème*, Vol. 6 (*Recherches sur Chris Marker*), ed. Philippe Dubois, Paris, 2002, pp. 9-45, p. 20; also Christa Blümlinger, “*La Jetée*: Nachhall eines Symptom-Films” (in German: *La Jetée*: Echo of a Symptomatic Film), in Birgit Kämper, Thomas Tode (eds.), *Chris Marker – Filmessayist* (Munich: Cicim, 1997), pp. 65-72, p. 71.

24. Philippe Dubois, op. cit.: “Il faut se mettre, se projeter, dans le futur si l’on veut bien voir, c’est-à-dire comprendre, le présent, dans le futur (du sujet), lequel ne s’éclaire que rétrospectivement, d’être pris dans une perspective de passé retourné, c’est-à-dire comme image.”

25. Cf. Paul B. Preciado, “Learning from the virus”, in *ARTFORUM*, Vol. 58, No. 9 (May/June 2020), <<https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823>> (accessed 26.07.2020).

26. Cf. Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image”, in *e-flux journal* #10 (November 2009) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>> (accessed 26.07.2020).

27. *Ibid.*

28. David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton /NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 93-94; cf. also Hito Steyerl, *op. cit.*

Images. Images everywhere.

Everyone and everything becomes an image, only functioning in an image logic under the auspices of the spectacularity of our (pre-)dominant telecommunication technologies. Within a few weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, as recently described by Paul B. Preciado in an article in *ARTFORUM*, has turned our bodies into new enclaves of bio-power and transformed our homes into biological surveillance rooms.²⁵ Virtual space has become our real space of action. Interior and exterior, private and public dissolve or become one. In Zoom calls, we nurture our relationships, study, work and celebrate, and practice sports. Low-resolution “poor images”, as Hito Steyerl calls these viral images, fill up and dominate our virtual everyday life. They are the symptomatic product of our visual culture that has become real and permeates everything. In a sense, these “poor images” and the way we performatively deal with them are a reflection of the “affective condition of the crowd”, since, as Steyerl goes on, they provide insight into our collective neuroses as well as our paranoia and anxieties.²⁶

The virality of the “poor images” is on a par with that of the virus, and sooner or later they will infect everyone. I produce them and let them circulate, these visual ideas turned viral.²⁷ As if taken out of time and suspending time itself, these circulations function in a time or even non-time of their own.

What role does art play in a present in which the production, circulation and not least consumption of an almost endless flow of images dominates, which do not simply function as “discrete objects” but travel through global networks and in so doing also participate in socio-political debates and the economic value chain?²⁸ As networked individuals, we live in a post-digital and image-based logic of representation. In other words, we are dealing with a new pictorial logic of networked displays that manifests itself as an aesthetic as well as relational dispositif. The new status of the mass circulation and mutability of images, i.e., their potential to

be present and processed and contextualized everywhere at the same time, generates new value for and through images – “image power”.²⁹ This power of images is not limited to the digital, but recursively affects the analogue realm, which in turn influences post-digital pictorial life. This creates a post-digital relationality, understood as a network-oriented “motion, either potential or actual”, in which images are “capable of changing format”,³⁰ which can go in different directions.

What does it mean to think, see, feel – in other words to live – through the post-digital?

Arriving at my desk, I open my computer. I still have a few minutes before my online seminar is set to begin, as ZHdK (like many other educational institutions) has switched to e-learning. I quickly browse through the news of the day, clicking from app to app, from page to page, from hyperlink to hyperlink. What I see are many images of one image: “bodies that come together to make a claim in public space”, bodies that “in their plurality lay claim to the public, find and produce the public”.³¹ They are images of the countless protest rallies triggered worldwide by the murder of the African American George Floyd by a policeman in Minneapolis. Floyd’s murder went around the world in images. It is probably only in the form of viral images that it could unfold an image power which recursively was able to trigger a performative embodiment of solidarity and of the political dimension – even if the event itself, Floyd’s violent suffocation, cannot be reduced to an image.

George Floyd himself has become an image. An image for an entire movement – Black Lives Matter.

Again, I think of *La Jetée*, of the story of a man fixated on an image from the past, which only reveals its meaning through its future and is resurrected in the present: *as an image*.

Translation from German by Alan Roth

29. David Joselit, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

31. Judith Butler, *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 70-71.

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