



Editor's note

Is it 1938, 1968, or 2026? When the ARK issue “Deception and Illusion in the Arts” was published in 1961, we were building the Berlin Wall, - now we have an American Mexican one. For those of us living in sheltered geographies, life rolls on as matcha lattes at Parker’s café, behind the college building. Yet for some, even at this university, “who were imprinted with fear like a faint line in the centre of our foreheads,”* there are no safe homes to go back to. The countries we were born in no longer exist. Maps are constantly redrawn at the whim of the mighty and male, skewed and glutonously bulged where wealth, and power are greatest.

In this edition, I ask writer and critic Estelle Hoy how can artists provide an effective response to what is happening now. She talks of Audre Lorde and rage. Rage is cultural. How it is expressed and punished. In these isles, it is disapproved of in polite circles, alongside public displays of affection, hoodies, potholes, junk mail, graffiti, call centres, menopause, immigrants, protesters, e-scooters, and bad punctuation. It is tricky in international academic environments, where the line between sanitisation of thought and mutual respect is constantly being recalibrated. And yet rage is effective. It bypasses reason and activates the core. So much so that rage is now being used by the extreme right to counteract “the cultural centre”, to dismantle inclusion, break the connectedness.

We live in a highly polarised world, with an abundance of data yet imperfect information, skewed by algorithms. As digital emojis and AI-enabled autocues replaced physical contact and spoken word we lost our ability to speak or to hear. We forgot how to have conversations that broaden

our perspectives rather than re-entrench narrow positions. We stopped thinking and began only to feel. We oscillate between private rage and public conformity, then flip. Can we fight rage with rage? Or is there something else?

This ARK concentrates on the idea of repetition as both: practice and a form of protest. Repetition is often mistaken for stasis, but it is movement. It is, as Deleuze argued, a positive force with unpredictable effects. Not an apathy. In repetition, the mind is freed from a conscious cognitive load, whether quiet, accumulative or transformative. It is the rhythm that carries artistic practices forward. The daily routines, returns, recommitments to an idea or cause, revisits, revisions, gestures that build meaning over time.

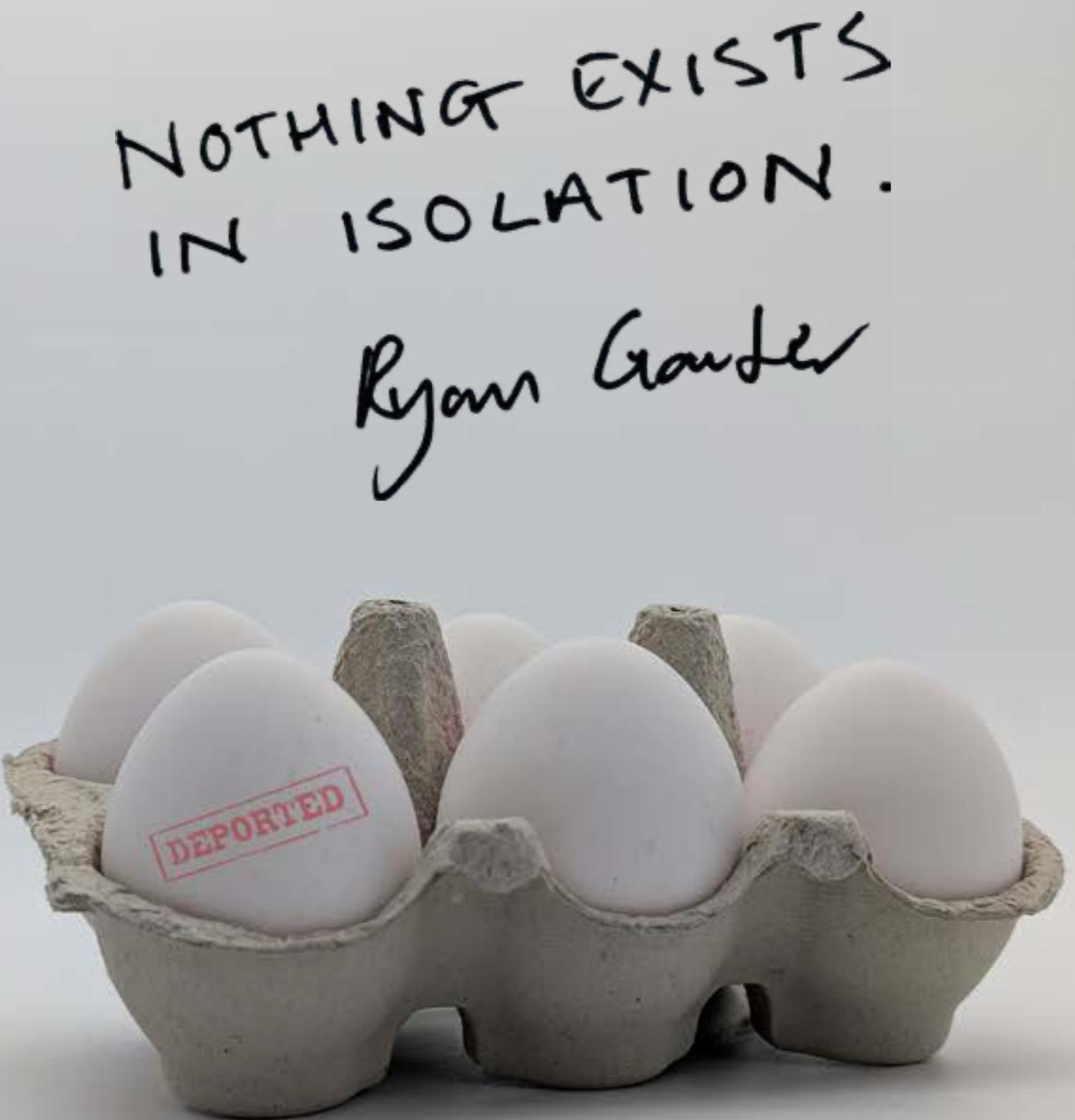
“Repetition is like a dance,” reflects Camille Henrot. “A refraction of memories,” Chantal Joffe. “A meditation,” Ani Liu. “A heartbeat,” Brigitte Bloksma. “A repair”, Indré Šerpytytė. It is like “food or sleep or sex,” says India Mullen. “An act of survival,” declares Carrie Scott.

The director of the Berlin Biennale, Axel Wieder, believes in the power of institutions as social and porous environments that accommodate dissent and community - something this publication aims to be. It is a snapshot of what young RCA artists are thinking, listening to, and looking at now.

- Laura

Cover image: Camille Henrot
BBecoming, 2020
© ADAGP Camille Henrot. Courtesy of the artist, Mennour and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Genevieve Hanson

*Audre Lorde,
“A Litany for Survival”, 1978



ARK | PARRHESIA
Spring/Summer 2025,
Publication as exhibition,
Hockney Gallery, May 2025.

Lola Luk, Send It Back, 2025,
Carton of eggs, ink stamp,
10 x 14 x 7 cm

Ryan Gander for ARK, 2025

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Jeanne F. Jalandoni, *Batchmates*, 2025
Oil on Canvas, acrylic on cotton weaving, epoxy,
101.6 x 101.6 cm [detail]



Conversations

Camille Henrot

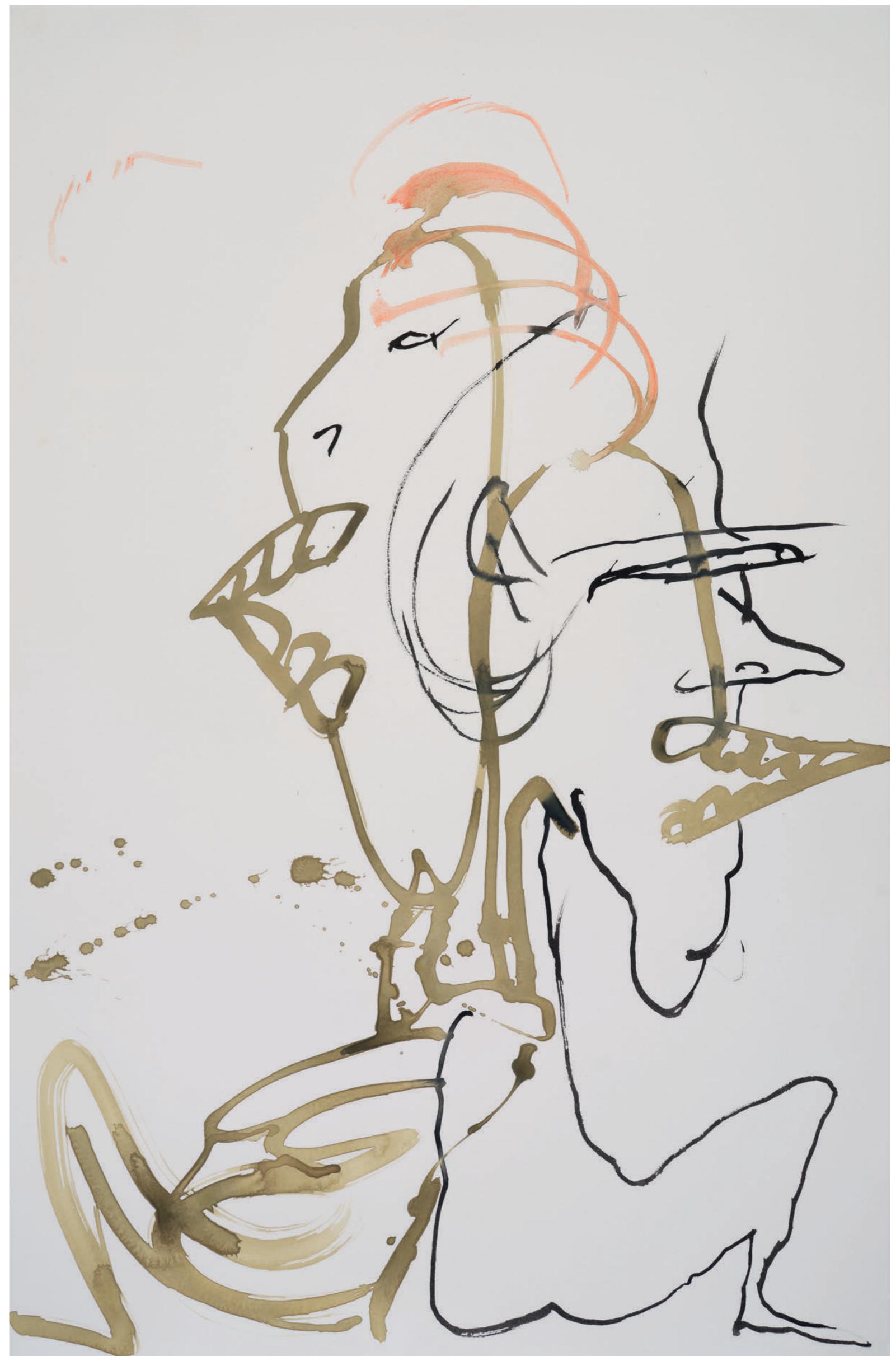
Repetition as Dance

Camille Henrot is widely regarded as a leading voice in contemporary art. Over the past two decades, she has developed a multidisciplinary practice spanning across drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, and film. Drawing inspiration from literature, online culture, second-hand markets, self-help, and everyday life, her work explores the tension between personal experience and global interconnectedness. Henrot gained international recognition with her 2013 film *Grosse Fatigue*, created during a Smithsonian fellowship and awarded the Silver Lion at the 55th Venice Biennale. Henrot has participated in numerous biennials and received the Nam June Paik Award and the Edvard Munch Award. Recent solo exhibitions include Middelheim Museum, Munch Museum, Lokremise St. Gallen, and Fondazione ICA Milano.

When I think of repetition, I think of the experience of daily life. Repeated action is never actually a repetition of the same thing but always somehow an evolution of the previous instance. Repetition could be a way to define evolution and change. Roland Barthes comes to mind as well. Specifically the concept of rhutmos and idiorrhythmy as discussed in his lecture “How To Live Together”. Idiorrhythmy is a kind of fantasy in which everyone lives according to their own rhythm, and recognizes and respects the rhythm of the other. This concept was developed through his observation of a religious community of monks at Mount Athos in Greece. Repetition also makes me think of dancing; that every movement we learn has to be repeated before it can be performed well. I studied

cartoons and animated films in school, and I remember how I realized that every movement in a moving image consisted of basic repetition, before it could be seen and understood as movement. Repetition is what happens in succession, therefore it is connected with evolution, progress, learning, living, improvising, and performing. Every repetition is a preparation for becoming, for a transformation of some kind.

Camille Henrot
As An Only Child, 2023, Watercolor on paper
 © ADAGP Camille Henrot. Courtesy of the artist, Mennour and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Thomas Barratt



Axel Wieder

Institutions as Social Spaces

In Conversation With:
Laura Dzelzytė

Axel Wieder is a curator and cultural theorist who was appointed as the Director of the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art in 2024. Known for advancing institutions as open, socially engaged platforms, he previously served as Director of Bergen Kunsthall (2018–2024), where he developed an internationally acclaimed interdisciplinary program and broadened audiences through ambitious exhibitions and collaborative initiatives. Wieder studied art history and cultural studies in Berlin and Cologne and has led several key institutions, including Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation in Stockholm, Arnolfini in Bristol, Ludlow 38 in New York, and Künstlerhaus Stuttgart. In 1999, he co-founded Pro qm, the influential Berlin bookshop and discourse platform. His work focuses on exhibition history, architecture, and political representation, consistently expanding institutional practices toward greater inclusivity, dialog, and public engagement. He publishes widely and has taught at various European universities and art academies.

LD: Axel, you are one of those curators, in the position of power, who is consistently expanding institutional practices toward greater inclusivity, dialog, and public engagement. Something that is at the core of the ARK project. You've often described art institutions as open social spaces. How do you envision the museum or biennale functioning beyond its traditional walls?

AW: It might sound maybe obvious to describe institutions as social spaces, but it has for me really important implications. A visit to an exhibition or a program is not just watching them, but we move in with all our experiences, our histories and the way we inhabit these. And we encounter others, the ones presenting but also other people visiting, we have different forms of exchanges, maybe we talk, but we definitely interact in some ways. I'm interested in possibilities for audiences to own and take over these spaces, to really turn them into platforms of exchange, which requires institutions to be considered in such a way, and not just stages for installation shots. It is surprising for me that so many institutions still produce photographs of empty, idealized showrooms, and that curators and even artists demand such images. For such reasons, cafés, bookstores, or other more typically social meeting spaces are so important in museums, they respond to other needs or other ways of being in a museum. There is also a big potential in live programs to create concrete dynamic moments. In Bergen, where I worked for many years as director of the Kunsthall until I joined the Berlin Biennale as director last autumn, we had a fantastic café, which became on many evenings a space for live events, from talks to concerts and club nights. This was an incredibly important entry point, as a different way into the institution, and we used this program also as an opportunity to work with many and diverse external partners, organizations and initiatives that helped to create a wider range of programs. So, for me a crucial question is first of all how institutions work within their own walls, how to relate from here in a different, more open way to the other social realities, to the outside.

“I don’t see any other way for art institutions to remain relevant, beyond commercial interest, than to address their public function more openly.”

LD: You speak powerfully about “platforms of exchange.” The emphasis on institutions as places to be inhabited, rather than merely observed, shifts the conversation from spectatorship to presence. I feel that in this sense, the “arts” becomes a collective field of creative expression: literature, music, theatre, design, defined not by medium but by the capacity to host encounters.

International academic institutions operate much like art biennales in the diversity and richness of their exchanges. At the RCA, for instance, we bring together over 60

nationalities. Earlier this year we relaunched ARK in six languages, deliberately challenging the supremacy of English as the default lingua franca. The use of loose pages invited audiences to assemble their own editorial, as a form of performance, reinforcing the idea that exchange matters more than authoritative authorship. Ultimately, what's at stake is not showing or winning arguments, but gaining knowledge, acquiring perspectives, and experiencing the multiplicity of voices that make an institution truly alive. Many of your projects blur boundaries between art, urbanism, and public discourse. How do you see architecture and city planning informing curatorial practice today?

AW: When I started actively working with exhibitions in the 1990s, I was very interested in discussions about architecture and the city as a topic in the art field. One reason for this was that here, in a discussion on cities, was really a very concrete connection with the everyday reality of people, with very specific politics, power relations, that could be made visible and analyzed. The way in which urban planning imagines and shapes the organization of society, how a specific building creates routines and materializes policies.

Michel Foucault's analysis of social institutions, and Henri Levebvre's reading of social space as a transmission of power relations were crucial. There is still important potential for me in connecting a discussion on urban politics with my work in art organizations, of bringing programming in connection with discussions about the reality of the cities we work in, but in a more open sense, in relation to more expanded notion of critical thinking on social space. In many instances art has become part of urban development, not always critically, and the discussion on memory culture and historical monuments that inhabit public spaces has become crucial in the past decade. From today's perspective, I would wish that curatorial practice would inform city planning! That we have more forms of shared decision making, thinking about participation and forms of ownership in a more critical way, and exhibitions as possibilities of opening such forums.

LD: The grounding in Foucault and Lefebvre shows in how you frame the city as both material and ideological. When you speak of wishing curatorial practice would inform city planning, it reads less like a provocation than a proposal for a more poetic administrative logic, one that accommodates nuance, dissent, and community. And yet, the reality is that institutions are often caught within the very systems they critique. Do you think institutions can (or should) operate as civic platforms rather than exhibition halls? What structural shifts does that demand?

AW: Yes. This requires openness, but to be honest: I don't see any other way for art institutions to remain relevant, beyond commercial interest, than to address their public function more openly. In my past work, I have described my ideal institution for contemporary art as mix between a museum and a community center. I find exhibitions still incredibly valuable and useful, there is a history that we have to hold onto because of its critical value, thinking about the history of representation, but I see a need for



“Michel Foucault’s analysis of social institutions, and Henri Levebvre’s reading of social space as a transmission of power relations were crucial. [...] In many respects art has become part of urban development.”

Marta Przygodzka, I Break Into My Guy Crushes’ Homes To Take Pictures of Them, 2025
Hand c - prints, 20.32 x 25.4 cm



exhibitions to become spaces for actions, rather than contemplation. We have to take audiences that we want to reach seriously and to address them as collaborators, with their own voice, not as consumers.

LD: There is something quietly radical in your insistence that audiences be treated as collaborators. It shifts the institutional economy away from consumption and toward co-authorship. Not every institution is ready to surrender authority so openly. In your role at the Berlin Biennale, how are you thinking about inclusion - not just in representation, but in authorship, process, and decision-making?

AW: I see the Berlin Biennale as a project that happens in dialogue with the city – with the architecture, but also the inhabitants. We have just started to work on the next edition and we don’t want to tell much yet, but one important aspect is that we plan to extend our work with other organizations as co-programmers, not just as venues, as one way of opening up to the rich, amazing cultural networks that exist in Berlin.

LD: What forms of collaboration or participation have you found most effective for amplifying underrepresented voices?

AW: I want to mention two great examples from the past, first the live program that we organized with Bergen Kunsthall. Most parts happened in the space called Landmark that was during daytime our café, so the program was also called Landmark. Many parts were organized with partners and initiatives and included from talks, film screenings, to concerts and club nights. Part of the aim of the program was also to support smaller or new initiatives from diverse, really manyfold backgrounds, to empower people who had ideas and ambitions, and to give access to our infrastructure and the team. We made many wonderful events happen, from discussion circles of young art lover with BIPOC backgrounds to Amapiano nights, that were organized by people from communities for their communities – but also all of our other audiences. A second initiative I want to mention is the Teen Advisory Board that we founded for Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation in Stockholm, where I was working as director 2014–18. We offered small paid positions for 6–8 young people who worked with us over a year, we took them to meetings, organized special events and had regular discussions on feedback and ideas from their end, but most importantly invited them also to program own events, such as a festival on the water, with boats, in the center of Stockholm. The best is that the initiative still exists, with a changing board every year.

LD: Are you reframing of the institution’s identity? By opening the café space to new initiatives and letting its character transform with each event, the institution becomes less a host and more an infrastructure for encounter. There is something crucial in that shift: diversity is not staged; it is lived through the building. Looking back at Pro qm, your early experimental platform, what lessons

from that experience continue to shape how you build institutional programs today?

AW: Pro qm was built on self-organization, it was our stable base to work simultaneously on other, less formalized or temporary projects. This aspect of self-organization is still incredibly important for me.

LD: Does it not become a minefield of inclusion, exclusion? How do you avoid that?

AW: Yes, I agree that we have to remain aware of how we constantly draw lines of exclusion, even if we aim to be inclusive. It’s a task that doesn’t stop. Working for a public organization, I find it incredibly important to continue to broaden our outreach, to lower unjust barriers.

LD: It is refreshing to hear the treatment of inclusion not as a solved problem but as a maintenance practice - a constant tuning of thresholds, invitations, forms of access. This kind of work is rarely visible, often unglamorous, and yet foundational for public institutions. How is the planning for the next Berlin Biennale going? Can you divulge the theme?

AW: We have just announced with whom we are working as the curator for the next edition of the Berlin Biennale – Vasyl Cherepanyn. We have now around 18 months to develop the project.

LD: Yes, I heard. A great choice! We will have to wait then a little. Where is the best coffee in Berlin?

AW: A great place for coffee is Kajumi, or their sibling Material, both in Prenzlauer Berg.

LD: Which gallery we cannot miss?

AW: ChertLüdde – because of its inhouse bookshop and wonderful courtyard.

LD: What female writer has inspired you the most?

AW: Two of the many: Felicity Scott and Jennifer Kabat.

LD: Can digital replace physical meeting, art, thinking?

AW: It’s a helpful tool but I like cafés, exhibition spaces and chance encounters in trams, which only work physically.



Sara Aguiar da Silva, Scone, 2019
Digital Print, 21 x 29.7 cm

A R K



Aguiar da Silva, Lemon Drizzle Cake, 2019
Digital Print, 21 x 29.7 cm

A R K

Chantal Joffe

Fracking Memories

In Conversation With:
Nik Macey

Chantal Joffe is a contemporary painter living and working in London. She studied at Glasgow School of Art and holds an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art. Joffe's successful career includes exhibitions at The Fitzwilliam Museum; Royal Academy of Arts; Turner Contemporary; The Saatchi; The Irish Museum of Modern Art; Bloomberg Space; National Portrait Gallery; National Museum of Iceland; Whitechapel Gallery; The Lowry. Joffe was the recipient of the 2006 Royal Academy Wollaston Prize. Her work is held in renowned private and public collections globally.

NM: I'd love to start by asking you about your time at the RCA, and whether you look back on that with fond memories, or not so much.

CJ: It was the most extraordinary, amazing experience. I loved it, I really loved it. We had two years. And it was a revelation to me. Amazing teaching, amazing people. I had teachers like John Stezaker, Rita Donagh, Chris Fisher. Amazing people.

NM: So what year was it that you graduated?

CJ: I graduated in 1994. And Chris Ofili was the year above me. Peter Doig was one of the teachers. Yeah, it was an extraordinary time, I think, to be making painting. But the Royal College... the thing that struck me when I got there was there was 20 of us and everyone was just so excited to be painting and talking about art. Like it was a real kind of innocent, pure innocence about... you met these people who'd been at Norwich, or all different art schools all over the world and all over the country, and what we all shared, we'd all just sit all night talking about painting and art. It was really magical. Just really magical time for me.

NM: Yeah, I feel a bit like that at the moment. There's a sort of community of people who are really excited by what they do, which is quite rare, I think.

CJ: Yeah, and they're sort of old enough to know how... You're 21, 22 rather than 18. Big difference. And you don't have feel shy to be so passionate. They're all like, let's just talk about Picasso. Let's talk about all the things we don't like, all films, everything. It felt like on undergraduate sometimes we were all just trying to work out who we were. I really felt my own grown up, more grownup-ness. I'd loved undergraduate, I'd loved Glasgow, but at the RCA, it was a small group of us, which was nice as well.

"When you sort of 'frack' your own memories, it's quite dangerous game to play [...] when the vein runs dry, you have to find a new thing to frack."

NM: So do you think that RCA was where you found your painting style, where you sort of became the painter that you are today? Or has that been since?

CJ: I don't think you ever find that. I think that's an ongoing work in progress. I hate the idea that you would 'find' it... I think that who you are doesn't change it, but how you do it changes all the time.

NM: So it's something that's constantly, constantly evolving for you?

CJ: Yeah, I would like to think so, and that change is always just around the corner... some new change, and some shift. But I think there were huge sort of epiphanies for me at the Royal College. Of kind of understanding what art could be and stuff... I think I expanded my own understanding of what it could be.

NM: I've just come from your show in Victoria Miro. I feel like the works feel really new. They're sort of very free and loose and a different energy. I was just wondering how that came about?

CJ: Well, I kind of got to a point in the summer and I thought, I need to change, I need to go elsewhere in this work, I need... I got to the end of something, I need to start something brand new, but that was actually really hard. It came with a lot of questioning and thinking and a lot of self doubt. I think that's always true; I think you're always kind of... you kind of run to the end of something and then you have to begin all over and try and work out how? So it was really hard. It was really, really hard to get to those paintings, and then I got to making them and I was doing it very secretly so nobody could see them. And that was really important that I was making them in secret. Yeah, I'm glad you felt that, because they felt new to me and different, and it's so exciting to make, you know?

"I was literally saying in the room where I was painting: 'Just come back, just come back.' To my mum, who's dead. 'Just come back for a minute.'"

NM: Yeah, I feel like because they're about memory- I felt that there was just a quality that you can't quite get hold of that sort of was perfect for the idea of memory.

CJ: I'd been thinking a lot about memory. I've been reading a lot of books in relation to memory and thinking about that, and inevitably you're thrown back on yourself and your own memories and your own family, and what that is. And the whole idea of if you can actually – if you can somehow get a direct hit of what memory is, you know what I mean? If you can somehow touch that? Me and my daughter call it 'fracking' when you sort of 'frack' your own memories, you know, it's quite dangerous game to play and also the weird thing about 'fracking' yourself is that you then the vein runs dry and you have to find a new thing to frack. [laughing] And that's kind of exciting! That's super exciting because it's like, 'ooh, I've hit on something new! frack, frack, frack.' And then there's a danger to that, which is that when I frack something like that, then I can't really re-enter it. So it is literally live in the moment of doing it, but then that dies, you have to find something... You kind of empty that vein as it were, and you have to find a new one to frack, which is thrilling and also kind of scary.



Chantal Joffe in her studio, London, Photographed by Nik Macey, 2025

NM: Do you have a favourite piece from the work that's on show right now? One that's your favourite or especially important for you?

CJ: There's one that... I think it's the third from the last one I made, which is called 'Basket'. And it's me, my sister and my mum, and that was a really exciting painting to make and a very emotional painting to make, and at one point when I was making it, I was literally saying in the room where I was painting: "Just come back, just come back." To my mum, who's dead. "Just come back for a minute." Which is... I'm not really like that, so it's particularly emotional. I mean, they're all pretty emotional, but that one was particularly saturated in emotion, and my mother's sort of leaving the picture, she's walking away. She's somehow looking backward, but leaving, and that felt... [pauses.] I think for me, it brought together the thing I wanted, which was this incredibly live sense of emotion, but also painting itself. And how you balance that rather than 'make an image.' Not to make a picture.

NM: It didn't feel like just a snapshot. It really felt like it embodied the idea of memory, I thought.

CJ: I kept remembering things like how it would feel to go up in my basement steps, like the rubber that was on the step. The smell of that or the green stairs. What the horrible nylon-y carpet felt like to smell, a child level. You know, stuff like that. I wanted to access memory in that very visceral, felt way, and then turn it into paint. Get lost in the feeling of paint and the abstraction of that too.

NM: Yeah, I love the quality of the paint! On one of them, I could even smell the turps!

CJ: Oil, linseed oil! No turps! [both laughing.]

NM: Did you use more linseed oil in these than you normally do? They felt very washy and buttery and glossy.

CJ: They're on canvas and they're playing around with the ground more, maybe, than usual. So canvas is more - normally use panel- and those are really absorbent. And I was taking away primer until the point where I was just painting on canvas and painting on the backs. So Bacon style, so that the rawness of the canvas and the paint on the raw canvas has this incredibly great 'dryness' which is really lovely, and kind of absorption. So you're getting the leaking of paint in. I really love that. I hadn't been excited by that in a long time, because with wood, you've got a sharp hardness. Whereas canvas is this fabric and it like [gestures pulling in] does that. And probably you can smell the linseed oil because I think canvas holds it differently. It dries faster on the panel. And I'd always loved panel, but canvas suddenly felt really thrilling, especially on that scale, they're big. And I could play with things of pooling paint and things, which were nice, fun things to be doing!

NM: They did look like they were fun to make! Sweeping gestures...

CJ: Yeah, very much. And weirdly lines are really fun on canvas because you can paint ambidextrously. So on one side you could be using this arm... then you get kind of weird [gestures]. I'm left handed so I'm doing it from both sides, which I really love because it's like a kind of Zen Archery of paint. [laughs.]

NM: It almost becomes like a performance then, in a funny way?

CJ: Yeah, completely. And you're playing with the physicality of paint.

NM: So how long did each of those pieces take?

CJ: Well, they really varied, so some are layered or changed or left and come back to. They're all different. They're slower than usual for me, because I'm taking things away and putting them back and allowing... In divers [painting] I keep trying to get the tone of the water right, or the platform their diving from right. I don't mean right in a photographic way, but right for me. And how the water recedes behind them and the trees beyond them. Really simple figure-ground relationships, which I think I hadn't really thought about, for long time, in that way. Everything felt new. That's what I mean about not having a style, because the minute you have a style, you're like 'Oh, that's how I make something. I make an eye like that or I make an arm like that.' I felt really excitingly out in the middle of nowhere, going, 'I don't know how I make an eye- I can make an eye way I want.' That was really, really thrilling- the possibility to change... I think the older you get the possibility to change is the most valuable thing you have, you know?

NM: Do you procrastinate painting?

CJ: I'm not so much a procrastinator, but what I find you have to do, you have to fill yourself up with books and pictures and music and life, to have things to paint about and then suddenly it does pour out. And sometimes you're doing paintings that aren't alive... Only in the act of painting can you synthesise the thinking. You can think about a painting forever, but you can't make any progress with it unless you're painting it. You can you can say 'oh, I'm going to make a painting of X or Y', but only in the making of it will it become.



Chantal Joffe, Sanibel, 2025, Oil on canvas, 215 x 152 cm.
© Chantal Joffe. Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro.



Chantal Joffe, Basket, 2025, Oil on canvas, 214.8 x 153 cm.
© Chantal Joffe. Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro.

A R K



Chantal Joffe, Matrushka Dolls, 2025 Oil on canvas, 240 x 183 cm. © Chantal Joffe. Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro.

A R K

Estelle Hoy

Manhattan Marxist Manifesto and Rage

In Conversation With:
Laura Dzelzytė

Estelle Hoy is a rule-breaking, lucid contemporary art writer and critic, liberated from the constraints of strict meaning and form. Her writings are deliciously humorous, if at times absurd, but compelling and politically charged. Her work could be described as a “millefoglie” - a thousand layers of pre-emptive truthtelling which concerns anti-capitalist propaganda and social commentary.

Estelle Hoy’s critically acclaimed book, *Pisti, 80 Rue de Belleville*, was published in 2020 with an introduction by Chris Kraus. In 2024, she published a collaborative book, *Jus d’Orange*, with Camille Henrot, and a book of essays, *saké blue*, which gathers critical essays, art reviews, and poetic fiction. Hoy regularly publishes in the international art press, including *Mousse Magazine*, *Spike Art*, *e-flux*, *Artforum*, *Flash Art*, and *Frieze*. She has exhibited in galleries including White Cube, Kamel Mennour, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, alongside artists including Louise Bourgeois, Anne Imhof, Mona Hatoum, Sarah Lucas, Rick Owens, and Michele Lamy. Her forthcoming book *Molotov* will be released by After 8 Books in 2026.

LD: ‘Cables to Rage’ by Audre Lorde or ‘The Bell Jar’ by Sylvia Plath?

EH: I started a cafe space with an ex-husband, which was named after The Bell Jar. Back then, I was working full-time in social work at a homeless centre where many were experiencing addiction and severe mental health issues, like Plath’s, which ultimately took her life. It was great to be able to bring groups to the cafe because I could be sure they’d be welcomed and respected. There is so much stigma around mental health, addiction, and homelessness, and there is perhaps little opportunity to enjoy the same public spaces. The Bell Jar, both the book and the cafe, serve as a means to understand mental illness and its myriad societal prejudices. I had one ‘client’ who was particularly special to me; she experienced schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder, including hoarding. She hadn’t showered for 11 years and would only eat white things, such as yogurt and cream. She was extremely bright, but tormented like Plath, and because of her OCD, she would ask me the same question over and over and over again. She was neurotic as hell, and would ask if her repeating the same question 300 times drove me wild, and I would say, “yes!” Then we’d laugh and laugh and start all over again.

LD: Différence et répétition. How Deleuzian! Perhaps by repeating the questions your friend was moving beyond limitations of the past or who she was, or how she was perceived in the world, and constructing herself anew over and over and over again with you as catalyst? However, unlike Sylvia Plath’s stifling bell jar, yours seems to have been a place of comfort and freedom from being othered or excluded.

EH: The Bell Jar became a community space for all kinds of people, and it took on a life of its own, bringing people together in friendships they most likely wouldn’t have had the opportunity to form otherwise. It seemed to break down a lot of stigma around mental health and help people understand the tumultuous nature of addiction and homelessness. I think about the space occasionally, but I think about my friend often. The last time I saw her was down the road from The Bell Jar, sitting on the ground in the shadows with her many bags, and that very afternoon she took her own life. I couldn’t bear to keep the note she wrote before her suicide, but it’s indelibly printed in my memory. Her funeral was held at The Bell Jar, and the community came to celebrate her life and extraordinary personality, and to mourn together. When I gave the eulogy, I read a short excerpt from Sylvia Plath: “I thought the most beautiful thing in the world must be shadow, the million moving shapes and cul-de-sacs of shadow. There was shadow in bureau drawers and closets and suitcases, and shadow under houses and trees and stones, and shadow at the back of people’s eyes and smiles, and shadow, miles and miles and miles of it, on the night side of the earth.”

Behind my friends’ glistening eyes and smiles, there were many shadows, miles and miles of them. I’m grateful to have known her and loved her deeply.

LD: “The real eye of the rainbow cannot be seen. In coal’s shadow is the diamond.” Audre Lorde saw shadows as a generative space from which diamonds of resilience, art, and selfhood are formed.

EH: Beautiful! And it is funny that you mention Lorde, because on the way home on the bus just now in manic-depressive Berlin, I was thinking about ‘Lavender Marriages’ otherwise known as a ‘marriages of convenience’ to conceal sexual orientation from persecuting structures. I’m interested in its etymology, but also how it’s kinda been reappropriated by the younger generation who are living under the purple bruises of neoliberalism. Young platonic people are pairing up for loads of covert reasons: to help navigate financial impossibilities under capitalism, share homes, finances, visas, support one another, even start families, since Hinge is a total joke. Lorde, I imagine, would find this injustice equally abominable, since she believed there could be ‘no hierarchy of oppressions’ among those who share the same goals of total liberation and a future for our children. I’m not sure I acquiesce, but who am I to disagree with Audre Lorde? Audre - a queer, black, intersectional feminist activist, nay, warrior, and in a Lavender Marriage in the 60’s. In her poem ‘Martha’ in *Cables to Rage*, she openly addressed her lesbianism for the first time, an epistolary coming out to her new life of lesbian fire and perfect rage, and this was a hella bold and hazardous move in the literary world at the time. Everyone’s caught up in thinking rage is an unruly emotion, but I think it’s a magnifying glass for the overlooked corners of existence and the people within that existence. Greta Thunberg being dissed by Trump as a ‘young angry person’ is just about the highest compliment one could receive. Be a lover of rage, for God’s sake. If there’s a cable tie between Plath and Lorde, it would be this.

LD: There is visceral and unfiltered rage in your writing, not just as emotion but as a political stance: against capitalism, silence, cultural stasis. It also acts as a collective energy – something that binds, calls to action, rather than isolates. A someone who, in a previous life, was drafting climate laws, I feel we all need rage of “the left”. It is too easy to bury ourselves in the privileged apathy of middle-class velvet sofas, but rage is disapproved in polite circles, alongside public displays of affection, hoodies, potholes, junk mail, graffiti, call centres, menopause, immigrants, protesters, e-scooters, and bad punctuation. And yet, it is effective. It bypasses reason and activates the core like nothing else. So much so that rage is now being used by the far right to counteract “the cultural centre” to dismantle inclusion, connectedness, and disband globalisation. Can we fight rage with rage? Can artists, philosophers, especially post-structuralists who accept that there is no objective universal truth, provide an effective response to what is happening now?

EH: I have no idea how to answer this! A velvet sofa would be terrific. [laughter] I’ll go with post-structuralist Roland Barthes’ *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* and suggest the operative word is ‘fragments’. Or maybe ‘lovers’? Let’s try both.



I've always enjoyed not knowing the correct use of punctuation, such as semi-colons, em dashes, and where the ownership apostrophe goes on 'Barthes'. I went to school next to a sewage plant that blew across the school yard, so that explains something. I could sign up for adult classes, but resisting an objective universal truth within punctuation marks is also a celebration of the fragmented nature of our existence. This is an adequate response to the current swing towards the divided right, because when we fixate on the idea that we need to agree on everything to achieve a political aim, then we get bogged down by the grind of consensus being inextricable from fairness. In a way, this is a strategic way to stop 'progressive' movements from actually progressing...

Fragmentation - within discourse in leftist factions, for example - and an acceptance of its chronic existence mean we expect it, make friends with it, and move forward regardless. We can't wait until we agree on every single political minutiae to take direct action; maybe it's like what Lorde said - we all have the same goal of total liberation, so stop fussing over the totalitarianism of a political semi-colon and get moving. So my grammatical ignorance is a teeny revolutionary gesture, I'll have you know. [laughter] Let the sunshine in on post-structural fragmentation! This answer is atomised in and of itself, but maybe this is precisely my argument. I'm attempting, as best I can, with the capabilities I possess and constraints I face, to make a clumsy and fragmented contribution.

Oh, and having lovers could provide an effective counter response because people are oxytocin-relaxed and more agreeable? No clue.

LD: Aren't we all inherently fragmented? Divided by the unconscious, language, and desire, and while it might be a wound to be healed, it can also be a resource to be tapped into. I love your idea of more oxytocin-relaxed lovers accepting that this world is fragmented, that it is made of an infinite number of particles, experiences, and positions, and that is the beauty, but also the complexity of it. Maybe that is the answer to far-right political movements? More love-making, more fragmentation.

Did you see the potency of our collective consciousness through your son's microscope?

EH: Microscopes are whistleblowers, which is why we bought my son one for his birthday last week. I mean, how can we retain our humanity and speak of collective values while failing to zoom in on what it means to be human at a cellular level? Denouncing the nihilistic effects of the zeitgeist we're living in truly takes an optical instrument. Closely examining grey, mortal hair in this week's scientific study in my kitchen, I realised that the current becoming of the world could be better understood if observed through a microscope, so that the naked reality of our ultimate mortality is entirely on display. Remembering our demise is an opportunity to focus on what's coming up, a movie trailer of sorts, and perhaps this empirical mnemonic device will redirect us, remind us we've little time remaining. Besides, looking at everything all at once overwhelms the spirit, and our collective consciousness slips through the cracks - its desensitisation is automatic. This



Riccardo Matlakas, Sweet Flag (from Melting Borders), Poland, 2018

potent micro approach is, at the very least, a childlike strategy, and where there's wide-eyed, open-hearted strategy, solidarity tends to grow.

LD: As creators, do we have a duty of care to take a moral stance, to expose, to transmit our values and beliefs? Do you think the character of an artist and integrity are different?

"Everyone's caught up in thinking rage is an unruly emotion, but I think it's a magnifying glass for the overlooked corners of existence and the people within that existence."

"Greta Thunberg being dissed by Trump as a 'young angry person' is just about the highest compliment one could receive. Be a lover of rage, for God's sake. If there's a cable tie between Plath and Lorde, it would be this." - EH



Riccardo Matlakas, Sweet Flag (from Melting Borders), Jordan, 2018

EH: Something Ocean Vuong said struck me yesterday regarding his students being held hostage by 'cringe culture,' whereby kids feel self-conscious about social media surveillance, and they don't want to be perceived as being overly earnest or effortful in their writing, since they're scared of public judgment. They perform cynicism because cynicism is often misread as intelligence, being cool, dissaffected, defined by mutual distaste. They're one type of writer at home, and another in the classroom. Artistic callisthenics.

I think in a roundabout way, this speaks to the considerable misalignment we're seeing as it pertains to Palestine. More specifically, the key difference between character and integrity. Maybe character is our overall moral fibre; we might be kind, empathetic, ethical, or whatever. It's a self-expressed or perceived state of morality by the people around us. But integrity, the way I see it, is who we are when nobody is looking, who we are when we'll be castigated for standing by those ethics, and penultimately: what we do about it. Integrity is who we are under duress.

If our professed character crumbles under the fear of ridicule or is concerned with posturing ourselves differently from our peers, our character doesn't really check out, let alone our integrity. They're disparate and inconsistent. I'm not sure how to put this. Character and integrity should not be swayed by inconvenience, pressure, persecution, or coercion. When we're all alone in the world, behind closed doors, when we don't need approval or recognition, will we, in the very least, stop leaning back. Can we make it in the world without integrity, without moral fibre that is true around the clock?

LD: I am on the fence. I remember a long debate with the Royal College of Art students during the Urgency of Arts session with the British writer and critic Orit Gat.

The point of departure was Roland Barthes's essay in which he, crudely put, killed the author in order to allow the reader's meaning to be born. But of course, that was the 1960s, with no internet in sight or in hand. It was possible then to ignore information about the author - their values, ideas, and moral stance - and concentrate on the text. In the twenty-first century, the matter of the character of the author vis-à-vis their public position is far more complicated. There is no digital privacy. We are examined not by a small circle of open-minded, forgiving and forgetful acquaintances and fellows but by the world at large. 'The scrutiny of our views is no longer local or contained; it carries the full weight and speed of fibre-optic cable's. Nor is it temporary. Our digital positions are permanently etched into the cyber chronicles. And while I agree that without moral fibre and round the clock authenticity we are nothing but marketing puppets - lip-syncing, TikTokking, Snapchating our digital caricatures, yes I experienced firsthand that, for some, especially young people, without a right to forget, a moral stance can be both a radical act and a terrifying prospect.

In our ARK | PARRHESIA issue (parrhesia meaning speaking truth to power without fear), we tackled questions of war, gender, power, AI, racism, colonialism, and disability. We invited a student who was privately vocal about the Gaza conflict to share their reflections in the magazine,

"The scrutiny of our views is no longer local or contained. It carries the full weight of fibre-optic cables. Nor is it temporary. Our digital positions are permanently etched into the cyber chronicles." - LD

in an attempt to create a healing bridge across the divide. They did not feel comfortable going public, and ultimately we respected their right to keep their views private. After all, "we live in a highly polarised world, with an abundance of data yet imperfect information, skewed by algorithms. It is tragic that even multicultural universities are no longer safe spaces." But this is not merely an institutional challenge; it is a systemic one. As physical contact and the spoken word were replaced by digital emojis, and AI enabled autocues, we lost our ability to speak and to hear to have a conversation, a discussion, a debate which broaden perspectives rather than re-entrench narrow positions. We lost our ability to think and began only to feel. We oscillate between private rage and public conformity, then flip. Half a century ago, Hannah Arendt warned of the "banality of evil," of obedience, and of the failure to think critically.

In your Manhattan Marxist Manifesto, you call to arms against apathy, greed, and the system. "We don't believe that capitalism is an insurmountable structure, and it's

crystal fucking clear that this assumption is bringing us to the brink of extinction. We don't have to resign ourselves to the concept that this is the sole future that our progeny can expect. Our liberation can come from freeing ourselves from our obsession with economic growth. Beyond resource sharing, we have come to think more and more that there is an element that could informally reframe our instinct of accumulation and expansion." Do you stand by it?

"Who are we when nobody is looking, when we are castigated for standing by those ethics, and penultimately: what we do about it. Integrity is who we are under duress." - EH

EH: I stand by it. More than stand, I leap at it with the gusto of a javelin. I published this manifesto with Mousse Magazine, inspired by Chris Kraus, who has offered me friendship/mentorship for a decade. Her generosity has propelled my commitment to this type of mentorship exchange with interested parties. I've been involved in a prison writing project where members engage in a mentorship program, and I'm invited to give critical feedback while participants develop their text. The backbone of mentorship as a social force is the dissolution of competition, the fascist tendency that prevails everywhere. Therefore, we can think about ways to preserve our existence, our social and creative solidarity, through the traits and fingerprints of mentorship, which we can make up together. And it's a two-way street of growing artistically; mentors learn from mentees' strengths. Rhythm is super tricky for me sometimes, so reading a writer with innate rhythm is helpful for my praxis. I guess I mean mentorship as a decentralised, unranked relationship that flaunts the line of friendship, expansion, social imagination, and probably a lot of other things Daffy Duck would splutter over.

The cycle of struggle for Prison Writing Programs is delay in the process. It's not a swift back and forth; there are many channels and ridiculous protocols to navigate. However, I've come to think that the 'problem' of delay can be reimagined as the total devastation of pressure to produce work with road-runner speed; another antagonism of fascist neoliberalism, which goes beyond a Looney Tunes political defeat and changes the cognitive and psychological composition of hyper-conforming society. Beep Beep! Delay is a withdrawal from the condition of exploitation. Delay could be an attribute of artistic mentorship that moulds itself into a precious, slowed conjunction of events, allowing us to see people as individuals, not machines. Protracted time to think about one another's work and person through the 'inconvenience' of delay becomes the peak of humanity.



Riccardo Matlakas, Sweet Flag (from Melting Borders), South Korea / North Korea (DMZ), 2018

Ben Street

The Art of Slow Looking

In Conversation With:
Giorgia De Stefano

Dr Ben Street is an art historian and author of several books, including *How to Enjoy Art* (Yale, 2021) and the award-winning children's book *How to Be an Art Rebel* (Thames and Hudson, 2021). He lectures for the University of Oxford and the University of East Anglia. He is a contributing writer on modern and contemporary art for *Apollo*, *Art Review*, the *Times Literary Supplement* and *Gagosian Quarterly*. He was a staff lecturer for the National Gallery, Tate, Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Royal Academy.

GDS: "Resist what we have to say about artworks". How do you think embracing uncertainty, not knowing exactly what an artwork means, can deepen someone's connection to art?

BS: I can't imagine a situation where we "know exactly what an artwork means", can you? All of my encounters with art embrace uncertainty because that's the price of admission - that you won't come away with an answer. This is true of all art, at least in my experience.

GDS: You've written and spoken extensively about the value of "slow looking" in experiencing art. But slow means time away from other things and experiences. In an age of social media and short attention spans, is it not counter to our way of life?

BS: It probably is a bit unusual in the way we in the West tend to process images these days. But that's been true in the last 200 years (do we call that "modern art"? Maybe). I don't actually believe that people have especially short attention spans these days, only that many people may not be used to spending a long time looking at one thing - which doesn't move or make sound (usually). It makes me very sad to hear people not reading novels, though, and I wish they would.

GDS: Are "entry-level Christian narratives" still relevant today?

BS: In Christian art? Of course.

GDS: Paul Guston used tension of self-awareness in his self-portraits to great success but is there not too much self-analysis, navel gazing in contemporary art?

BS: That's Philip! Anyway, no. It sounds to me you're thinking of specific examples, but I don't find much of either of those in the art I see. Not enough, if anything!

GDS: What subscriptions for art commentary do you paid for and find the most value?

BS: I pay for Brad Troemel's videos because I think they're often on the money and a breath of fresh air. Other than that, I don't.

GDS: Where is the best coffee in London?

BS: Busy Brewing at the Lord Herbert pub, Plumstead.

"Slow looking gets closer to a work of art's 'pictorial intelligence', [...] Silent, slow looking, or looking that doesn't result in a scrawled panic for 'meaning' (and usually a scurry to the wall text), is a skill honed to perfection by small children, who (mostly) don't find sitting on the floor looking at a single object to be beyond the bounds of their ability."



A Day in the Arts



Benjamin Blanc, *Rising of the Occasion II*, 2025,
Oil on canvas, 120 x 160 cm

Carrie Scott

Notes from Frieze

The English-American curator, critic, and consultant Carrie Scott is known for connecting the art world with the real world, a distinction she brings to life with a trenchant sense of humour that has earned her a global following.

Formerly a gallery director in New York, Scott left the commercial gallery sector in 2008 and went on to work with Nick Knight as director of the SHOWstudio shop for a decade. As the founder of the consultancy Seen (established in 2024), she has since focused on making art more accessible, championing visibility and inclusion at every level.



Sarah Ball, *Emma F.*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 250 x 200 cm

Art fairs have their own choreography - a rhythm you fall into before you realise it. The same corridors, the same faces, the same dance of glances exchanged over the top of a checklist. But this year at Frieze, that sense of repetition felt strangely charged. It was more like a pulse, than monotony.

Maybe it was the atmosphere - buoyant in a way no one quite trusts given what's happening on our global stage - or maybe it was the work.

Everywhere I turned, artists were using repetition across series, or with patterns. It was not as decoration, but as an insistence.

Nohemí Pérez's charcoal forests at Mor Charpentier were the first to shift my breathing. At a distance, they seemed serene - inky trees, bright embroidered birds - but the longer I stood there, the more the landscape revealed itself as haunted. Pérez, who grew up in Colombia's Catatumbo region, knows how violence folds itself into the natural world. Her repeated marks, her layering of darkness and thread, felt like a reminder that history accumulates, settles, and stains. Repetition can also be a form of defiance. Nicholas Galanin's work does this with extraordinary precision. His practice revisits the same themes of Indigenous erasure and colonial violence because the structures that produce those violevnices remain stubbornly unchanged. His work at Peter Blum wasn't a didactic gesture; it was a pulse, a beat, a rhythm that refuses erasure.

Each reiteration is an act of survival.

Even the quieter works carried repetition as a kind of philosophical position. Sarah Ball's portraits at Stephen Friedman made identity feel like something assembled through small, repeated acts. The slight tilt of a head. The way a person looks out on the world. Identity, she seems to suggest, is cumulative, something you inherit, then revise and perform. Elsewhere, repetition was a method of world-building. On Talia Levitt's canvases paint masquerades as embroidery. And the trope of the still life is used again, and made new, so that one woman's story has been worked across the composition. And then there were the artists refusing the old art world dichotomy between the monumental and the domestic. Do Ho Suh's small-scale fabric sculptures - radiators, sockets, fire hydrants - were tiny repetitions of the architectural ghosts he's known for. Some people grumble when large-scale artists "go small," but these works felt vital, showing us how home is a repetition of small, personal infrastructures that hold us. And the trope of the still life is used again, and made new, so that one woman's story has been worked across the composition.

Lauren Halsey, meanwhile, turned repetition into architectural sculptures. Her booth at Gagosian was a living archive of South Central LA - its signage, its slang, its mythologies. Her engravings and sculptural elements layered narrative upon narrative until they felt

like a communal chant. Even Frieze Masters thrummed with resurfacing. Anne Rothenstein's debut at seventy-seven - dreamlike, precise, atmospheric - felt like a quiet indictment of an art history that overlooked her. And she wasn't alone. Toni LaSell, Titina Maselli, Iria Leino all feartued at the fair, repeating a story about women whose practices alve been sidelined, obscured, or buried in storage. And perhaps that's why the week felt so buoyant. Not simply because sales were brisk or because the crowds were energetic, but because the repetition happening across the fairs wasn't aimless. It was demanding and insistent that we return to what matters: Art. Maybe that's the real rhythm of this fair season: artists, audiences, and institutions circling back - again and again - to the work that refuses to be forgotten, using repetition as memory and a beat to recall it.

Art fairs have their own choreography - a rhythm you fall into before you realise it.



Laura Dzelzytė, *Memories of Pensive Christ (Rūpintojelio Atminai)*, 2025
Wood, wax, mixed media, 350 x 350 x 100 cm (detail of the installation view) Sėla Museum, Lithuania, 2025

Brigitte Bloksma

The Rhythm of the Tide Outside Museum

Brigitte Bloksma has been Director of BAZ, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Sculpture in Hague, since May 2022. From 2015 to 2022 she served as Director of Kasteel Wijlre Estate, a museum for contemporary art in the south of Limburg where art, nature, and architecture converge. Both museums originated from private collections and have since evolved into public institutions. Until May 2022, Bloksma was a Crown-appointed member of the Council for Culture, the advisory body for the Dutch government on cultural policy.

“Guided, guided away, guided and guided away”, wrote Gertrude Stein about the life of a blue coat. Repetition is rarely neutral. It is a pulse, a rhythm, a heartbeat echoing through bodies, artworks, and the sea outside my window. At Museum Beelden aan Zee, where I spend my days, the tide is the most faithful sculptor - waves smoothing stone, pulling sand, shaping the shore again and again. The centre is never still; each wave is new.

At forty-five, with a daughter of eighteen, I know repetition intimately. The repeated gestures of care that once filled my nights and days - you know the drill feeding, rocking, soothing - have given way to a different rhythm. I’m watching her unfold, watching her move through primary school and high school, creating her own repetitions, her own becoming. My body, too, carries its repetitions the wrinkles, the first grey hairs, the cycles and the letting go. Some have called such patterns a trap, or even a suffocating burden. But I have come to feel that repetition is also where renewal hides. Or at least I’m learning to notice the beauty of reprise in life like loving the same man for twenty-three years, or washing my hands and seeing how they change, like the leaves and the skin of the trees on our street.

Artists have taught me to see this. Yayoi Kusama’s dots, infinite yet never the same. Cindy Sherman’s repeated female figures, each revealing another mask of self. Eva Hesse’s fragile forms - ropes, tubes, nets - that tremble in their slight differences, reminding me that repetition is alive. Louise Bourgeois circling back to her spiders and cells, each one tender, wounded, protective in a new way. Niki de Saint Phalle’s exuberant Nanas repeated bodies that insist on multiplicity, on joy. Mona Hatoum twisting domestic repetition into uncanny oppression. Magdalena Abakanowicz’s headless crowds one figure, repeated endlessly, yet never identical.

And now, in the museum by the sea, Tania Kovats has placed her Divers human figures cast in concrete, like bodies descending into water. They carry the rhythm of immersion and return, as if the ocean itself were sculpting them, pulling them down and lifting them back again. To walk among them is to feel how repetition is not sameness, but tide - a movement that remakes the world each time it comes.

Repetition, in this stage of life, feels less like confinement than gathering. Not a decline, but a harvest moon. A

return to silence, to self - each time slightly altered, each time more wholly me.

For me, repetition is not a chain but a threshold. It is where sameness tips into difference, where the return of the wave, the line, the breath becomes the ground of transformation. In motherhood, in womanhood, in art, in the rhythm of the tide outside the museum, repetition is both memory and possibility. And so I return, guided and guided, like a blue coat in the rain. Not to remain, but to transform and to rise.

P.S. Figs are my favourite, especially combined with tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil. And a glass of red wine, of course. That repetition never gets boring either.

Currently on view (2025):
Tania Kovats - Oceanic
(20 June 2025 – 4 January 2026) Sculptures and drawings exploring the sea, water, and ecology.

Ryan Gander X Edgar Degas - Pas de Deux (20 June 2025 – 4 January 2026) A dialogue between Gander’s reinterpretations and Degas’s iconic dancer. Upcoming in 2026:

Magali Reus (16 January – 3 May 2026). Sculptures inspired by everyday objects, craftsmanship, and coastal landscapes. Alberto Giacometti X Rui Chafes (from 25 June 2026 onwards) A cross-generational dialogue between Giacometti’s modernist forms and Rui Chafes’s contemporary perspectives.



Hypha Studios

Rethinking Artistic Spaces

Camilla Cole, the founder and CEO of Hypha Studios and Hypha Curates, organisations that provide free studios and exhibition spaces for artists, and develop new models for ethical, accessible art sales, talks to ARK.



Jazz Grant, Tomorrow in a Fossil, 2025, Paper printed collage, 42 x 29 cm

A R K

The art ecosystem in London operates as a dynamic chain connecting creation, exhibition, and commerce. It begins in artist studios - shared, subsidised, or independent spaces such as those run by Acme, SPACE, or Bow Arts - where artists produce work and develop their practice. From there, many seek exposure through open studios, artist-run spaces, and small non-profit galleries that act as stepping stones to commercial representation. London's gallery scene ranges from experimental collectives in Hackney or Deptford to global blue-chip galleries in Mayfair, forming a layered system that both nurtures emerging talent and sustains established careers. Galleries play a central role by curating exhibitions, building artist reputations, and facilitating sales to collectors and institutions. The final stage of the ecosystem involves art fairs, online platforms, and auction houses that connect works to buyers locally and internationally. While London remains a global art hub, the ecosystem is shaped by challenges such as rising rents, affordability pressures, and the need for digital adaptability. It is particularly challenging environment for emerging artists to navigate, but there are dynamic projects such as Hypha who are trying to innovate and provide "safe spaces" for grassroots practices.

"The art world is in a period of transition" - says Camilla Cole as we discuss the changing ecosystem of the arts scene. Across the globe artists, curators, and galleries are all feeling the pressure of rising costs, shrinking funding, and the uncertainty of a cultural landscape that is still recalibrating after years of global disruption. "This is why now it is vital to develop new approaches that can sit alongside the traditional systems of support that so often fail fledgling artists."

"When I founded Hypha Studios, my goal was not to replace existing institutions or galleries, but to fill a gap - to offer artists what is often the hardest to find, and the most expensive thing to pay for - space," explains Camilla. Rising rent prices and a decline in public financial support have seen even the most dedicated practitioners struggle to find and keep a studio for their work. As a direct response to this crisis, Hypha Studios began partnering with landlords who have empty commercial spaces and matching them with artists who live nearby, transforming unused properties into temporary, free studios and exhibition venues. This mutual exchange enables artists to access professional environments in which they can create and showcase their work, while landlords and local communities gain from temporarily filling spaces that would otherwise be left vacant.

Hypha offers emerging artists, many of them from the RCA, an alternative to the often exclusive gallery system, which also faces the pressures of economic strain. In over four years Hypha put on a total of 140 exhibitions across the UK, featuring over 2000 artists over 70 different locations. Camilla believes that her own background in curation informed her the approach to Hypha: initially starting out at Goldsmiths doing an MA, Camilla found herself yearning for a more hands-on and collaborative approach to curation, eventually abandoning her studies

and using the money she had saved up to start Hypha Studios instead.

A parallel project, Hypha Curates, focuses on sales and creating a unique online market. The profits directly fund Hypha's studio projects. There are no exclusivity clauses or storage costs for artists, which traditionally they had to embrace. Camilla feels Hypha Curates provides an entry point for collectors who might not yet feel ready to engage with the conventional market, while offering artists another avenue for visibility and income.

The UK's art world has always thrived on diversity of practice, of approach, of perspective. Hypha is simply the latest additions to that ecosystem. At a time of widespread funding cuts and uncertainty in the commercial art world.

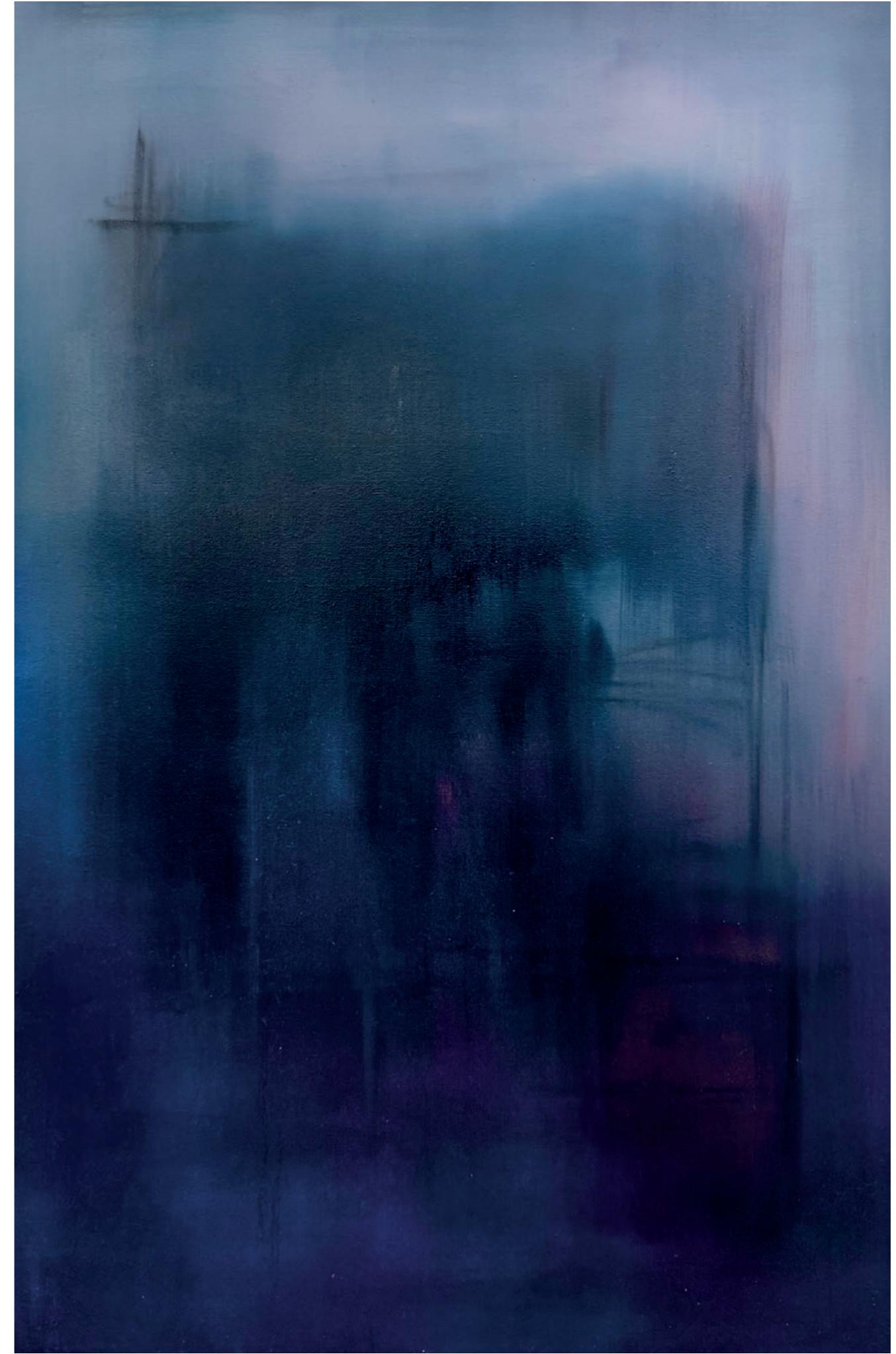
"Ultimately, our aim is to create pathways, not be gatekeepers. In times of constraint, these small but purposeful models of generosity and collaboration may be exactly what we need to keep the cultural landscape alive and evolving." - CC

A R K



Angus White, You Never Change, 2025, Synthetic polymer paint, charcoal on canvas, 210 x 250 cm

A R K



Giorgia De Stefano, Don't You Think?, 2025, Oil and soft pastel on canvas, 120 x 90 cm

A R K

Emily Stevens

Showing up for Your Practice

Emily Stevens is a London-born painter who lives on the south coast UK. She received a BA in English Literature with Spanish from the University of Sussex and an MA in Painting from the RCA (2022).

I keep a studio journal. I have been doing so religiously for about 6 years. I have 22 of them, at last count, lined up scruffily in bookshelves at home and studio. They are multiple colours but all the same size and make. I am fastidious about the brand, almost superstitious. I don't know exactly why I'm so pernickety about them being the same type each time, because all I ever write in them is the same thing:

Tuesday, "If you're not 'moving' painting on then is there a point?"

Thursday 5pm, "OK: the weird paintings are back, they're coming out. Can't stop them (I have tried before). WHY? I've tried to do more 'considered' paintings, ones that I think make sense, ones that don't expose me so much (to ridicule?). WTF is wrong with me. I like my weird paintings. And other people seem to like them too. I don't know why I censor myself sometimes, before I've even created the work. Which is what I do: I have an idea; one that really lights me up, except I go OH NO can't do that, that's too weird. Yet there are times when those weird ideas just won't leave me alone, so I paint them. And I feel better. It's like feeling a bit ill, and then feeling well again. That's how I feel now."

Saturday, "This one: it's been a process of putting things in, taking them out, putting them back in again..."

Monday, "Not sure if I still love this one. It looks like a pink blamange. blacmange? How the hell do you spell blancmange? Like that."

Thursday, "I am always trying to push painting, at the very least on a personal level. Chasing these things that can seem elusive, even if I've achieved them before. But that achievement can feel like an accident, and how to

reproduce it feels like the hardest thing ever."

3pm Friday, "I love this painting! I love it when this happens - something unexpected and sweet."

Saturday, 'today I felt v low in studio, worrying about money, not being any good, painting shit and a waste of time.'

Tuesday, "artist as a way of being. I don't even question it anymore."

Friday 1.35pm, "doubting commitment to big paintings. Scared? Unsure. But you never know if the colours will work until they're ON THE PAINTING. ON THE PAINTING is the only definitive way to tell. It's not a science; there are no repeatable events in painting, ever. Wednesday, "I'm so Vain. All these paintings are about me. I don't even know who I'm making these paintings for anymore. I just know I'm making them and it feels like a compulsion. To be honest, I reckon making them for someone is probably not the way to go about it, if I want to make art / be an artist. Making them for someone is like making commissions. I don't want to do that. But I used to say I was making them for myself - this does not feel right, right now. I'm not making them for anyone or any reason. I'm just making."

Tuesday, "The line drawings I do are enough. I really need to embrace this. Keep going: keep making this work that feels weird and wrong, because that's what lights me up. KEEP GOING. Keep going."

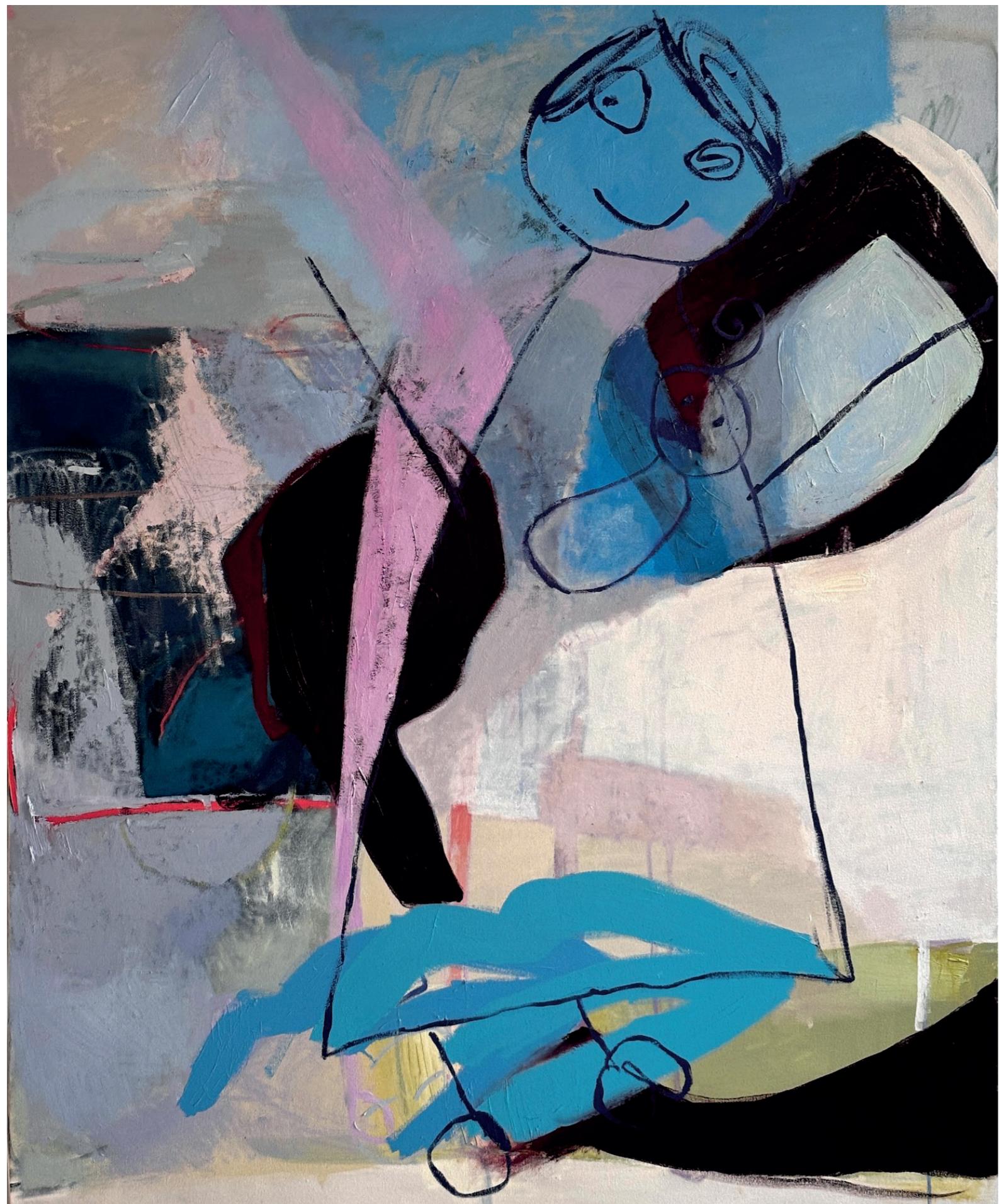
As a society we seem to be obsessed with never-ending growth, this is capitalism after all. Yet the action of always growing is flawed. Same with the work. The re-use of



Emily Stevens, Devotion, 2025, Oil on Canvas,
120cm x 150 cm

works enables growth. Art is made of other art. Art is made of 'failed' art. Art is made of life.

Art is not made from thin air, nor from a void. Art is generative and self-generative. Art is compulsion. Art is repetition. This is what it means to keep showing up for your practice.



Emily Stevens, Deranged Mumma Falls in Love for the Second Time, 2025, Oil on canvas, 130cm x 150 cm

A R K



Emily Stevens, Does It Break Ur Heart When I Cry, 2024, Oil on canvas, 100cm x 120 cm

A R K

Alexandra Steinacker-Clark

All About Art Podcast

Alexandra Steinacker-Clark is an American-Austrian art historian, curator, writer, and podcaster based in London. She is best known as the founder and host of All About Art, a podcast dedicated to exploring diverse careers in the arts and demystifying the inner workings of the cultural sector. Alexandra writes, curates, and lectures on contemporary art and professional development, and co-directs NXT GEN, a programme supporting early-career arts professionals.

ARK: Do you ever feel like the art world is just one big loop - openings, fairs, repeat? What keeps it from feeling like déjà vu?

AS-C: The art! When I am always discovering new artists, reading new research, and learning about new things, it keeps these events from feeling repetitive. That is the joy of working in this sector. The people also make it what it is. In the arts, it's quite typical to walk the line between personal and professional, but that's something I enjoy. I get to work with friends, and be inspired by them every day! It's rewarding to celebrate their wins, and have them with me when I celebrate mine. They inspire me to be the best I can be, we always give each other ideas and motivation.

ARK: When does repetition become ritual for you, and when does it just become noise?

AS-C: Repetition becomes ritual when it brings peace of mind, freeing up mental load. It becomes noise when it's the opposite - repetition for repetition's sake, with nothing to build on. I also feel that repetition and planning go hand in hand, and can create healthy habits when done intentionally.

“Repetition becomes ritual when it brings peace of mind, freeing up mental load. It becomes noise when it's the opposite - repetition for repetition's sake, with nothing to build on.”

ARK: In your podcast, you ask a lot of people the same questions. Do their answers ever start blending together, or does each repetition reveal something new?

AS-C: Each repetition reveals something or else I wouldn't continue asking the questions - I would have had the sense to pivot my interviewing. What is special about the questions that I do repeat, such as hearing about people's individual career paths, is that new experiences are shared, new insights that both my guests and I can build upon for our own approaches to our lives and jobs.

ARK: The art market loves trends - same names, same hype cycles. Do you find it comforting or exhausting?

AS-C: Trends - in art, in fashion, on social media - I find it all quite exhausting, especially when they move so quickly in this day and age.

ARK: What's one art-world habit you wish we'd all stop repeating?

AS-C: Diminishing governmental financial support and low pay for arts workers. It feels like focusing on accessibility

and engagement for people wanting to work in the sector is important here - it all begins with education and politics, which is a huge challenge. Over the past decade in the UK, more than half of arts funding has been cut and now fewer than eight state schools in England offer History of Art at A-level. Funding gets cut, school curricula cease to include the arts, and people are not only unaware of careers in the arts but they are also less inclined to engage with it in their free time. It leads to less governmental funding, but also less commercial viability. That habit - which extends from the arts to society in general - I wish would stop repeating.

ARK: What projects are you mostly excited about?

AS-C: My book Working in Art. It's available for pre-order from November 19th but is coming out in April 2026 - I can't wait to hold a physical copy in my hands and to see what people think about it! One of the biggest misconceptions about the art industry is that unless you already have wealth and contacts, you have no chance of breaking into this apparently exclusive world of the arts. Through the All About Art podcast and NXT GEN, a membership community I run for emerging arts professionals, I began pushing back against this idea. As a young person, I loved art history but wasn't sure about careers beyond being an artist, gallerist, or museum worker. I questioned what those roles really entailed - what does a curator do daily? What about the behind-the-scenes work that makes exhibitions possible? What about the business side? I worked in the commercial art world for a few years, at auction houses and big galleries, which were such amazing experiences to gain - but I still had so many questions.

AS-C: Working in Art offers answers to all of those questions, featuring real people in real art jobs sharing their journeys - the highs, the lows, and everything in between. My aim was to create an invaluable resource for understanding the industry and provide a resource for people who want to discover what it's like to work in it.

ARK: What's something you never get tired of repeating?

AS-C: That engaging with art increases empathy, improves mental health, encourages community building, and can teach us more about ourselves and each other than our society tends to appreciate.

ARK: What is the best place for coffee for artists in London?

AS-C: Reference Point on the Strand. There is a library, comfortable couches and tables for seating, funky interior design, and the coffee is delicious and affordable. I find it's great if you want to go see shows in Mayfair and Soho, as it's not a far walk from places like Somerset House or the National Gallery



AnnLi Tico, *What We Carry*, 2023–2024, Clothing tags, recycled textiles, and found objects (detail)

The Collector's Atelier Charlotte Langridge

“Collecting is repetition. A return to what draws the eye, the hand, the desire to live with an image.”

Yet it is never the same. Each artwork and acquisition is a variation, a difference carried forward. At The Collector's Atelier, we explore this rhythm: the repeated act of looking, learning, and choosing. For new collectors, the first purchase echoes through the second and the third, building

an identity not through singularity but through a series of refrains. For seasoned collectors, repetition becomes dialogue between works, between histories, between the self and the art that reflects it. In this way, collecting is less about accumulation and more about resonance. A repetition that makes difference visible. A cycle where each return produces something new: a perspective shifted, a connection revealed, a story reframed. The Collector's Atelier exists in this space between repetition and renewal where art is made available to all, not as static possession but as a living process of encounter and re-encounter.

Indrė Šerpytytė Being Artist and Collector

I'm constantly looking at art from two angles. In the studio, I'm focused on making sense of difficult histories. As a collector, I'm drawn to work that feels honest, grounded, and made with intention. The two sides feed each other - what I live with at home eventually influences what I make, and vice versa. That is what being an artist and a collector means to me.

When I collect, I'm pulled toward pieces where I can feel the artist really meant it - where the material choices feel necessary, not decorative. I like work that takes a risk, or that's doing something quietly powerful. Those instincts are the same ones that guide my own practice.



Is life a juggle? Completely. I don't pretend it's balanced - I just try to be present with whatever needs me at the moment: my daughter, my work, myself. Everything else waits its turn.

The RCA left a few things that really stuck with me: the intensity of crits, learning from the technicians, and thinking in series rather than one-off pieces. But more than anything, I remember the shift when I realised art isn't just about what something looks like - it's about what it can do in the world. That clicked for me there.

Repetition shows up in my work because it helps me sit with difficult subjects. Sometimes it's about trying to understand something, sometimes it's a way to hold onto memory, and sometimes it feels like a kind of repair. It becomes rhythm when the repetition starts to create its own movement; it becomes ritual when the making itself carries meaning.

There are definitely conversations from the RCA I still think about - especially around how to deal with violent or traumatic histories without turning them into spectacle. That question never really leaves.

As for the pressure to reinvent all the time - I don't feel it. Some ideas need you to come back to them again and again. Returning isn't repeating; it's deepening.

The questions that keep coming back for me are pretty simple: How do images shape memory? How do you honour a story without exploiting it? How do you stay responsible to the places and people you come from?

If I were writing to my younger RCA self, I'd probably say: don't rush, trust your instincts, keep your studio a place you actually want to be, and say no more often. Read more, walk more, and call home.

You're doing fine - keep going.

Sophie Nowakowska

You Dare To Call It Success

You Dare to Call It Success?

I, someone at the bottom - I was drinking champagne at art auctions and eating homemade sandwiches at the best art school in the world because I couldn't afford the ones from the café.

I was meeting gallery owners and walking two hours across London because I didn't want to waste money on public transport.

I was going as a plus-one to fancy art dinners and calculating which fruit would be the cheapest for my porridge.

I was not charging for my work because I couldn't say no to any opportunity.

I was getting no spaces to exhibit because I didn't know anyone.

I was earning exposure by doing things that didn't align with my values because I couldn't afford not to.

I was dreaming about being seen, and realising visibility was the most expensive thing of all.

You, people at the top

- How would you feel being one of hundreds of students in a single art degree?

How would you feel being one of thousands at your art school?

How would you feel being one of tens of thousands of students graduating from London's art schools every year?

How would you feel being one of hundreds of thousands of artists in the first three years of their careers in London?

How would you feel being one of tens of thousands of artists whose work no one ever saw?

How would you feel being one of thousands of those who manage to participate in one exhibition a year?

How would you feel being one of hundreds who gave up making art to afford life?

You, people at the top

- How would you survive if you had to be your own salesperson, accountant, social media manager, editor, and photographer?

How would you survive if you were an introvert at gallery openings and still no one noticed you?

How would you survive if you rarely had the chance to talk about your work?

How would you survive if no gallery ever picked you up,

and you kept drowning in unsold work?

How would you survive if there were no opportunities to exhibit?

How would you survive if your studio rent was higher than your income from two jobs unrelated to art?

How would you survive if there were no heating and you had to make art while wearing gloves?

You, people at the top

- How can you talk about creating opportunities when tutors and technicians don't have time for every student?

How can you talk about empowering voices while censoring students' work at degree shows when they speak out?

How can you talk about supporting artists while shortening degrees and raising fees?

How can you talk about inclusivity when you accept more students every year and don't have studios for all of them?

How can you talk about dialogue when you become silent the moment students start asking questions?

How can you talk about access when what you actually mean is overproduction?

How can you talk about care when artists graduate without knowing how to survive in the world you built?

I, someone at the bottom

- I am drinking champagne at art auctions and skipping lunch because I don't have time for it.

I am meeting gallery owners and thinking that I actually can't afford that coffee.

I am taking a plus-one to fancy art dinners and receiving emails from Master's graduates of the best art school in the world, asking if I know anyone who could hire them as a cleaner.

I am charging for my mentoring sessions, and I know I couldn't afford them myself.

I am getting spaces to exhibit for free, yet I can't afford to leave the room I rent because I don't have the money for the next deposit.

I am earning money by sometimes doing things that don't align with my values because I can't afford not to.

I am visible now, knowing it's still the most expensive thing of all. And still, you, people at the top - you dare to call it success.



Nadia Da Silva, Mary's Archetype, 2024, Acrylic paint, oil paint and oil pastel on canvas, 76.2 x 101.6 cm



REFLECTIONS

Reflections



Viviana Almas, *Prelude to Tranquility*, 2023, 76 x 56cm

Amanda Marie Platek is completing her PhD at the University of Copenhagen's Søren Kierkegaard Research Center. She focuses on the intersection of anxiety, freedom, and choice in Kierkegaard's corpus. Amanda received her M.A. from Columbia University, and her B.A. from Georgetown University.

She sits on the Circle of Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, supporting openings of solo exhibitions of artists such as Olafur Eliasson, Anish Kapoor, Anselm Kiefer and Tracey Emin.

Amanda Marie Platek Kierkegaard's Repetition in Contemporary Art

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne ceaselessly to the past, writes F. Scott Fitzgerald to conclude *The Great Gatsby*. Yet the question remains: Against our own judgement or volition, are we compelled – or even, doomed – to repeat that which has already been?

Is repetition a compulsion? (Freud)
A destructive tether? (Dostoevsky)
A mundane cycle of entrapment? (Kafka)

'Repetition' is colloquially associated with involuntary recurrence, in which one is thrust back into habits she neither chooses nor controls. To repeat is to be caught, cyclically and passively. It assumes a condition in which life unfolds without autonomous will, subjugated to patterns. But what if Nietzsche's demon were to whisper to you: "This life as you now live, you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence." [1]

Nietzsche asks, would this be a torture, or a pleasure? Could you say yes to your life, so completely, that you would propel yourself into this eternal recurrence?

Within existential philosophy, repetition serves as a catalytic tool on the penultimate journey toward authentic selfhood. Repetition is willed, not forced, and is the standing invitation for one to embrace his individual incarnation. Central to Søren Kierkegaard's corpus of philosophy, repetition is the actionable medium through which a life is forged. To become a self is a task; Made,

not begotten, one must will to become himself alongside the eternal other (God, or the power that posits one into being). Existential repetition thus involves revisiting the past as possibility, whilst intentionally making choices aligned with the self under the conditions of freedom and uncertainty. It is the deliberate work of re-appropriating one's existence so that the self is actively willed, again, and again, and again. But the complexity is, as humans, we try to repel that which we are imperviously compelled to repeat (bad habits, mundane life-tendencies, destructive drives) whilst simultaneously finding it challenging to will the repetition of the difficult-yet-necessary. Perhaps this even gives our ethical direction too much weight; How can one delineate between that which he must resist repeating, and that which he must ensure repeating?

To Kierkegaard, you meet yourself at the *Øjeblikket* (the instant), the punctum at which time and eternity intersect, as a temporal choice can have eternal ramifications. To be confronted with the indeterminacy of the future, yet to still make intentional choices amidst the backdrop of the unknown, is to exercise autonomous freedom: This is the leap of faith. To take one leap of faith would be difficult, but perhaps possible. What is complex about individual selfhood to Kierkegaard is that it is not one leap of faith, but the repetition of faithful choice which constitutes the path to selfhood. Thus, authentic selfhood for Kierkegaard demands an ongoing existential struggle, in which one chooses faith through individuation, consistently over a lifetime. To fail to become a self is not the result of gravitating toward vice or moral irreprehensibility, as one may presume. To Kierkegaard: "The greatest hazard of all, losing the self, can occur very quietly in the world, as if it were nothing at all." [2] The constant negation of exercising one's selfhood through never choosing or through outsourcing to societal normatives - a negative, recursive form of repetition - has the grave outcome Kierkegaard calls despair.

If the reader takes seriously the gravity of becoming a self - or failing to do so - then we may ask: How can one, practically, become a self through repetitive, autonomous action?

To Nietzsche, to become an *übermensch* is to answer the question: Can you transform your life into something meaningful, a work of art in its own right, so that you would choose it, endlessly?

Authentic art, to Walter Benjamin, is that which resists replication without agency, and has aura. An authentic piece of art exists as a singular object. Agentic repetition serves as the medium of an authentic artist, in that the conscious choice to repeat form, function, process, or theme, gives way to a vocational calling of said artist. An individual work can be authentic in its singularity, but an artist's authenticity is forged through repetition. When I visited Anselm Kiefer's compound in Barjac in the late winter of 2024, I was struck by the gravity of a cohesive life work, repetition in action. Earthen excavations form a tunnel-system which painstakingly connects over eighty

buildings, housing multimedia works grappling with themes of destruction, religion, time, myth, memory, and the burden of history. Each piece can stand alone, possessing aura and gravity inherent in the materiality, size, and subject. But together, the pieces create a true *Gesamtkunstwerk*, with the vision of an artist over decades realized as a whole. The corpus becomes vocational, and gives new life to Kiefer just as Kiefer gave life to each work. From one, many. From many, one.

This summarizes existential repetition: It is visible to the outside world only in its totality, but to the individual, it must be chosen, day after day. Fragmented pieces begin to resemble a cohesive whole through active, repetitive, consistent choice. But to repeat oneself is also an imperfection: An individual is both a changing entity and a consistent entity. The individual is dialectical, or famously per Kierkegaard: "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself." [3]

Antony Gormley has worked predominantly with the same subject over a lifetime: His physical, human form. In a talk at Frieze Masters 2025, he explained the painstaking process of making his physical casts in his early works, and how now, these are largely automated by 3D scans. His form is soldered in iron, steel, lead. His work represents the instantaneous and the eternal. A humanistic *Theseus' Ship*, each piece, each cast, is of the same individual (Gormley) and simultaneously, a fleeting, momentary individual (Gormley) who can never occur again. It is the

Walt Whitman put it:

What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer.

That you are here - that life exists and identity, that the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

[1] Nietzsche, Freidrich. *Ecce Homo*. 1908.

[2] Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Sickness Unto Death*. 1849.

[3] Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Sickness Unto Death*. 1849.



liminal injunction between the physical self and the denial of it. The individual, replicated, over a life.

To Nietzsche, eternal recurrence is not the curse of the same returning, but the demand that one embrace his life in its totality, all of the joys and flaws present. Herein lies the complex nuance of the eternal recurrence: One must say yes, as emphatically, to every sadness in one's life, as much as one says yes to every joy in one's life.

Yayoi Kusama's life work presents repetition at its most paradoxical edge: At once, compulsive and inescapable, and simultaneously, chosen and vocational. Her infinity rooms are borne out of fantasy, illusion, obsession, and self-obliteration. Living with mental illness marked by recurring hallucinations and periods of institutionalization, Kusama has described art not as an escape from her condition, but as a means of surviving within it. She transforms psychological compulsion into a deliberate practice, dwelling within her life and mind, in an act of defiant repetition. Kusama radicalizes Nietzsche's demand to deliberately stay within one's life, and transform it into art through saying yes in extremis. To make one's life into a work of art is readily observable in physical art, but is not limited to this medium; All vocations have the potentiality to catalyze authentic selfhood. To Kierkegaard, becoming a self is extraordinary in its ordinariness, and ordinary in its extraordinariness. To make one's life into art is the result of actionable freedom, faith, and selfhood. There is an incompleteness in becoming a self, as it is the concurrent movement toward oneself, but also simultaneously always reproaching a new iteration of said self. The difference between negative and positive repetition, then, is the difference between being absorbed by life and assuming responsibility for it. Negative repetition, as despair, binds the self to the deferral of choice; positive repetition opens the self to what it may become. One is passive recurrence, the other is passionate renewal.

Freedom is actualized, not in escaping repetition, but in transforming it. To will oneself into being is the highest task. To accept oneself and will it again, is devotional. To become an artist is to become oneself, and to become oneself is to become an artist. Art provides an observable medium and mediation for the viewer to question their own ability to become a self, in the temporal and eternal, and to contribute their art (no matter what it may be) to the world.



Viviana Almas, Surface Tension, 2024, 76 x 56cm

Chengxi Taylor

Feminine Approach to AI

ARK: The real question isn't whether machines can create, but whether humans can continue to infuse meaning into creation. In a world where AI now generates art, language, and even emotion, what does meaning look like to you? And where do you think it still belongs uniquely to humans?

CT: I've always believed that meaning arises from constraints. It's the paradox of being human: what makes us seem "inferior" to machines is exactly what makes us unique. A machine doesn't die; it doesn't long, fear, or hope. But we do. Because our lives are finite, we're desperate to give them meaning. Every action carries a trace of that awareness: the urge to leave a mark before time erases us. That's why I find the human condition so beautiful and absurd at once. We cry, we shout, we love, knowing it all disappears. A human-created artwork moves us not because it's perfect, but because it bears the friction of a life that has felt joy and pain. Machines can simulate emotion, but they don't suffer the weight of being. Meaning belongs to that tension, to the fragile consciousness that knows it will end, yet still chooses to create.

"The paradox of being human: what makes us seem "inferior" to machines is exactly what makes us unique. Machine doesn't die. It doesn't long, fear, or hope. But we do."

ARK: A Feminine Philosophy of Innovation. You describe your initiative seen as a reflecting a "feminine approach to innovation" - one defined not by gender, but by empathy, intuition, and reflection. How might that philosophy challenge the dominant logic of Silicon Valley, and what could it teach us about designing more conscious technologies?

CT: Silicon Valley has long defined innovation through speed and scale. When I went there to raise funding, I saw the abundance of resources, but something was missing. I eventually secured investment there, yet chose to build my company in the UK, where, surrounded by Europe's long

cultural history, ambition feels different. To me, ambition isn't just about conquering markets; it's about being brave enough to challenge the definition of success itself.

As co-founder and president of an AI company, I'm not just developing technology; I'm building a new mindset. I call it a feminine approach to AI, one that honours empathy, intuition, and nuance. This isn't romanticism; it's a necessity for a solid technological foundation. Intuition isn't irrational; it's rapid pattern recognition, the ability to connect seemingly irrelevant dots at a speed beyond our conscious comprehension. It's science, it's us, it's the intelligence of the not-yet-understood subconscious. And this, I believe, is where the next intelligence of AI will emerge. When we design from that place, we're painting a more ambitious future, one where technology honours emotion and context, and evolves with us rather than apart from us. A future that makes humans stronger, more whole. That's also why I felt an urgency to create the club alongside my tech company. It's a space to ask the questions that may not have immediate answers but are vital to ask. By bringing together thoughtful women, painters, filmmakers, engineers, writers, investors, we're weaving a tapestry of perspectives and intuition. Together, we're shaping a future where technology doesn't just serve humanity, but reflects it, where it becomes, in its truest sense, more like us.

ARK: Technology as a Language of Translation. You've written that both art and technology are acts of translation - turning invisible thought into visible form. Do you see AI as expanding our expressive vocabulary, or does it risk flattening human originality into patterns it can recognize and reproduce?

CT: I like to think of AI as another form of consciousness. When you look beyond the noise and deep into its architecture, there's something hauntingly familiar: the rhythm of a mind learning to think. AI is, in a way, a brain in digital form. Our relationship with it reminds me of raising a child. Each model we train is an act of guidance and reflection. As we teach the machine, we uncover the hidden layers of our own cognition: how we reason, dream, and translate the invisible into form. Most people see AI as an end point, a final product that will either help or destroy humanity. But I see it as a process, a mirror. "To create AI is, in itself, an act of expression. It reveals



Photography by Julija Hafizova



our longing to understand consciousness, our fear of limits, and our faith that something beyond us might understand us back. Perhaps it's unsettling to imagine that we may no longer be the only form of intelligent life." But maybe that's the beauty of it. For so long, we've felt alone in the universe. And now, through AI, we might be reminded that consciousness, in all its strangeness and fragility, was never meant to be solitary.

ARK: How do you think we can introduce slowness, reflection, and even silence into the way we build and interact with intelligent systems?

CT: Slowness isn't about pace; it's about intentionality. I've never liked the performance of "busyness." Especially in startup culture, there's this myth that great entrepreneurs are always in motion. But sometimes, doing nothing is the most radical act of creation.

Most of my breakthroughs came not when I was doing more, but when I paused. Those silent moments, when I find myself speechless and uncertain, are usually the ones where something truly shifts. To bring slowness into technology is to bring back meaning. Reflection isn't inefficiency; it's intelligence. It's how we ensure that what we build doesn't just move fast but moves right.

ARK: You've described the club as a space for "collective reflection" rather than networking. As AI becomes part of our shared intelligence, what do you imagine true collaboration between humans and machines might look like creatively or even spiritually?

"I am building a new mindset. I call it a Feminine approach to AI, one that honours empathy, intuition, and nuance."

CT: First of all, I would ask: why is it even possible to speak of collaboration between humans and machines? I don't see things in forms. Why do we instinctively protect "humanity" more than we protect a machine? Perhaps simply because we are more familiar with the human shape. It's a cognitive bias. But if we look beyond appearances, what I find truly beautiful is consciousness itself. That is the space both human and machine can share. When we touch that level, beyond form, beyond fear, collaboration becomes not only possible but profound. It allows us to move past the boundaries of being human and reach toward the essence of consciousness. In many ways, we are already doing this. Think of musicians using synthesizers or digital interfaces. At first, these tools were resisted as "unnatural," but they ultimately expanded what the human voice could express. Every new technology, from the piano to the algorithm, has been an extension of our senses, a translation device for emotion. So when I imagine true collaboration between humans and machines, I don't see domination or imitation, I see resonance. That, to me, is the future of collective reflection, where we stop defending our form, and start exploring our shared soul.

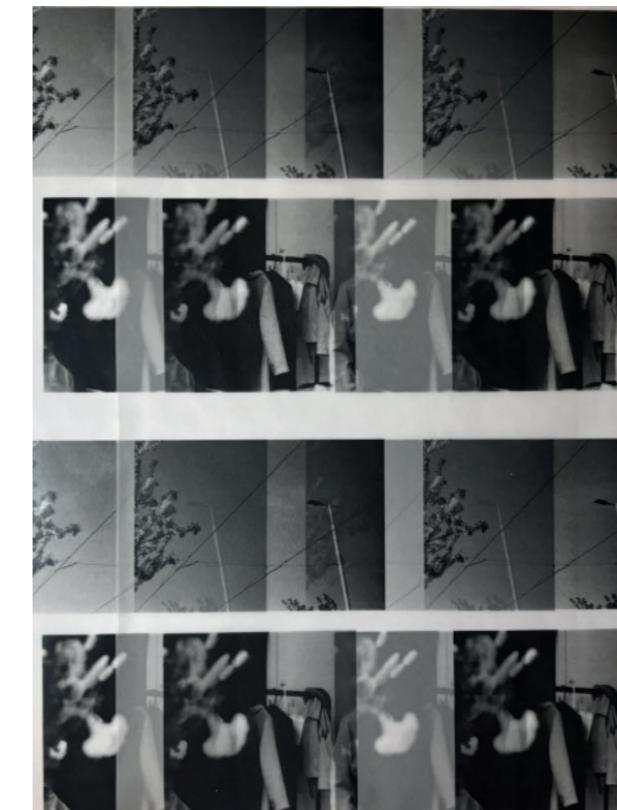




India Mullen

Repetition in Daily Routines

India Mullen is a multidisciplinary artist from Ireland. She has spent the past decade working in Theatre and Film, primarily as an actor notably, known for her role in *Normal People*. In recent years, Mullen has ventured into filmmaking and visual art. Her photography work has appeared in publications such as *Wonderland*, *W Magazine* and *NME*. Mullen recently showed work at *Have A Butchers Gallery* in London, as part of the exhibition *Strange Quarks*, curated by Allegra Venturi with artist and designer Johannah Lordan.



I'm interested in the idea of repetition across dimensions and how we interact with time and space. Particularly how we interact with our own immediate experience of time and space - in the repetitions of our daily routines, and the rhythms we become fixated with. Our senses and the rhythms we become fixated with. Like food or sleep or sex. How important it all feels to us, and yet, how cyclical it is, and infinitely continuous. All things adjacently taking place at the same time, in other dimensions maybe, and repeating again in every life.

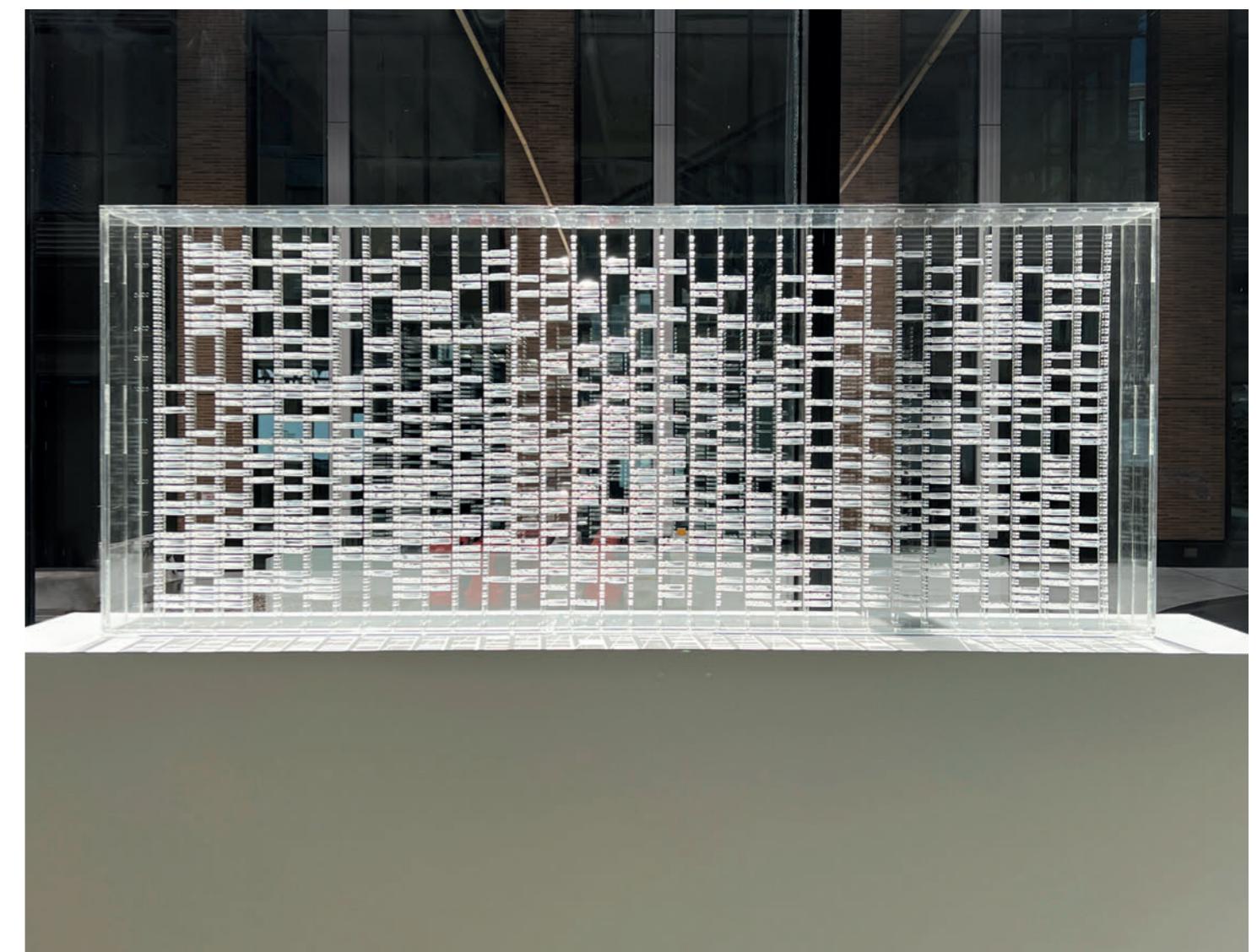
India Mullen, Consumed, 2025, Photographic print on vellum paper

India Mullen, D, 2025, Photographic print on vellum paper

Ani Liu

Repetition as Meditation on Motherhood

The Carrafiell Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts, Ani Liu is an internationally exhibiting research-based artist working at the intersection of art and science. Her work examines the reciprocal relationships between science, technology and their influence on human subjectivity, culture, and identity. Reoccurring themes in her work include gender politics, biopolitics, labor, simulation and sexuality. Ani's work has been exhibited internationally, at the Venice Biennale (Architecture Biennale 2021), Ars Electronica, the Queens Museum Biennial, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Asian Art Museum, MIT Museum, MIT Media Lab, Mana Contemporary, Harvard University, and Shenzhen Design Society.



Repetition can be an act of meditation. A lot of labor, both in and out of my studio, requires repetition. One of my sculptures, *Untitled (Labor of Love)* records every feeding session and diaper change for the first 30 days of my child's life. The work of care was both exhausting and entrancing in those tender new days; I was full of the anxiety and wonder of a new mom doing everything for the first time. As the hours and days went by, with each passing moment at the breast or at the diaper table we grew into a routine; the baby and I and the family fell into a rhythm of verbal and non verbal communication. Exhausted as I was, I kept this record as a diary of sorts. Two and a half years later, I unearthed this diary in my studio and set about making the sculpture. In the sculpture, every 30 minutes of time is marked with a glass vial. To show the passage of time during a feeding session, the glass vial is filled with milk. To show the passage of time while cleaning feces and urine off a body, the vial is filled with diaper fragments. There are 30 columns in the sculpture, to mark the first 30 days of life, and 48 vials in each column to show the 24 hours of a day in half hour increments. To make the sculpture is to repetitively insert milk and diaper fragments into vials, to lovingly place 1440 individual vials into a frame arranged as a chart to mark the loving labor of raising a child. As I made this work I relived, in small ways, that first month. My hands grew sore and my back ached but there was also a quiet clarity and comfort to the labor. My body and breath become synced. In a world of endless scrolling and seemingly endless bad news, it is a privilege to sit away from the screen, engaged in repetitive acts of care of my choosing.

Ani Liu, *Untitled (Labor of Love)*, 2022 Mixed media data portrait (breastmilk, diaper hydrogel, diaper cotton, glass, acrylic), 152.4 x 61 x 12.7 cm

Ani Liu, *A Search for Ghosts in the Meat Machine*, 2018-2020 Mixed media installation (set of 9)



Francesco Urbano Ragazzi

The Aesthetics of Capitalism

Francesco Urbano Ragazzi is a curatorial duo composed of Francesco Ragazzi (International Ph.D. in Philosophy of Art, adjunct professor of Aesthetics) and Francesco Urbano (Ph.D. in Film & Media Studies). They have developed an extensive range of new production strategies and exhibition formats working with pioneers such as Jonas Mekas, Kenneth Goldsmith, Jennifer West, Cheryl Donegan, Haroon Mirza, Pauline Curnier Jardin, Tsai Ming Liang and others.

Mass tourism works by channeling the enormous flow of interests and desires into a series of predetermined routes. What is perceived as “unmissable” is established *a priori*. By looking at what others have already seen, “getting lost” is virtually impossible. Prejudice is a primary instinct and there is nothing wrong with that. Flaneurs are no better than tourists. Nor are explorers, artists or intellectuals. There is no distinction between masses and the elite. To explore the notion we decided to turned to the oldest contemporary art event, the Venice Biennale, in order to find new ways of seeing and showing.

In the fall of 2016 we met with poet Kenneth Goldsmith. Together we started planning what would be our comeback to Venice after two projects we curated: The Internet Pavilion by Miltos Manetas in 2013 and The Internet Saga by Jonas Mekas in 2015. We lacked almost everything: the venue, the occasion, the budget. All we knew was that we wanted to dedicate a monument to the written word, the screen and the page. We were ready to materialize Kenneth Goldsmith’s grand new monument to “the genius of uncreative writing”.

Kenneth immediately thought of Hillary Clinton’s emails. There were 30,000 of them with attachments from her time as the Secretary of State. 50,747 pages of documents

produced between June 30, 2010 and August 12, 2014, including 7,570 messages sent by the senator. The emails were made available in the form of thousands of PDF files by the US State Department as a result of a Freedom of Information Act request and were made searchable in an online archive by WikiLeaks starting March 16, 2016.

Kenneth had collected all those PDFs one by one with the desire to print them. He believed that together they were the greatest poem of our time. Lists of names and surnames, of re:, fwd, to, cc, ccn, pls, FYI, among which takes shape the concise style of those who, like and more than us, have to give answers every day by rhythmically tapping their fingers on their devices.

That mass of words was the work of someone who had searched for meaning among a myriad of information, as personal agendas met those of international diplomacy, and real life burst into bureaucracy. It was the work of Hillary Clinton in the crucial years of her political activity as well as the work of all her collaborators, the servers, machines and humans that had processed the data, and the others that had meticulously concealed all the sensitive information.

Kenneth Goldsmith, HILLARY: The Hillary Clinton Emails, 2019
Installation view at Despar Teatro Italia, Venice Biennale
(58th). Photo: © Giorgio De Vecchi / Gerda Studio (each)
(pages 69-71)



The work by Kenneth Goldsmith was a “literary readymade” that brought together an innumerable series of ghostwriters: from the rooms of the White House to those of the US State Department, to the desks of WikiLeaks. The ghosts of those emails had already been evoked several times over the years, influencing Hillary Clinton’s run in the presidential election and generating the controversy that is known as “emailgate”. Kenneth’s idea was then to show that corpus of epistolary texts in printed form, in their human greatness and misery. The exhibition would have made them a real and accessible object, an inhabitable space of pages organised into books, stacks, and archives.

Not many museums would have taken the risk of showing Hillary Clinton’s emails. There were too many possible complications, too many risks. A neutral territory or an overcrowded battlefield was needed. We found the appropriate space at the end of 2017, in Venice, on the way to the railway station: it was an early 20th century palace with a 15th-century-ish water facade that looked not toward the canal as is normal, but toward the street. At the entrance, an art nouveau sign said “Teatro Italia”.

A theater, a cinema, a university building, an abandoned edifice, a supermarket. These are some of the best-known identities through which this building went through until it was transformed into Despar Teatro Italia. The supermarket, indeed. The neo-Gothic facade reminded us of Venice as an artificial city, where the fifteen-century style can be a modern construct – or rather a self-forgery – and where urban transformations have always been a metamorphosis of the market.

Hilary. The Hillary Clinton Emails by Kenneth Goldsmith took shape there. Among early 1900s frescos with a nationalist flavor, liberty decorations in wrought iron, a philological restoration, the addition of contemporary shelving and the display of goods for sale. Between architectural and cultural assets, between usage and consumption.

Throughout the exhibition the balcony of the former cinema theater was transformed into a lo-fi version of the White House Oval Office where Hillary Clinton’s emails were displayed in duplicate: a sculptural cube of papers and their readable version in volumes.

From the balcony of the Despar Teatro Italia, people could read the 60,000 pages of Hillary Clinton’s emails and contemplate the view on the products of the supermarket and on the people who were purchasing them. From downstairs, people could walk through a library-like grocery store.

In this space-time stratification, the appearance of Hillary Clinton, the real one, was certainly a possibility. A remote but plausible possibility, on which we decided never to act directly. Kenneth’s wish and ours was that Hillary Clinton would arrive at the show of her own will, and that she would read her own e-mails there, that she would perform herself inside the White House overlooking the supermarket, and that she would sit at the resolute desk as

she would have done if she had been elected President of the United States of America.

When we were approached by the former Secretary of State’s team, that possibility and desire became reality. On September 10, 2019 Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Hillary. The Hillary Clinton Emails channeling new vertiginous narratives into the exhibition. There would be much to tell and analyze about it, but we won’t do it here, because although that performative act and its echo represent a fundamental part of the project, they are not its focal point. The centre was the great energy flow generated by the tourists, customers, onlookers, students, influencers, Biennale visitors, academics, architects, thieves, gatekeepers, workers, journalists, artists, unsuspecting passersby, and finally, Hillary Clinton.



the refrigerators running. All those signals came together in one big reverb. Decolonize the museum. By showing, by unveiling the aesthetics of capitalism.

We can’t give answers, we don’t have to. As curators we can at best create the possibility for the viewer to find their own position. We can do this by introducing forms and new ideas into the free market, while at the same time exploiting the productive power of companies to create new works of art. We can challenge the identity of the corporate space and that of the artwork until they collide, until their rituals interfere, bringing to light their affinities and resistances, raise questions and transform them into architecture. Showing every corner of the world as a multi-identitary, transitory, queer space. Chambres d’inconnus, rooms of strangers who can try to know each other, but who have the freedom and the right to ignore each other. Chambers of the unknown, where social categories are temporarily mixed. Where the elite and the masses, the minority and the majority, art and reality, stand together at close quarters. Where modernity is disguised as baroque, neoclassicism as art nouveau, the analogue as digital. Where glancing produces desire, and identity continues to move, to travel, to walk.



It was a public White House. A house where each one could play the creative act of consuming. Consuming time, ideas, reality, data, products, contents, life. Consuming that place personally and collectively. Consuming it so much to bring it back to being a theatre, cinema, university building, abandoned edifice and (also) a supermarket. A White House. A museum.

It was Paul B. Preciado, a Spanish writer, philosopher and curator, who related the space to the museum institution. In a public conversation, during the supermarket rush hour, sitting in a replica of the presidential chair, he noted: “We don’t want to clean the museum from the market. That’s not what we want to do. What we want to do is depatriarchalize the museum, decolonize the museum and go beyond the aesthetics of capitalism, which we don’t know yet. We don’t know what it is. So, all we are doing now is reflecting critically on the aesthetics of capitalism. That’s what I’m doing here. We are trying to understand how the aesthetics of capitalism work, by showing by unveiling some of its mechanisms.”

The echoes of Paul’s energetic voice that day carried through the theater along with the sound of the radio, the buzz of the buyers, the beep of the checkout counters, the hum of



RCA Student Voices



SICA (Ju Chieh Wu), (mis)takes, 2025, Photography using film negatives affected by light leaks and motion blur

Nik Macey

Hockney's Pearblossom Highway

Nobody stops on Pearblossom Highway. David Hockney stopped here with his camera for ten days in April 1986. The result, 'Pearblossom Hwy' is a seminal image that breathes life into the arid landscape of the Southwestern USA. Pearblossom Highway is a place of transition, a vessel for movement between towns and cities. It's not the destination.

"Hockney's singular vision for this lonely place permanently transformed the nature of photography and what it can achieve"

I find it remarkable that Hockney chose this liminal space as his muse and stopping point. It's hot, lonely, bleak, full of scrub and trash, desperate, hopeless, and yet Hockney's singular vision for this lonely place permanently transformed the nature of photography and what it can achieve. Pearblossom Hwy is formed of over 800 individual photographs. Rejecting the codes of traditional western spatialisation, none of these photos are taken from a central perspective, but rather every single image is close up and zoomed in- a deliberate choice intended to draw the viewer inside the picture. I feel like I'm inside the landscape, walking on the road and feeling the potent dry heat on my skin. The "monotony of the roads" pulled Hockney here when he moved to California in 1963, one year after leaving the Royal College of Art. During his fruitful time at the RCA (1959-1962) Hockney focused on painting and drawing and developed his unique style of looking and interpreting. He became an exciting contributor to ARK when the magazine was at the centre of cultural transformation in the Pop Art era. Upon Hockney's arrival in the alien world of Los Angeles, he immediately learned to drive and travelled out on the desert highways each week to soak in the strange landscape. He was instantly captivated: "everywhere you look is exciting, because it's the process of looking." California's desert highways carry an otherworldly energy- alien, ethereal, uncanny, and quite unlike anywhere else. When I crossed the Mojave Desert in 2015, journeying between Las Vegas and Los Angeles, I was struck by the overwhelming alone-ness; there are no people, animals, towns- no water or shelter- for hundreds of miles on end and sometimes you don't cross another

car for hours. You are utterly alone with the sweeping flat landscape, so sweeping and flat that it's suffocating.

Metaphotocollage/ Joiners/ Photo Collages/ Drawing With a Camera/ Paintings Of Time/ Repetition. Why did Hockney make this work? Originally, to illustrate the story of Hamlet for Vanity Fair (I find it fascinating that he searched for this story in this desert.) When Vanity Fair declined to print the finished work he didn't care, he had still "got something terrific out of it!" He certainly had- Hockney had achieved an image of pure innovation, inserting time into photography. No longer did the viewer look at a photograph for longer than the camera had. Pearblossom Hwy is about seeing multiple perspectives in a single image; looking down, up, across, in. An ordinary driver would never stop to notice litter, or Joshua trees in their whole form rather than as blur whirring past the car window. This image gives us both proximity and distance; a blended melting pot of perspectives that are ordinarily impossible to capture on a highway that you speed through in seconds. 'Pearblossom Hwy' is the visual embodiment of driving these roads.



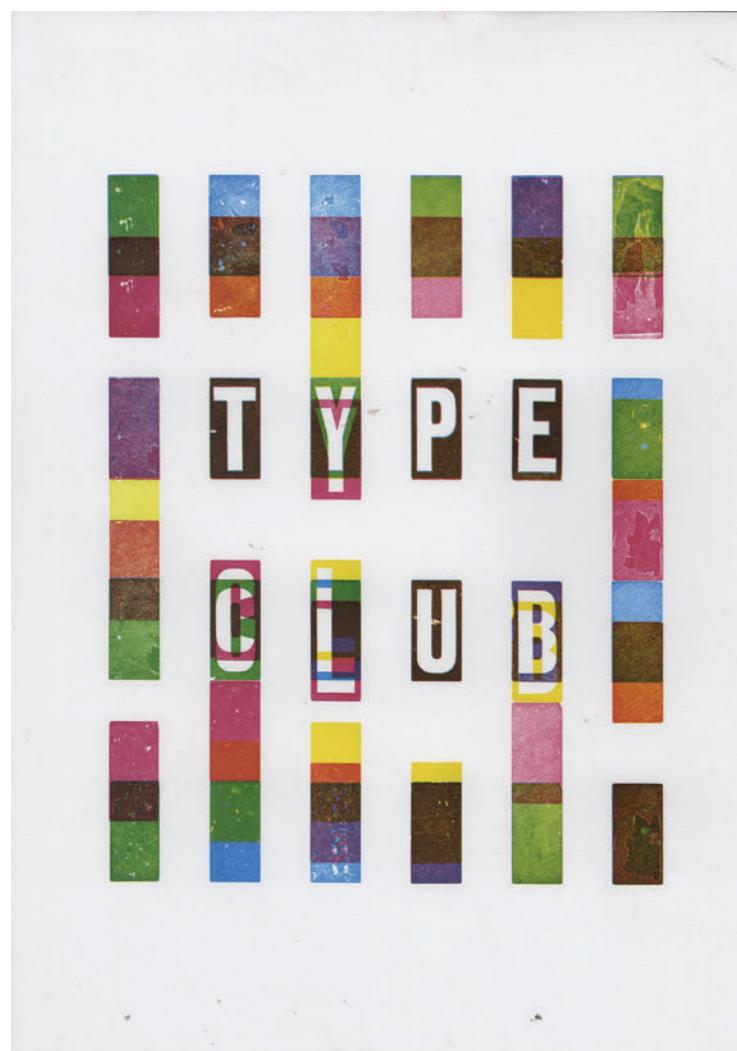
David Hockney, Pearblossom Highway, 11-18th April 1986, 1986, Photocollage, 181.6 x 271.8 cm, Courtesy of Getty Museum, Los Angeles. © David Hockney.

Each side of the image translates a differing perspective- that of the driver on the right, and the passenger on the left. But why is the driver's side the wrong way around? Where does the name Pearblossom come from? It evokes spring, life, nourishment, and steeply contrasts the bleak reality of the desert where it sits. It is not a fertile place but a barren one, yet to Hockney it proved fertile ground for the conception of a new type of photography, or "drawing with a camera" as he coins it.

The picture's blue sky is a painting. In painting, choices are constantly made on form, colour, composition. The sky, comprised of over 200 photographs, afforded Hockney free reign to make choices- he could choose which shades of blue he used, and where he put them, like in a painting. The importance of choice distinguishes 'Pearblossom Hwy' as a work that only David Hockney could have made. 800 images, 800 choices that link and slot together, an elaborate jigsaw puzzle of Hockney's own making, a sumptuous celebration of his maverick way of looking and perceiving our world.

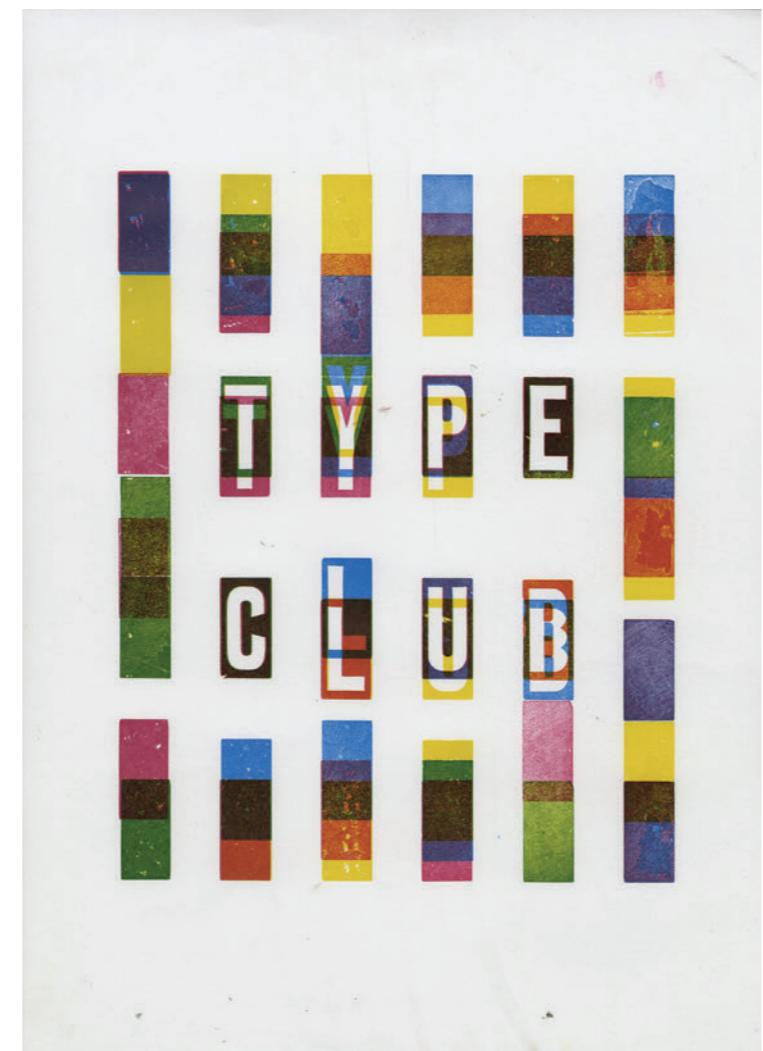
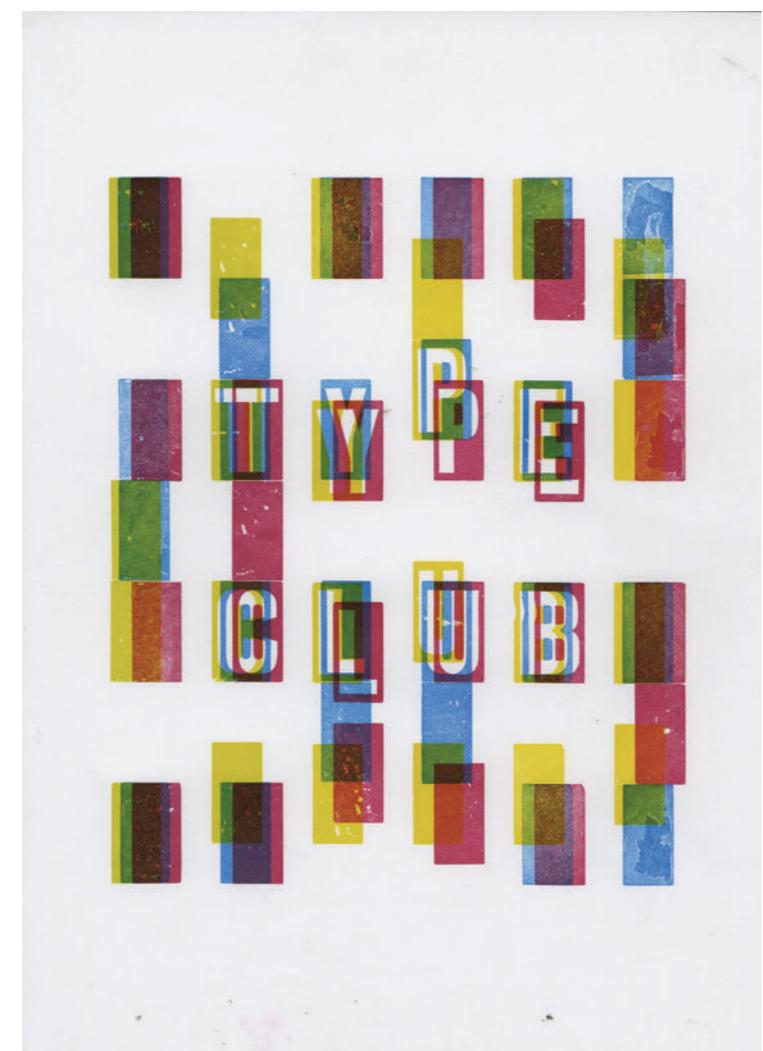


David Hockney, Pearblossom Highway, 11-18th April 1986, 1986, Photocollage, 181.6 x 271.8 cm, (detail), Courtesy of Getty Museum, Los Angeles. © David Hockney.



Joe Twm, Type Club #04, 2025, Letterpress

A R K



A R K

Hugo Teubal

Review of Berghain, by ROSALÍA

Rosalía acts like the loom that weaves this tapestry of sounds I have just recited. Languages intertwined in my mind, carefully weaved threads; phonetics that are my own (Spanish), current (English) and alien (German) produce a soundscape in which Rosalía's new single, Berghain, rests, moves, lives. Of this loop that has been playing on my mind, repetitive and insatiable vortex, the unfamiliar German has been the most prominent. The mind works in mysterious ways; out of all the languages presented, why the alien German and not the familiar Spanish, the overused English? Why does it want to penetrate my mind so ferociously, unwarranted, and yet why does it feel so deliciously pleasant?

"I'll fuck you till you love me" Yves Tumor sings on his segment of the song. OK, you have succeeded, you can put an end to it now - I want to scream—I fucking love you. In fact, it seems I can't live without you.

"I'll fuck you till you love me" x3
"Till you love me" x5
"Love me"
"Till you, till you love me"
"I'll fuck you till you love me" x2
"Love me" x4

It's the only song my brain allows me to listen to and thus what pushed me to finally sit, get a piece of paper and pen, and write this review: like the uncomfortable feeling of a cough you can't keep inside, the song has been itching my brain unceasingly. This is my way of coughing it out. It is perhaps, as Bjork puts it in the very work of art, "divine intervention". Like a preacher in church, like the relationship between Jesus and devout, Rosalía made her fears my fears, her anger my anger, her love my love, and her blood—her blood is still her own. What is the source of this divine power? I can only guess—so I will: its aura of novelty; the fact that this is, undoubtedly, the result of a profound search of artistic identity and experimentation; the positive notion that what we're witnessing is a work

of art. I write this piece amidst the writing of another review; that of Taylor Swift's new studio album *The Life of a Showgirl*. In this review, I act as defender of Swift's project, in defense of autonarratives and personal projection in art, in retribution to the downpour of criticism the album has received, a lot of it unwarranted and supported in misogyny and the historic desire to limit a woman's (artistic) power (i.e. Sylvia Plath). However I can't deny, and I won't, that when Berghain came out, my art craving heart, which to be fair had been starving in the field—that is more and more starting to seem like a desert—of pop culture as of late, felt momentarily satiated. I realised then, that instead of requiring an external source—me—to defend on the basis of the right and need to produce (specially female) personal narratives as I did with Swift, Berghain elevates itself in its own artistry. Rosalía's melodic "Die Flamme dringt in mein Gehirn ein//Wie ein Blei-Teddybär//Ich bewahre viele Dinge in meinem Herzen auf//Deshalb ist mein Herz so schwer" breaks any barrier, lingüistic or critic-funded, it can encounter. The art stands in itself and, at risk of sounding conceited and old-fashioned, it might have something to do with what Walter Benjamin defined in his 1935 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* as 'aura'. Not to say that Taylor's album is not 'aura-full', but the lack of novelty it offers, its sort of collage-nature, found in some of her songs that directly trace to other artists' artistry (i.e. Wood to Sabrina Carpenter) and to herself (the album offers 'Nothing New', as she inevitably prophesied would happen in her namesake song) does make it fit to, at least, be defined by the literal reading of Benjamin's title; a work product of 'Mechanical Reproduction'. Another factor that might've contributed to this feeling of 'craft'—or a crafted, thought, introspective, work of art—that lacks somewhere else is time. R4 drops five years after *Motomami*, her last studio album, which allowed Rosalía to perform artistic and personal introspection, self-discovery and the development of a craft that is new but is also distinctively hers. What I wanted to highlight—what I'm really excited about—is the refreshing sense that pop music is moving, dynamically, to the rhythms of German opera, Spanish blues and English tone; that this is carried out by someone as exciting as Rosalía; that she keeps pushing her boundaries and she didn't let us down; that pop music is not 'dead' or stagnant. That even in the age of 'automatised'—AI—art production, there's still room for artistry and creativity, for experimentation and introspection, for aestheticism and taste, for plurality and tapestry.

As journalist Zane Loewe states in his Instagram in relation to Berghain: "For the first time in my career I'm kind of speechless". It's so exciting to live in a world where Rosalía is able to make, and it's so exciting to feel it happening before one's very own eyes, ears, body and emotions. It's exciting to feel that, in the middle of a global recession, both economically and ideologically, art still dares to shake, transition and transform. Even if it is done through repetition.

Oriana Anthony

Oh Dear Human: Exhibition Review

It was a rainy day; not pouring but a definite dribble, we arrived a little after seven and the room was already warm and attentive. "Oh Dear Human" was the exhibition we needed to see. It felt like a sort of beautiful pessimism. Looking at the pink sky of a sunset and appreciating its beauty whilst understanding it's only pink because man-made chemicals in the air made it so. That ambivalence, recognition, and warning frames the show. Herein lies the cyclical nature of our reality: always repeating, never quite the same.

The show situates itself within a history of rebellion against monotony. King Mob, a radical art collective (60s-70s) sprayed nearby: "same thing day after day-tube-work-dinner...tv-sleep-tube-work." These words inspired Roger Waters of Pink Floyd when writing "Time." During the artist panel -Curator and Founder of Gallery Platform M- Mari Kim expressed a similar sentiment, discussing people's complicity to recent digital ID proposals (a "bystander crisis," as she called it), shaped by banal capitalist routines and numbed by social media.

The overarching theme was one of pity towards the human condition. A feeling of "you poor human, you've really made a mess out of this, haven't you?" I remember when Mari Kim asked me directly (in front of the whole audience), "Are you OK?" I replied with a half-confident "Um, yes?", not willing to reveal my inner turmoil to a room of warm-faced strangers. I felt provoked; it was a barrier destruction between a typically distant curator and the audience. It made me look at the work differently - I began to think more deeply about the artists. Were they OK when they made this, afterwards, and now, in a room full of people staring at something made in introspective isolation, as is often the case in painting?

With the non-pictoric works by Regina Kim (RCA CAP alum) the tone shifted as 3D-printed objects usually involve some degree of collaboration. It was tangible: the sculptures felt distant instead of close, manufactured instead of crafted. This coldness, embedded with Kim's all-seeing-eye video installation, indexed trans-humanist processes while critiquing the surveillance ambience. In a space haunted by watching eyes "are you OK?" Stops being purely intimate; it simultaneously sounds like a

check-in and checkpoint. The work implies we're already hybrid- living through screens routines and systems- and that staying human is something we have to practice again and again.

Jerome (RCA Painting alum) speaks with impressive optimism, but the aesthetic of his work holds a tension. Hopeful colour backgrounds hark to the beauty of nature, whilst the glossy black flourishes give them a chaotic darkness. The black reads as event or trace: a way to preserve and transform a moment which can never truly be replicated or repeated. Hope and warning on the same surface. In a post-panel interview I ask him: "What is your favourite natural feature?" After some thought he told me: "birds," due to their "colour, pattern and wide variation". Take the Common Starling: glossy black, multi-chromatic metallic sheen, like a brilliant oil spill speckled with snow. The works behave similarly: familiar forms, shifting effects.

The curation was considered. It was a smart decision to place Jerome's large paintings where they were, visible externally; I saw people on the street drawn in. Once within the room, Regina's small black sculptures guided the space like cherubs of darkness, and the digital eye within one sculpture was a nice touch. On one of the front windows, Soryun Ahn's similar paintings were doubled, two facing inwards and two outwards. Since Ahn's paintings depict dream states, a feeling of *déjà vu* hit me when I encountered the inside work, forcing a double-back, and inviting closer comparison. Despite not hearing from Tong Wu directly, his paintings reflect the bystander as habit, where gestures repeat, attention thins and complicity settles in place of urgency.

In three words: engaged, calm and authentic. From the curator to the artists to the panel moderator, everyone involved was part of the global majority: an exhibition that would have been highly improbable here 50 years ago. Khan's deliberate moderation kept focus on the artists.

Mari Kim's show weaves a narrative of care and concern, with themes of trans-humanism, surveillance culture, and critiques of contemporary capitalist compliance. Bright colours of common birds dashed with black glossy traces of human engagement; humanoid figures manufactured from plastic with all-seeing eyes; dreamlike *déjà vu* interspersed with busy and biblical figurations of something between utopia and dystopia. Oh Dear Human pities our present condition, recognising the cyclical nature of our errors: always repeating, never quite the same.

Participating artists:
Regina Kim : @regina.graphic
Soryun Ahn : @soryun_ahn
Jerome : @boyjerome
Tong Wu : @tongwuartist



Installation view of Oh Dear Human, London, J/M Gallery, 2025, photographed by **Oriana Anthony**





Sean Weisgerber, Price Per Square Inch Series (upcycled),
2020-2024, Acrylic on linen, 1830 x 4320 cm (diptych)



Ece Batur, Self Demolishes, Yet I Am Still Awake, 2025
Soil, wooden chair, handmade lace veil, red cotton dress,
Live performance and moving image, 21 minutes

A R K



A R K

Daisy Lynch

Congratulations, You're Not Dying. So Now What?

Most people experience feelings of relief and comfort when they hear from their doctor the words “the tests came back negative”. After all, the thing you were dreading when spending the night before self-diagnosing on WebMD has been ruled out. You’re not actually dying. Excellent. Supposedly, you can breathe a sigh of relief and move on.

But what happens when you can’t actually move on? When the oh-so-comforting words of reassurance from your consultant begin to sound more upsetting than an actual diagnosis would, and being discharged from the hospital somehow feels like you’ve failed? It’s all well and good to be met with a chorus of congratulations from various friends, family, and tutors when you give them the anticipated news of your recent MRI scan, blood tests, or biopsy. This is a relief, right? This means you’re healthy. Yet in reality, you’re slowly grinding through stages of grief at the loss of your own optimism that perhaps, this time, they might actually find something. This test would be the one where they can pinpoint where it’s all going wrong, and you can begin to finally move forward with your treatment. But it doesn’t happen.

The truth is, you would rather that those tests had shown something. You would rather sit in the consultant’s office and be given the bad news with the good, than to be perpetually left in a medical limbo when you have yet to feel well again, have begun to run out of options for this to be achieved. Instead, you have to pretend to be pleased with passing your tests with flying colours, even when you feel like you can hardly survive the day in the state you find yourself in. Every new exam, scan or procedure they offer you seize with the unbridled hope that is the one that gets you where you need to be. This is the operation which will make the problem go away, and you can finally start to get better. You would even take the diagnosis of an incurable, chronic illness if it simply meant that you could finally put a name to why you always feel this way. Not as an excuse, but as an explanation for skipping coffee with friends, the need for constant essay extensions, and anticipated poor exam performance. It becomes tiring and vague to constantly say that you’re feeling unwell, and it’s a label which begins to no longer fit how you feel when it has become your constant. Perhaps most of

all, you want people to understand and respect how you are feeling, without having to explain it all on repeat. To describe your complex medical symptoms every time you meet someone new quickly grows tiring.

However, perhaps the most exhausting part of living with an undiagnosed illness is the constant fight you have to put up with medical professionals in order to get your voice heard. The dismissal that comes with clear tests and scans feels like falling into a black hole of ‘what now?’ running through your head. You don’t want to take no for an answer, so you keep coming back demanding more research until you are left with no clear ideas of where to go next. It’s draining to have to make these demands to be believed, to be listened to and not dismissed. Every step of the way being met with resistance and disregard from GPs and leading consultants; and it gets so boring retelling your story again and again just one short phone call. You shouldn’t have to be visibly sick to receive appropriate healthcare, and nor should you have to wait until you’re too unwell to function until you are listened to. But the reality of having an undiagnosed invisible illness is there is a lot of doubt about your experiences, and it doesn’t just come from your doctor, but from friends and tutors too. Perhaps the lack of a label for your illness makes it easier to diminish it because they only have your presentation to go by. Very often you are told “but you don’t look sick” when it has taken all morning for you to prepare for the exertion of that hour’s conversation.

So, you’re not actually dying, but now what? Do you continue to push for further investigation after a year of being a regular at your local hospital? Or do you accept that living with an undiagnosed, chronic illness is simply now a new, unexpected part of your life which you have to learn to embrace? Maybe this decision is not entirely within your control right now, yet you will find that there is a constant presumption from some, and mournful hope from others, that you will get better with time, that this will blow over and you will cease to have these conversations. The essays will come in on the deadline, and your social activities will resume and at the arranged times. Living with an undiagnosed illness means you do have to live with wretched hope that these people are right, but with every clear test and scan which you get back, this feels as though you get further and further away from that achievement. Nevertheless, what matters even more than a diagnosis is having a support network to whom you do not have to explain yourself. So, Reader, find people who will reschedule at the last minute without a hint of disgruntlement. The kinds of friends who will go with you to the GP, and those people who will never seek to ask what’s wrong, but merely understand without needing an explanation. No, you’re not dying yet, but living with an undiagnosed illness does mean saying goodbye to the former constant of your old life and learning to adapt to the shaky and unknown path of your new one.



Liwen Zheng, Biometric Discount: Five Offsets to Evaporation,
n.d. Photocopied receipts and digital scan (series)



Mariajose Fernández-Plenge, CUT CUT CUT, 2024
Still image of the performance

Julia Schouten

Baby Specialising in Baby

Visit an exhibition but the bookshop is more interesting tactile, textures, text, hands, handling with fingertips. flicking, fingering through, eyes catching on this and that. this: a book of poems, book or pamphlet or something - does the category matter? a sweet little fragile thing, certainly not eternal. stained, discoloured and crinkled already actually purchase at the counter - student discount and all. from behind the desk they say: this author is launching her debut novel next week, in this very same location. a personal invitation! a sign as good as any: this book is taking me places, and i've barely peered inside.

Some more words on its physicality - all paper and staples. not handmade no, but probably not mass-produced, not unique necessarily either. anyway, i'd like to make something like this. a little book, paper and staples - or more preferably: string, a nice cover. hopefully with some words to fill it.

RCA moodle. click-click-click. core > technical services hub > print facilities > printmaking > scroll-scroll-scroll. right at the bottom: bookbinding. video 6: double section pamphlet. Sharon Lee's hands. some kinda watch on right wrist, ring on left finger. tools. [1]

Fold and cut, fold and cut, fold: create inner folios. repeat repeat repeat. one at a time. signature. always reinforce fold with bone. now fold: cover paper. now fold: small section. central fold. fold. fold. bone. bone. now: nest, nest, clamp. mark. follow. cut. thread. pierce. sew. fold, fold. voilà. a pamphlet.

Now some words on the book launch. wednesday. moist books, they sell baseball caps saying: slightly wet. Nell Osborne's debut novel is *Ghost Driver*. but first, two readings by other authors. Prudence Bussey-Chamberlain reads from *Bone Horn*. a private investigator is trying to find out if Gertrude Stein's partner Alice B. Toklas had a horn on her forehead. i buy this book poking fun at archival research and now i'm obsessed with the couple. order the new biography on Stein. but most importantly: online i find *baby precious always shines*: selected love notes between Stein and Toklas:

Baby, specializing in baby, that is what I am,
Everybody has their specialty and I am
specializing in baby,
Bless baby dear baby all baby and I am
I am specializing in baby splendid
baby rested baby darling baby I am
specializing in my baby god bless her,
be all rested

Y.D [2].

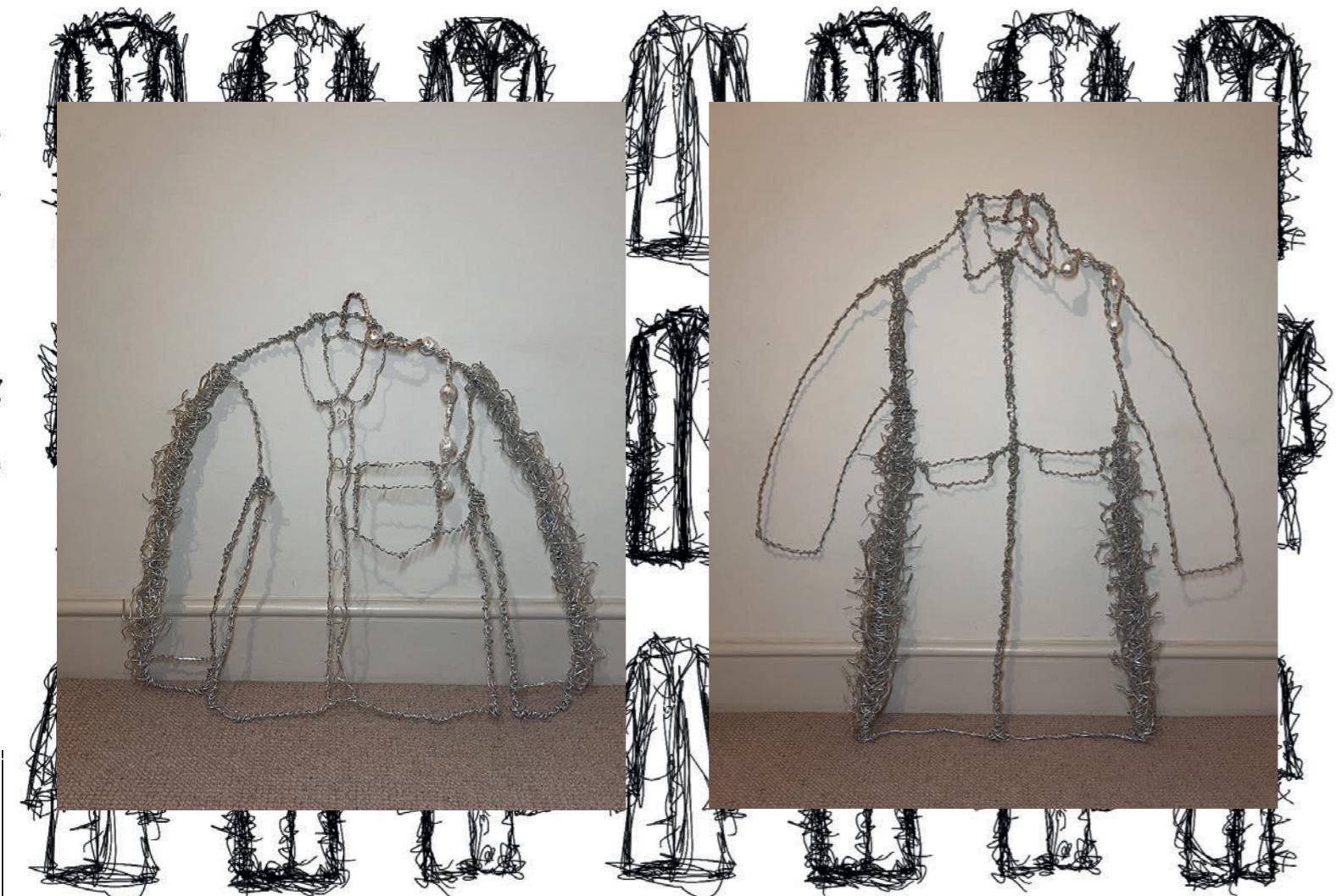
who's talking here? it's Kathy Acker's "I". [3]
don't know how she came to plagiarise. maybe death to
identity. death to the author. maybe, baby.
Baby, specializing in baby, that is what I am.

[1] A3 paper to cut for inners, 70 x 15cm cover paper, needle and
thread, ruler and pencil, scalpel, bone folder, awl, clip/clamp

[2] Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, *Baby Precious Always Shines: Selected Love Notes between Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas*, ed. Kay Turner (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 52.

[3] "I knew I wanted to plagiarize, but I didn't have a clear theoretical justification for what I was doing or why. So I just started finding these different texts and putting them together. [...] I wasn't interested in autobiography or in diary writing, but in what the textual 'I' looked like. So [...] I took some biography and made it into an autobiography." Kathy Acker, in interview by Larry McCaffery, "An Interview with Kathy Acker," *Mississippi Review* 20, no. 1/2 (1991), 88.





Donghyeon Kim (Raon), *Guilty Pleasure*, 2025, wire, silver leaf

A R K



Matilde Battisti, *Nonni*, 2025, Screenprint, 42 x 59.4 cm



YOUR HOT YOUNG ASIAN EX
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in your area



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WÄHLE ES IMMER WIEDER

Mehdi N Haghghi, Nature, 2025, Screen print on paper,
21 x 29.7 cm

A R K

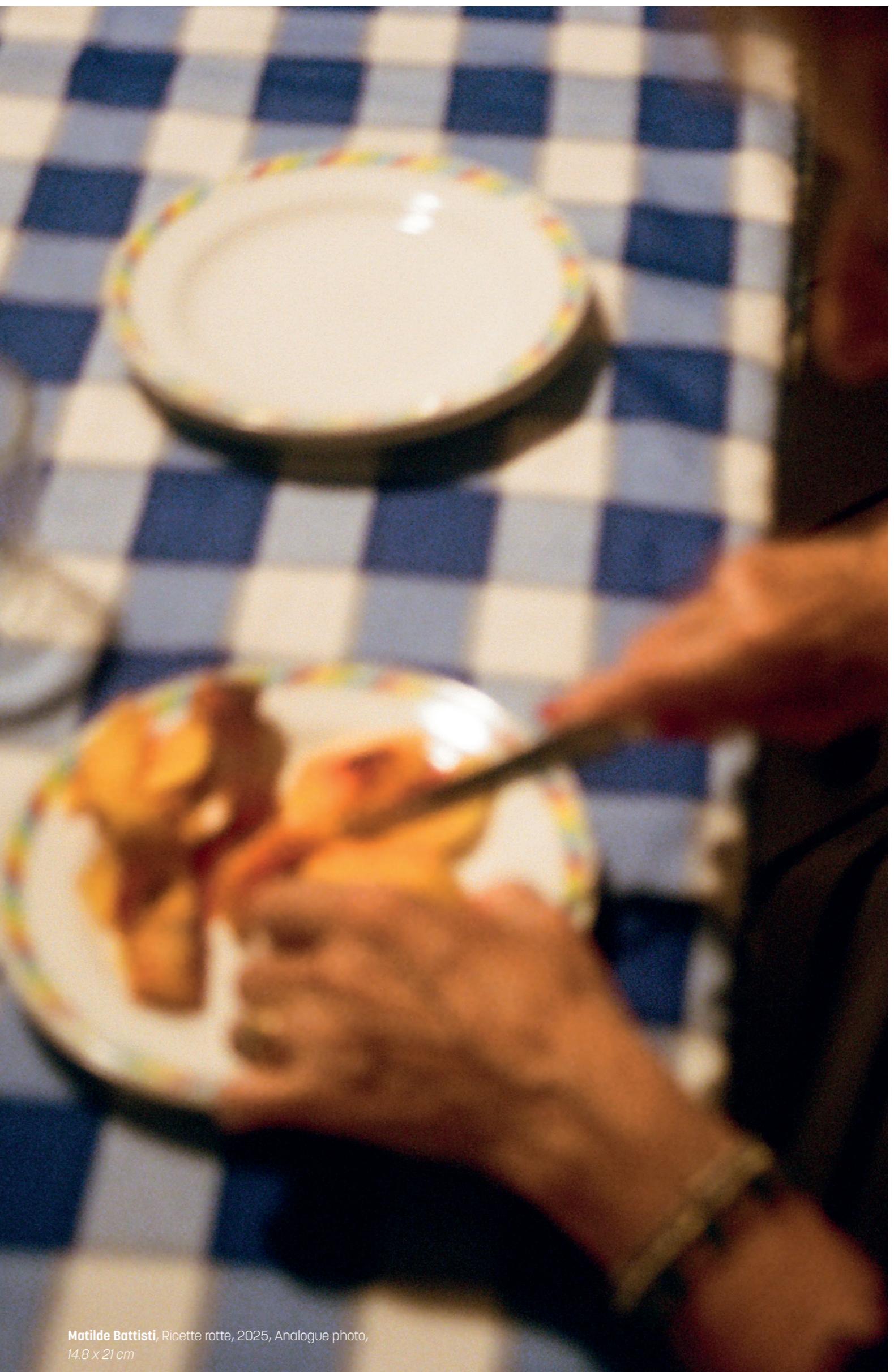
Aima Fan, Time Travel for The Recently Divorced™, 2025,
Risograph series

Katya Hudson

Kitchen Sink and All That

I washed the dishes for what felt like the 12 time today
 Again, again, again
 Repeat and repeat again
 Micro memories of minuscule actions
 As I remember to turn the cold tap after only after my hands burn again
 Arrange the cutlery
 Put the bowls away
 The floor looks dirty
 Domestic patterns
 Rituals of the quotidienne, mundane
 Take out the bins
 The surfaces
 Crumbs of coffee, kitchen left
 I realise I don't let myself have down time
 But how can you philosophise in a dirty home?
 Calm and clean (don't look at floor) I sip my coffee.
 I've forgotten how to rest.
 Again again
 The cooking, the eating, the washing, the sweeping.
 I don't have a boyfriend so I ordered a drill
 No need to wait to put those paintings up
 There's a metaphor there somewhere
 Dinner is a bowl of peas because I'd rather not scan my Tesco's card for eggs again.
 If I wash that bowl again I'll scream
 If I go out I'll come back to the mess
 A life of tasks to maintain body, home, no time for mind
 Peppered with nice drinks and pleasant conversations
 It's so disappointing how much of adulthood is made of habits to maintain. I don't have children so a bowl of peas is ok
 I eat my peas while watching home repair videos
 It's so boring
 Too.
 I paid for a prime video
 It's been a while since I've watched a film Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles
 Mentioned by 3 different people, on three different occasions, all three men. An excellent film, promises of potato peeling.
 I paid for prime and put a reminder in my to cancel it.
 As I had done the month before.

It's beautiful in dull muted colours. The film title is an address, the film is set at home. Jeanne is a beautiful woman, slightly aged, possibly by the mundanity of life that she performs. Womans work is never done. There are no friends, but a son, at the age between man and boy. Their life follows a familiar pattern, while he goes to school - where we do not she does odd jobs. She leaves the house rarely. She goes to buy potatoes, other groceries wrapped in brown paper and carried in a netted bag. Butcher, baker, fruit and veg. She does odd jobs. When she's home she's in her house coat. When she's outside she wears sensible heels. Her husband is dead. There is another man that visits every Thursday, they go into her bedroom until the light goes dark. We are not told what they do there. She keeps her money in the crockery on the dining table, reaching in and taking out. In the early evening she prepares for dinner. Always peeling potatoes. Each day 2 courses: first 2 bowls of watery soup, they eat in silence. The sound of spoons on bowls, dulling down to one as he has finished first. She takes the plates and serves in the kitchen, the routine main of meat, potato and one veg - she gives him double, a growing boy etc etc. It's silent again except for sounds of cutlery clanging. She asks him not to read, but she does not tell him she would like to speak. There is a walk right after dinner, followed by the radio - he reads and she knits. Then the sofa bed is folded out, the heating on. And in the morning the whole horrible thing begins again, like a washing machine going round in circles. A slightly different prepared meat for dinner, the one marking of a day. For days, weeks, months, years. Of the few Akermans I've watched - I am always tested. Like exercise, her films are often an effort of endurance, ability to withstand boredom, a sort of Mill style Utilitarianism - sweetened with aesthetic. Previously seen only in a cinema theatre, my gaze was trapped by the guilty thought of leaving early, the cost of tickets, the desire to be someone who has watched this film. It's the potatoes, it's the monotony of every day, each sofa bed is folded out. Routine established things begin to crumble, little insignificant things. The potatoes are overcooked, her coffee oversweetened, today there's not the mood to knit. Mince, egg and breadcrumbs, knead meat meditatively for too long. Are you ok Jeanne Dealman? When the monotony of everyday tasks threaten to consume. How long has it been? Again. I did the dishes for what felt like the 12th time today.



Matilde Battisti, Ricette rosse, 2025, Analogue photo,
 14.8 x 21 cm





Haein Jum, Mountainous Mothers, 2024, Oil painting
120 x 109 cm each (diptych)



2025 Grads



Jiatong Yuan, *My girl, My sorrow*, 2025, acrylic, oil, wax, dye
on canvas, 102 x 152 cm



Dhanashree Kadlag, Modular Body, 2025, Multimedia composition

Across London's 2025 graduate degree shows, a sense of consolidation and confidence was unmistakable. From the Royal College of Art to Central Saint Martins, UAL, Goldsmiths, and The Graduate Art Show at Vanner Gallery, this year's output built on the dominant concerns of recent years: identity, ecology, and social justice, but with a noticeably more assured and reflective tone. Rather than amplifying urgency, many artists appeared comfortable slowing things down, trusting form, material, and process. *The Graduate Art Show and Artplace share their impressions.*

Graduates 2025

Painting was a particular highlight. Across exhibitions - from the Slade School of Fine Art MA show to RCA Painting - painters demonstrated strong technical command alongside conceptual breadth. Importantly, painting rarely felt isolated. Sculpture, textiles, and installation frequently intersected with painterly practices, keeping large cohorts lively and avoiding repetition. Social and political engagement remained central in 2025, but it was often embedded rather than declared. At the RCA, artists such as Ruby Read All the Wicked Are Here, Alison Dollery, and Usaydh Agha explored community, disability, gender, and historical memory through symbolism and figurative restraint rather than overt didacticism. Laura Dzelzytė's *Next Day Delivery (After Botticelli)* (2025) cleverly reframed a Renaissance altarpiece through the visual language of delivery packaging, addressing reproduction, consumer culture, and the circulation of images with wit and clarity. In contrast, Malca Mizrahi's *Self-portrait with C-Section* confronted the viewer with the raw physicality of the female body, using scale, flesh, and scar tissue to foreground lived experience. Demi Danka's experimental use of chemicals on light-sensitive emulsion paper resulted in striking, unpredictable textures, alive with colour and energy.

"Shows brought an interesting shift in tone more detached, conceptual, and provocative ideas that nudged the show into new territory. I particularly liked the digital influence with playful systems-based work and animations."

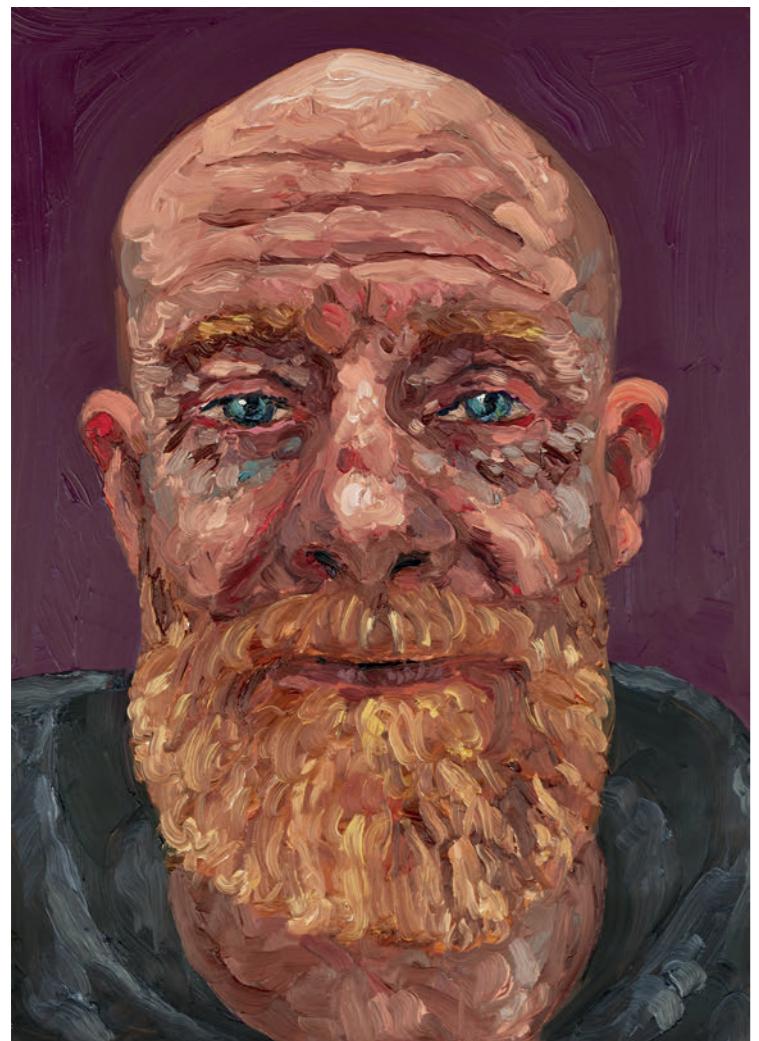
RCA MA Print graduates Elizabeth Roberts and Sam Joseph used layered monotype, screen print, and painting to engage with psychological and spatial dimensions of dance, memory, and belonging. At Slade, Ukrainian artist Varvara Uhlik created a mesmerising installation of her post-Soviet childhood. Reconstructed playground structures - a swing, slide, and rocket - evoked effectively

collective memory, loss, and identity shaped by Soviet-era architecture. Material and ecological awareness continued to shape practices across institutions. Megan Willow Hack, graduating from MA Art and Ecology at Goldsmiths University created pigments from urban trees, plants and pollution matter from Southeast and Northeast London where she grew up. Sustainable processes, recycled materials, and earth-based pigments appeared throughout fashion and mixed-media work at CSM and UAL, feeling fully absorbed into methodology rather than presented as a theme.

"Quieter, considered works resonated amid the scale of London graduate exhibitions."

Digital practices also shifted in tone. Instead of spectacle-driven experimentation, 2025 favoured systems-based, playful, and reflective uses of technology, from AI avatars exploring surveillance to algorithmic installations concerned with memory and presence. Overall, compared to earlier cohorts marked by urgency or excess, the Class of 2025 demonstrated restraint. The strongest works trusted subtlety, material intelligence, and slow engagement, offering a compelling picture of an emerging generation confident in both craft and critical thinking.

"This year's RCA Painting show felt like a dynamic snapshot of a generation negotiating their place in the world."
Artplace



Ruby Read, All the Wicked Are Here, 2025,
Oil on panel 150 images, 13 x 18 cm



Megan W Hack, Prevailing Wind Carries Toxic Airs to the East,
2025 Foraged pigments, birch leaves, oak gall, chestnut,
ivy, hawthorn, PM10.3 µg/m3 on canvas, 200 x 200 cm



Elizabeth Roberts, I Want to Dance, 2025,
Screenprint on paper (detail)



Joe Twm, Data Sees Everything, 2023,
Ink Roller on newsprint



Varvara Uhlik, *Play Ground*, 2025, Steel, water, black dye,
Installation View, Slade School of Fine Art, 2025



Jeanne F. Jalandoni, *Batchmates*, 2025, Oil on Canvas,
acrylic on cotton weaving, epoxy, 101.6 x 101.6 cm

A R K



The expansive fields divide,
the earth from sky
as you approach,
head on, in two.

Both parts of equal solid strength - or state -
take to transparent stalking.

I have not walked a denser road,
and to say the truth,
I miss it.



Laura Dzelzytė, Paradox of Choice, 2025,
Oil on Linen, 60 x 76 cm

ARK TEAM

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