Artists Newsletter Issue 4/4
Supporting Visual Artists since 1980

ARTISTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA: DISTRIBUTE, NETWORK & REINVENT

INTRODUCTION

GUEST EDITOR, HOLLY WILLATS

This is the last of four 40th anniversary editions of Artists Newsletter, each of which has taken inspiration from a different decade. The period covered here is 2010-2020, and while this is obviously very recent, what stood out for me as a game changer for artists' practices during this time is the growth of social media.

Mariah Mahfooz, *30 Questions with Mariah Mahfooz*, 2019

When I first started to think about this publication, I was reminded of a text by Daniel Sean Kelly from the Leicester-based, artist-led space Two Queens. Kelly wrote in Art Licks issue 23, 2018:

"Artist-run galleries occupy two spaces. The first is where the organisation sits in geographical reality, anchored in the gallery itself, the studios, the handful of regular visitors who live locally, the daily struggle to get more people to come in from the street and look at something that challenges them. The second form is the reputational space the gallery occupies within a national system of spaces and artists; where the space itself and the realities of the display of the work almost become the least important part of the process. Probably less than 10% of the people who have heard of us have ever stepped over our doorstep. The value of the artist-run is arguably weighted in that second space, that which is usually too insubstantial to prove its public benefit to funders, and which gives artist-run projects their short life expectancy."

What struck me most when I first read this is the way that a project can gather such a strong audience and position within a certain scene, outside of the space it occupies on the ground. I have no doubt that this is where social media comes into play.

As discussed in the podcast produced for this Artists Newsletter by Andrew Mallinson (co-director of The Feminist Internet), historically artists have always seized the opportunity offered by any new media or platform that has

allowed them to share new ideas. This is clearly expressed in the article, Post, which demonstrates how social media allows for networks to be created both across peers and audiences. Having this direct line of communication with audiences also cuts out the 'middle man': artists needn't hang around for gallery opportunities or press coverage any longer, as #ArtistSupportPledge has so wonderfully shown us. Likewise, it is possible for projects that challenge the status quo, such as The White Pube, to reach an audience and create an ongoing career on their own terms.

With this in mind, I invited artist George Eksts to take part in this newsletter with his Instagram-based project Slow Install. Eksts is a perfect example of an artist using social media to rethink the rulebook, and Slow Install has established a strong following as a result. The project frees the participating artists from the constraints of exhibition-making (lack of budget, timeframe, capacity…) and shares their work with a large audience.

As well as building an audience through social media, artists have played with taking on different personas and testing new ideas. The context in which work is being shared lends itself to a performative approach, and artists Nora Silva and Jeremy Hutchison, and artist collective TOTALLER, have all used social media to experiment with ideas in this way. For this Artists Newsletter they have each produced a poster that presents a statement for the decade ahead.

I hope that this exploration of artists and social media offers some interesting, exciting, and perhaps even inspiring insights into the different ways artists have appropriated online platforms within their work. This is of course a huge topic and it is only possible to present a very selective insight here. Any conversation about the use of social media also needs to acknowledge the negative and sinister sides of these channels. As Anne Duffau states in Post, there is still much to be done in terms of "duty of care, respect & anti-discrimination". And as Andrew Mallinson explains in our podcast, there is much that still can be done: "The internet has made access to images of art more accessible, but not made art in and of itself more accessible."

With technology moving so quickly, the landscape will no doubt change again in the decade ahead. As it does, artists will adapt and explore further ways to disseminate ideas, create new space for experimental projects, and find accessible methods to build community; because as TOTALLER playfully states in its poster contribution, it is always "better to be an us".

Holly Willats is a curator, editor and writer, and the Director of Art Licks. Launched in 2010, Art Licks supports the work of early career artists across the UK and champions artist-led activity and self-organised initiatives. Activity includes a printed magazine, annual festival, commissioning and residency programme on the North York Moors. @artlicks / artlicks.com

Julie Lomax, a-n CEO

This is getting personal. By which I mean it was during the decade reflected in this fourth and final 40th anniversary Artists Newsletter that I became a-n's CEO, taking on the role in July 2018. To say I joined at an exciting, busy time for the organisation would be an understatement.

The 2010s were a period of intense digital activity at a-n. As we have done throughout our 40-year history, a-n was quick to respond to the ways that artists were increasingly engaging with each other, as well as accessing information and opportunities. That meant making the big, brave decision in June 2012 to cease publication, after 32 years, of our print magazine, instead focusing publishing resources and time into developing our online offer alongside member events and a-n's bursary programmes.

As well as expanding and fine-tuning a-n's own website, social media has been key to creating dialogue, discussion and debate with a-n's 23,000-plus artist members. Timing, as ever, has been key. By the early 2010s smart phones were becoming cheaper and more widely used by artists. It was clear this was a space a-n needed to occupy.

Twitter debates (a-n started tweeting in April 2010) were a regular, lively feature of our early social media activity, as was live tweeting from all manner of art events. a-n was also active on Facebook, while in 2015 we joined Instagram. The October of that year saw our first Instagram takeover at artist-led Sluice Art Fair, during London's Frieze Week. There have been many partnerships since, the latest being with Slow Install as part of Holly Willats' guest editorship of this special Artists Newsletter.

Holly has brilliantly captured how artists and artist-led projects are using digital platforms as a tool for broadcasting, exhibiting and creating communities; how clever, empathetic use of social media has enabled new voices, created networks, and bypassed artworld gatekeepers.

This publication also looks to the future and artists taking back control, which will be a focus for a-n as we go forward into the next decade. To subvert the famous Shakespeare quote from *Coriolanus*, 'What is the art world but the artists?'

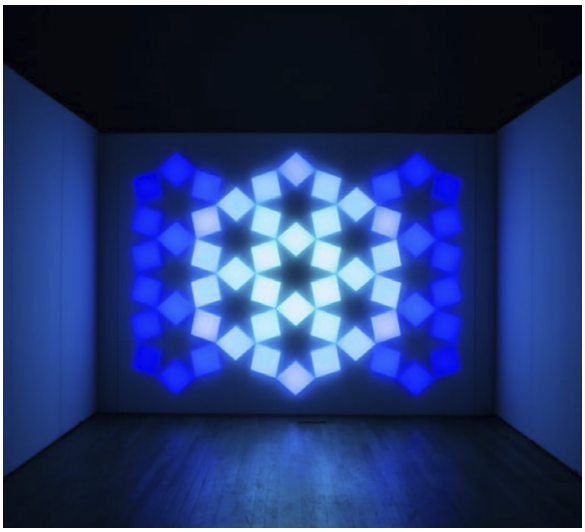
Cover of a-n Magazine, June 2012 featuring David Shrigley's work *What The Hell Are You Doing?*

PODCAST: PICTURES OF FLOWERS

Andrew Mallinson (The Feminist Internet) chats with artists Maria Mahfooz & Liorah Tchiprout about artists and social media

CLICK PLAY TO LISTEN

"they are this perfect internet creation" • "I thought he was A.I. for the longest of time" • "shared space for artists to co-exist through images and resources" • "I can pull up a Kim Kardashian meme about race relations" • "I would be selling a painting every day, sometimes twice a day" • "I like messing around with internet tropes" • "If I wasn't an artist, would I have social media?" • "It's this network that allows us to build" • "even if you are making work on paper you still exist in this digital space" •



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#40Years40Artists

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Cover: Slow Install installation: (L-R) Milly Peck, *Alight* series; Fiona Curran, *I Live By Leaves*; Nika Neelova, *Fragments Shored Against The Ruins*; Ryan Orme, *They always bring you flowers.*

Top: David Murphy, *X (fiftieth)*, 38 x 28cm, (left); *X (forty-second)*, 38 x 28cm, (right). Left: Liorah Tchiprout, *Princess in a Pink Room*, 2021. Bottom Right: Zarah Hussain, *Invisible Threads*, light installation. Commissioned by: the Barnaby Festival, Macclesfield in 2018.

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Post

How has social media been used to share work and create community? Seven artists respond in 280 characters or less.

Dear [NAME]

I would like to invite you to present a short text that will be included in the upcoming anniversary newsletter for a-n that I am editing. This is the last in a series of four bulletins, for which I am focusing on 2010-2020 and the arrival of social media within the decade, and what this has meant for artists.

The invitation is to consider an instance when social media has been useful to you, and to write this up in just 280 characters (the length of a tweet).

I felt that you are [someone / a group] that uses social media as a means to challenge the gatekeepers, to share work and create community.

I hope that collectively, the group of texts will offer an insight into the various, imaginative ways artists have used social media as a tool of communication and in sharing their work.

Looking forward to hearing from you, thank you,

Holly Willats

Larry Achiampong

"My earliest interactions with social media via my practice was with Myspace, in 2005. It was invaluable for a person like myself where race and class are concerned, because no organisations were willing to give me a solid opportunity. Social media is effective because the gatekeepers don't get to have the same power they once did."

Larry Achiampong's solo and collaborative projects employ imagery, aural and visual archives, live performance and sound to explore ideas surrounding class, cross-cultural and post-digital identity. He lives and works in Essex, and is represented by C Ø P P E R F I E L D.

larryachiampong.co.uk
@larryachiampong

Matthew Burrows MBE

"For Artist Support Pledge Instagram is a tool, a means to connect and create a community of support for all artists and makers. It is a generous culture that asks each and every one of us to give more than is usual or expected, and be free from meanness or smallness of character – perhaps a good definition of the creative spirit."

Matthew Burrows MBE is a contemporary British painter and founder of Artist Support Pledge, a global movement in support of artists and makers. Matthew lives and works in the UK and is represented by Vigo Gallery, London.

matthewburrows.org
@matthewburrowsstudio

Collage by A—Z (Anne Duffau)

Anne Duffau, A—Z

"Connectivity, togetherness & ´finding your community' have been an important aspect of A—Z digital projects. So much work to be done still within the use of social media in regards to the duty of care, respect & anti-discrimination. Sharing useful info & projects is a start."

Anne Duffau is a cultural producer, researcher, and founder of A—Z', an exploratory/nomadic curatorial platform exploring artistic practices and knowledge exchange through collaborations, presentations, soundscapes, screenings and discussions. Anne ran the StudioRCA Riverlight, London programme (2016-2018) and is the 2020/21 Wysing Polyphonic curator at Wysing Arts Centre.

a---z.tumblr.com
@a_____z

Flying flag outside Gaada

Daniel Clark, Gaada

"As an artist-led organisation sited in the UK's most remote archipelago, social media has been essential for Gaada to not only raise awareness of its work at a national level, but also for signalling to our immediate island community that a safe cultural space exists in Shetland."

Gaada is a community-embedded and artist-led organisation based in Shetland. From its visual art workshop, Gaada supports a growing community of artists through an ambitious programme of activity which includes exhibitions, commissions, workshops, events and publishing.

gaada.org
@gaada_org @danielclark.xyz

Georgia Gendall

"Social media allows me to be an artist when I feel far away from it. It gives space for things to fly off the shelves before they touch the surface; making art feel impulsive, vigorous and endless. It has enabled me to run projects and not only join conversations happening further afield but bring them into a local orbit."

Georgia Gendall is an artist and facilitator living and working in Cornwall. Georgia runs The Allotment Club, a project space on an allotment in Penryn, and Residency in a Shed. She also runs Forced Collaboration: an online instructions-based collaborative platform, aiming to forge relationships between artists from different locations and tackling the blockages we all face in our practices.

georgiagendall.co.uk
@georgiagendall @forcedcollaboration_

Ian Giles, *After BUTT*, film, 2018, Chelsea Space, London. Photo: Rob Harris

Ian Giles

"I am more drawn to social networks than social media. Facebook is a handy detective tool; I tracked down gay squatters who lived in 1970s Brixton, plus I use Instagram when casting my films. A poster pinned up at Gay's The Word can yield the same results. I find the media side a little anxiety inducing…"

Working in film, performance and social practice, Ian Giles' work fosters new networks to record and celebrate LGBTQ+ histories and experiences. Forthcoming exhibitions and performances include: On Railton Road, Jerwood New Work Fund, London (2021) and The London Open at the Whitechapel Gallery, London (2022).

iangiles.co.uk
@iangiles

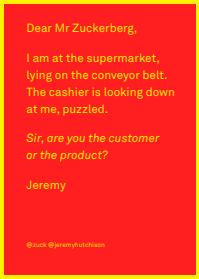
Daniel Sean Kelly, Co-Director, Two Queens

"Artist-run galleries within web 2.0 occupy two spaces: IRL we are an underdog, URL we have some reputational power – to each its own audiences/concerns/needs. Online space amplifies the potency of perception. Social media allows relationships built on affinity over proximity."

Daniel Sean Kelly is an artist based in Leicester and co-director of Two Queens, an artist-run gallery and studios located in the city. Working largely in painting, printmaking and ceramics, his work seeks to create a speculative space for the imagining of other realities – a science fictional universe comprised only of objects existing in the world up to this point.

2queens.com
@twoqueensstudio @danielseankelly

Dear Mr Zuckerberg (Supermarket), 2021. Digital file, unlimited edition



Jeremy Hutchison is an artist based in London.

For three years, Jeremy has been corresponding with Mark Zuckerberg. Using his own Instagram feed, these letters cover everything from geo-politics and data privacy to absurd reflections from the bathtub. Following his music video Dear Mr Zuckerberg (2020), Hutchison interviewed the tech billionaire over Instagram live. Unfortunately things descended into farce. Follow the project on Instagram @jeremyhutchison.

Working across performance, sculpture, text and video, Jeremy's practice disrupts the mechanisms of capitalist ideology. He has exhibited at ICA, Prada Foundation, Z33, Modern Art Oxford, EVA Biennale, Grand Union, Jerwood Space and Royal Society of Sculptors. He was a 2015 fellow of the Whitney Museum studio program.

jeremyhutchison.com

Click to download printable PDF of Artwork

Dear Mr Zuckerberg,

I am at the supermarket, lying on the conveyor belt. The cashier is looking down at me, puzzled.

Sir, are you the customer or the product?

Jeremy

@zuck @jeremyhutchison

A-N#4 PODCAST

PICTURES OF FLOWERS

A conversation between Andrew Mallinson, Maria Mahfooz and Liorah Tchiprout.

For this special issue of Artists Newsletter, Andrew Mallison from Feminist Internet presents a podcast discussion with artists Maria Mahfooz and Liorah Tchiprout, that considers the relationship artists have built with social media.

What follows is an edited transcript, organised around central themes touched upon in the conversation.

Listen to the full podcast via the 'Play' button above.

1 Andrew Mallinson, *Tomorrow's Nipple*, 2018
2 Mariah Mahfooz, *Arab Fuckers*, 2019

Introduction

Andrew Mallinson: I'm a co-founder of Feminist Internet, a collective of artists and designers working to make the internet a more equal place through creative and critical practice.

I am joined by Maria Mahfooz and Liorah Tchiprout to discuss the ways in which artists have reconfigured social media and the internet to fit their needs.

While both Maria and Liorah are contemporary artists, their work is very different in medium. Maria works primarily in video, stating that her work is guided by her identity as a visibly brown Muslim woman exploring themes of representation, construction of the self, and how different spaces can be navigated. She uses green screens to transport herself into different environments that she would not have access to in reality. On the other hand, Liorah's practice could be understood as more traditional, existing almost entirely as drawings on paper depicting dolls she creates which draw upon histories of Jewish activism.

Maria and Liorah, as artists, both use social media in very different ways. Liorah, for example, has a beautiful story in which she built her career through Instagram and the Artist Support Pledge, while Maria uses Instagram as a site for her work to exist in the same way that someone else might use the gallery.

Love/Hate

Maria Mahfooz: I've had a love/hate relationship with social media. If I wasn't an artist, would I have social media? – I don't know. In terms of my practice, it's a really fun thing to experiment with, and I kind of like that performative aspect of it.

It is such an inspiration and source of meeting other people, networking, seeing what's out there, seeing galleries, I get a lot of information from Instagram. I don't have Twitter and I just enjoy scrolling through TikTok, whereas I have more of a voice on Instagram.

Liorah Tchiprout: I think my relationship with Instagram is weird because it started with me thinking that I'm not a digital artist: I make pictures, I'm not anything to do with this. But I realised that even if you are making work on paper you still exist in this digital space.

I often think about how there is a perception of you that exists through this thing that's curated. I also think it democratises what people see of your work because without Instagram it's only about how a gallery chooses to present you and your work.

AM: I think you bring up a really interesting point in this question of what role does Instagram play in the lives of artists? I've been thinking a lot recently about whether Instagram is a gallery, or is it a stage? Is it a portfolio? Or is it all of the above?

LT: If I go to an artist's studio I'll post something about it on my Instagram. If I can use it to platform other artists then it's an incredibly empowering thing, to be able to promote other people and their work.

AM: Completely, what you're saying is so important. It's this network that allows us to build.

Artist Support Pledge

AM: I find it so fascinating the way that artists use social media, as everyone uses it so differently and adapts it to meet their needs. Liorah, for example, you've sold directly through Instagram, correct?

LT: Before the pandemic I was studying for a Masters in Print and I was working in editions and printing etchings for a company. But the pandemic came around and because I was a freelancer I got laid off and I didn't know what I was going to do. I got a job as a station cleaner in Hammersmith bus station and then I got COVID, so it was pretty bad.

Then I saw people posting for the Artist Support Pledge and I started to post drawings and paintings with the hashtag #ArtistSupportPledge, not for very much but for £80 or £100, and it just caught on to the hashtags. I would be selling a painting every day, sometimes twice a day; it was just wild. I was working from this little desk in the corner of my room, and I just couldn't believe it. But yeah, that really took off in a big way and people started to buy quite a lot of my work.

Then I went on *Portrait Artist of the Year* because I really wanted to meet Kate Bryan. I was really nervous but I did it, and I met Kate and Kathleen Soriano, who are now really big supporters of my work. It's kind of snowballed in a way that means this is my job now, I don't really do anything else and it probably wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the pandemic.

AM: I love that story. It's really quite magical; it's this sort of post-internet, romantic, artist success story.

Your Instagram audience is really engaged and every time you post you get quite a few people leaving really lovely comments. You seem to have this direct line of communication with the people that are following you. I'm curious about how that feels – does it feel like quite a stark contrast to a year or two ago?

LT: Yeah, definitely. It's a whole different world. It's an amazing thing when people care about something you're doing. I don't know if it will last forever, and maybe not, but I will just keep going and am really grateful.

AM: It's fantastic that a hashtag campaign that was started as a way of raising money and uplifting artists actually managed to do that in such a successful way. I think it's a really great example of when the internet does good things. So often conversations around the internet and social media fall into this space of debating about its problems, and how bad it is. And that's not to say that it's not full of problems but your story was only made possible because of Instagram, because of the network that it allowed you to tap into and to build. Also, when it comes to your work I think it's really interesting as your practice is certainly not one that a lot of people would associate with internet art. I wondered if you wanted to expand a little on what your practice is about?

LT: I'm a figurative artist but I work a lot from puppet models. The models I build are inspired by a puppeteer from 1920s New York, called Zuni Maud, who took puppets – which weren't traditionally a Jewish medium – and infused them with Yiddish folk tales, as well as scathing political satire. They were performed in the basements of factories and all the factory owners were trying to shut them down. I find them really radical, really cool; that kind of relationship between life being very serious but also being play, and I like that in art.

My work is ultimately me playing with dolls and making pictures of them – to me it has ideas about gender and society, and feeling inside communities and outside of them and all these things – but they're dolls, they can't be that serious.

Humour

AM: I think that while some people might perceive both your practices as being different, there are a lot of parallels in the way that you deal with identity and in some capacities use satire. Maria, my perception of your work is that it really plays with this sort of serious satire. You manage to discuss serious subject matter around identity politics and racism through a very playful lens. To me it parodies, critiques, performs and uses the material of the internet. I'm thinking about your work *30 Questions with Maria Mahfooz*, which is amazing and parodies the series that Vogue created where they ask celebrities a series of questions in a very staged manner. I'm curious how you see your work fitting in this context.

MM: I see it as a bit of a mess around, and having fun with myself. For the Vogue 30 questions I made a video of an animated figure of me walking round my local streets (instead of a swanky house), and I used it as a format to interview myself. I am the media that I consume and my media is reflected in my interests... I adapted Vogue's 30 Questions because it used to come up on my Snapchat.

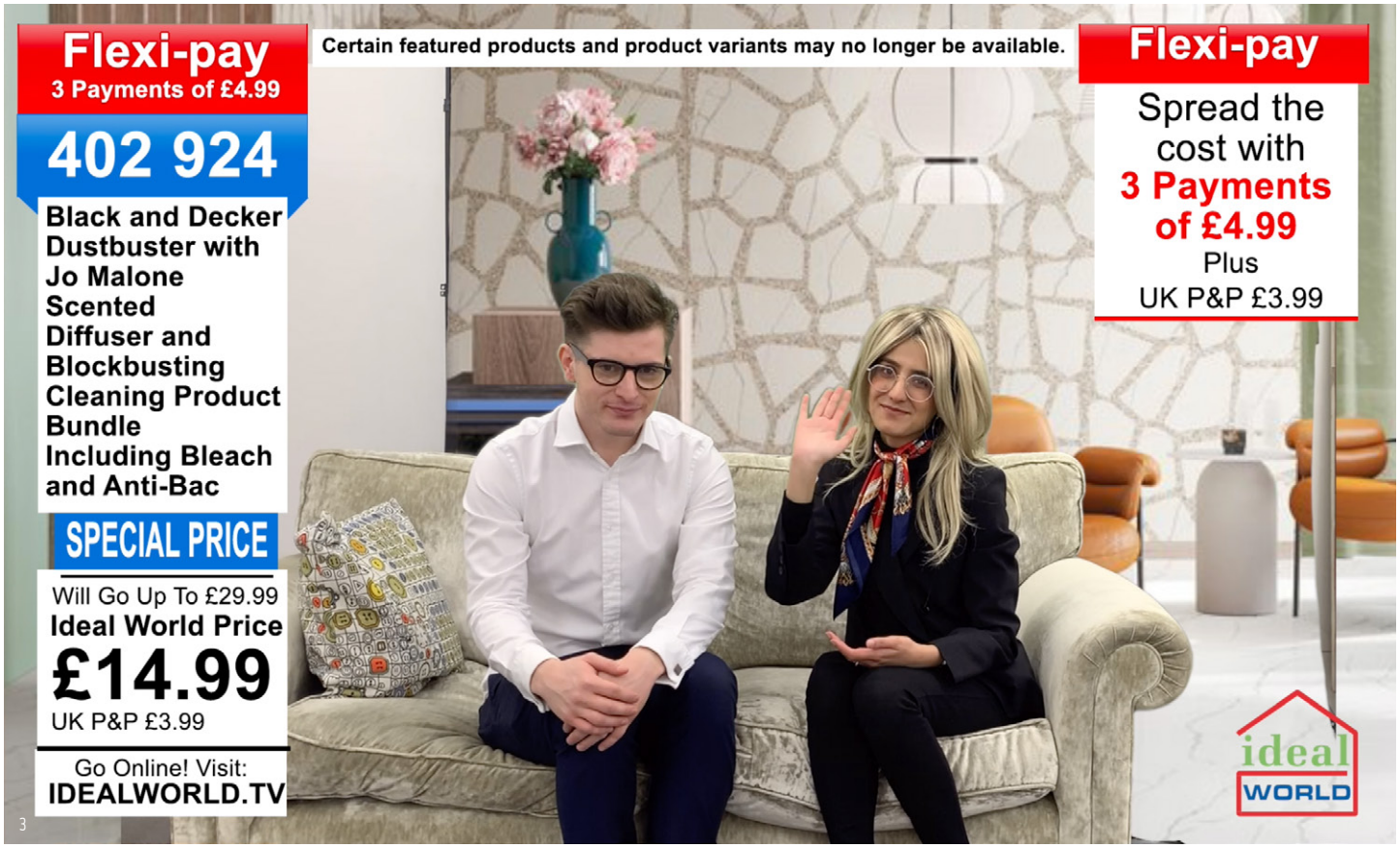
The whole aesthetic of my work is really playful, it looks like a lot of fun, it uses memes, it feels accessible, but I'm interested in how I can flip situations. I like messing around with internet tropes, it's such a massive source of inspiration. Like, I don't have a Yiddish puppeteer activism reference but I can pull up a Kim Kardashian meme about race relations and stuff like that, or the amazing Instagram page @kardasian_kolloquium.

AM: Yes! I know the one, it's amazing. They take texts, the kind of ones we would read in art school: Plato, Baudrillard etc., and use them to analyse specific Kardashian scenes. They become these sort of mini critiques of culture through an internet lens. It feels like something that is very 'of Instagram'.

This reminds me about an account I've been following for some time now: the handle is @markrothko and they post these extreme, peculiar and really strange sets of images that have a kind of narrative element to them.

What I think is so interesting about both the Mark Rothko accounts and Kardasian Kolloquium is that they exist because of places like Instagram; they kind of couldn't belong anywhere else, they are this perfect internet creation. There's also @jerrygagosian who parodies the rich art dealer. What they all do is subvert Instagram to meet their needs.

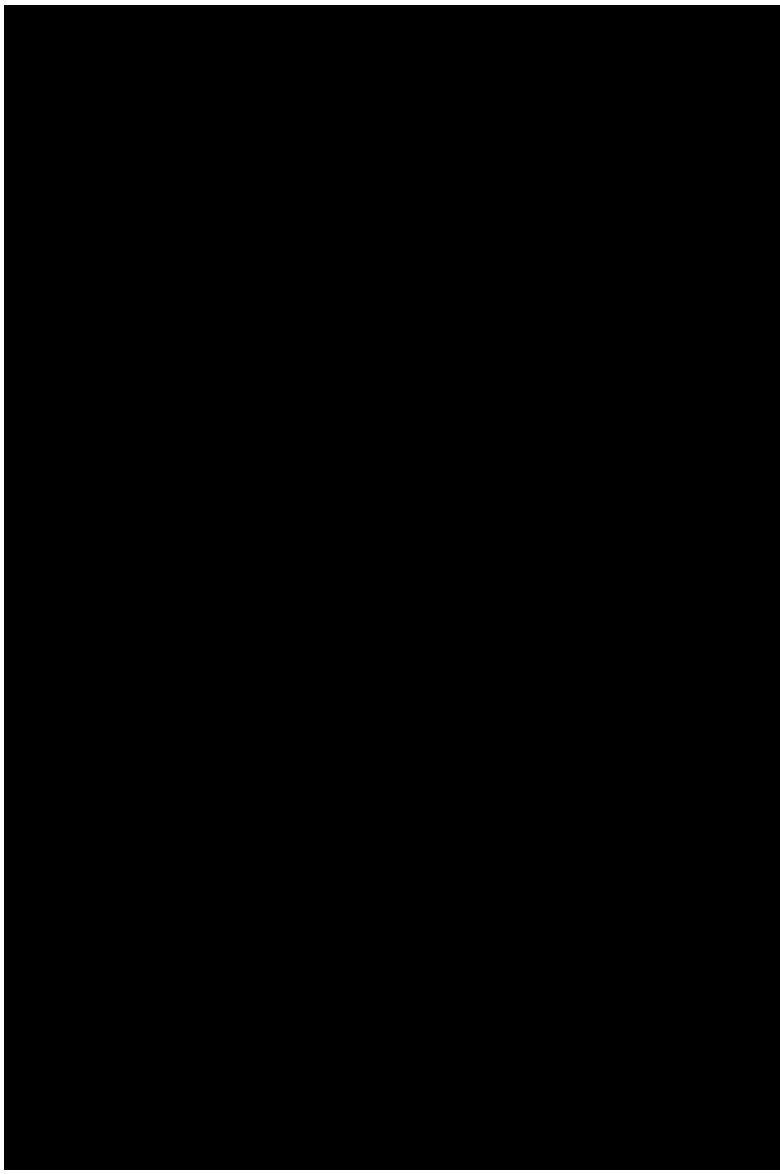
LT: I think platforms like Instagram were designed for frivolous things and that's why it's interesting that so many artists use it as the primary showcase for their work, and also for activism: it's become a platform for all these big things, but ultimately it's built for sharing filtered pictures of flowers. We're sharing work on a platform that isn't designed for it; even the fact that it's square.



3 Mariah Mahfooz, *Ideal World*, 2020
4 Liorah Tchiprout, *I Know*, 2020

4

5 Liorah Tchiprout, *I Call It Service*, 2021
6 Andrew Mallinson, *Fields*, 2020



People feel like they can laugh at Instagram or engage with it in a way that is frivolous, whereas if they go to a whitewashed gallery people are looking at each other thinking, 'Is this supposed to be funny? Can I laugh?'.

Online Shows

AM: Over the last year we've seen a massive shift to online exhibitions, and that's not to say that they didn't exist before, but because of the time we're in we've seen a push towards online programming. In part, that's because institutions were forced to adapt to this mode of online programming during lockdown, whereas before it was a practice being led by artist-run spaces and collectives.

Maria, I know you were recently part of an exhibition ran by isthisit?, which is an artist-led platform ran by Bob Bicknell-Knight. What was your experience of taking part in a show like that?

MM: I thought he was A.I. for the longest of time. I thought that he was an artificial intelligent robot; every time I'd interact with him over email I'm like 'this man's not real, this is a chat bot', but it turns out he is real!

They've been championing online programming for so long and I really respect that, and the whole process was so easy.

AM: Right! It's much easier than the whole process of loading the van etc., especially if you're making video work. But Liorah, it must be really different for you?

LT: Well I think work on paper and painting often looks rubbish online, and my work is really small and it's hard to show that. But I'm not entirely cynical; when people present online shows and they are nicely curated I'll have a scroll through them, but I think it's different because if I go to a show, I will sit in front of a work for ages and look at it. It's great that some things are more online, but it really is nothing compared to seeing the physical thing.

AM: Completely. So much art is consumed via the screen now and not in person, and I think that's true even pre-pandemic. I think about this a lot in the way that we are inundated with images online and how that affects our attention span.

Accessibility

AM: What this really makes me think about is whether art is actually more accessible now, because of the internet. We can access art more easily via social media but I feel art is still sometimes obscured by its own vanity. I'm thinking about my parents who both really enjoy art but don't have a background in it, and the times I've taken them to see exhibitions in London and they read the language of the press release or look at the work and they say, 'I really like this but I'm not sure I understand it'.

MM: Sometimes language really does isolate people and I hate that it does that.

LT: I think the internet has maybe made it more accessible, in the fact that you can see stuff online, but if things are still couched in terms that are impossible for anyone to decipher and understand then it is still inaccessible.

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AM: Yeah, perhaps the internet has made access to images of art more accessible, but not made art in and of itself more accessible. I think so much contemporary art requires context and that context is sometimes even more obscure through the screen. Instagram captions, for example, don't give you enough space to fully explore the breadth of an artwork, and again, you're still only encountering it through the image. But what Instagram does offer you is connection, it is this shared space for artists to co-exist through images and resources.

Distribution

LT: Historically, the shared image is a place that artists inhabited – think about etchings and lithographs, which even though they were for art, they were used to disseminate information. I think that artists have always done that, they've always found ways of disseminating information and sharing images.

AM: This point that Liorah raises, to me, feels as if it's at the core of our conversation, that historically, artists have continued to reinterpret and repurpose the tools around them. The internet as a whole is just another tool in the artist's studio. It's a library for research, it's a network of communication. Instagram is a gallery, a portfolio, a private view and a marketplace. What is eternally fascinating is the way that artists take these tools and make them their own, reconfiguring them in ways that uplift their communities.

Maria Mahfooz is an artist based in London. Green screen queen and Princess of Manor Park, Mahfooz's practice is often autobiographical and guided by her identity as a visible Muslim woman of colour. Her works play on othering within the framework of popular culture and the digital realm, interrogating themes of representation, construction of selfhood and the many intersections at play. Mariah studied Fine Art at Central Saint Martins and was selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2021. She has exhibited with spaces including Changing Room Gallery, isthisit? and Sid Motion Gallery.
mariamahfooz.com / @mariamahfooz

Andrew Mallinson is an artist and writer based in London and co-founder of Feminist Internet, an organisation working to tackle internet inequalities. Their work draws on queer and feminist practices to understand how the body intersects politically and socially with space. They are an Associate Lecturer at the University of the Arts London's Creative Computing Institute and Central Saint Martins. Their writing has been published by Pilot Press as part of the 'Queer Anthology' series and they have exhibited work with The Photographers Gallery, Furtherfield, Five Years Gallery and IAM in Barcelona.
feministinternet.com / @andrewdmallinson / @feministinternet

Liorah Tchiprout is an artist based in London. Her work is concerned with belonging, girlhood and the theatrical. She builds physical puppet characters to construct her own pantheon from which to draw images. This methodology allows these characters to sit in-between the real and the imagined, drawn from a reality that is constructed. Through it, she builds a world which re-centres the stories of women and girls – a world for them to liaise, interact, and plot in. Tchiprout studied Fine Art Print at University of Brighton, Bezalel School of Arts and Design, Jerusalem, and Camberwell College of Arts. She has been previously shortlisted for the Ruth Borchard Self Portrait Prize, shown at Bankside Gallery, and in 2020 was awarded the Print Futures Award. Her work is held in public and private collections in Europe, the Middle East and USA.
tchiprout.com / @tchiprout

40 YEARS **40 ARTISTS**

ZARAH HUSSAIN

Zarah Hussain discusses the impact on her practice of technological change and social media. Interview by Louisa Buck

Zarah Hussain (born 1980 in Cheshire, lives and works in London) combines contemporary digital art with a training in hand-drawn Islamic geometry. Her work encompasses animations made with code, interactive apps, painting and sculpture. *Numina*, commissioned by the Barbican in 2016, projected animated geometric patterns on to a pyramidal wall sculpture set within a hexagonal grid, and in the same year she created an interactive digital animation for the Islamic Art Festival in Sharjah Art Museum. In 2014 Hussain had a solo show at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Public commissions include a permanent mural for Walthamstow (2017), projections on to the façade of the William Morris Gallery (2017) and works for waiting rooms in The Royal London Hospital (2012). In 2017 Hussain won the People's Choice Award for the Lumen Prize for Digital Art for her work Numina.

Hussain's work *Blue Hexagon* (2004), a painting in hand-ground watercolour, appeared on the cover of a-n Magazine, October 2004. In the first-person artist story on p5 she wrote: "my paintings are inspired by patterns from all over the Islamic world and I am fascinated by the sense of vibration, energy and spirituality present in geometry."

What have been the main changes you've experienced as an artist over the last 10 to 20 years?
The main change I have experienced is the growth in the digital sphere and the massive potential it offers to artists. I have always loved technology. I bought my first mobile phone in 1998 and I did an evening course in web design in 2000 to build my own artist website. Since then, with the rise of social media and the huge advances in technology, it has

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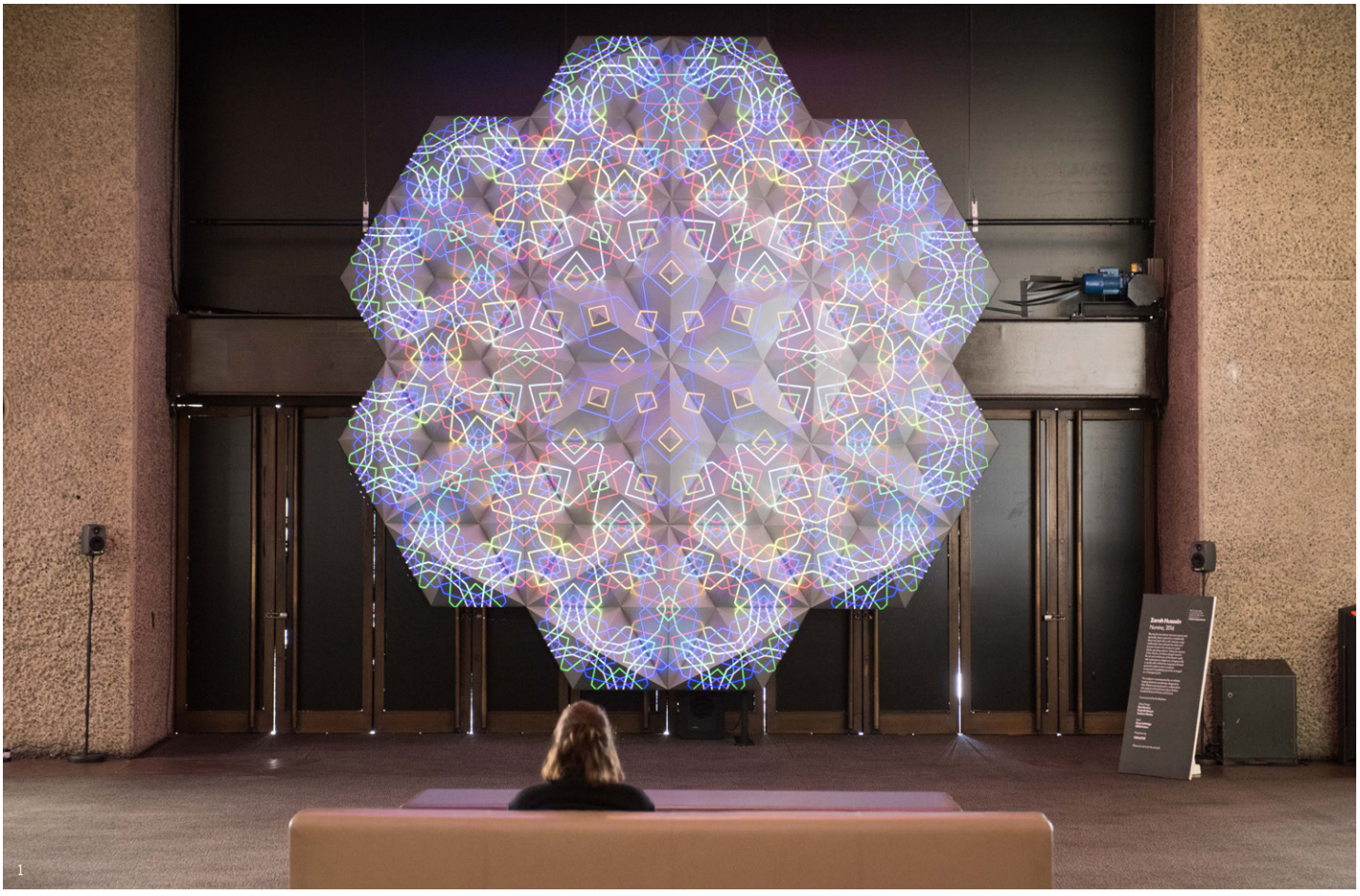

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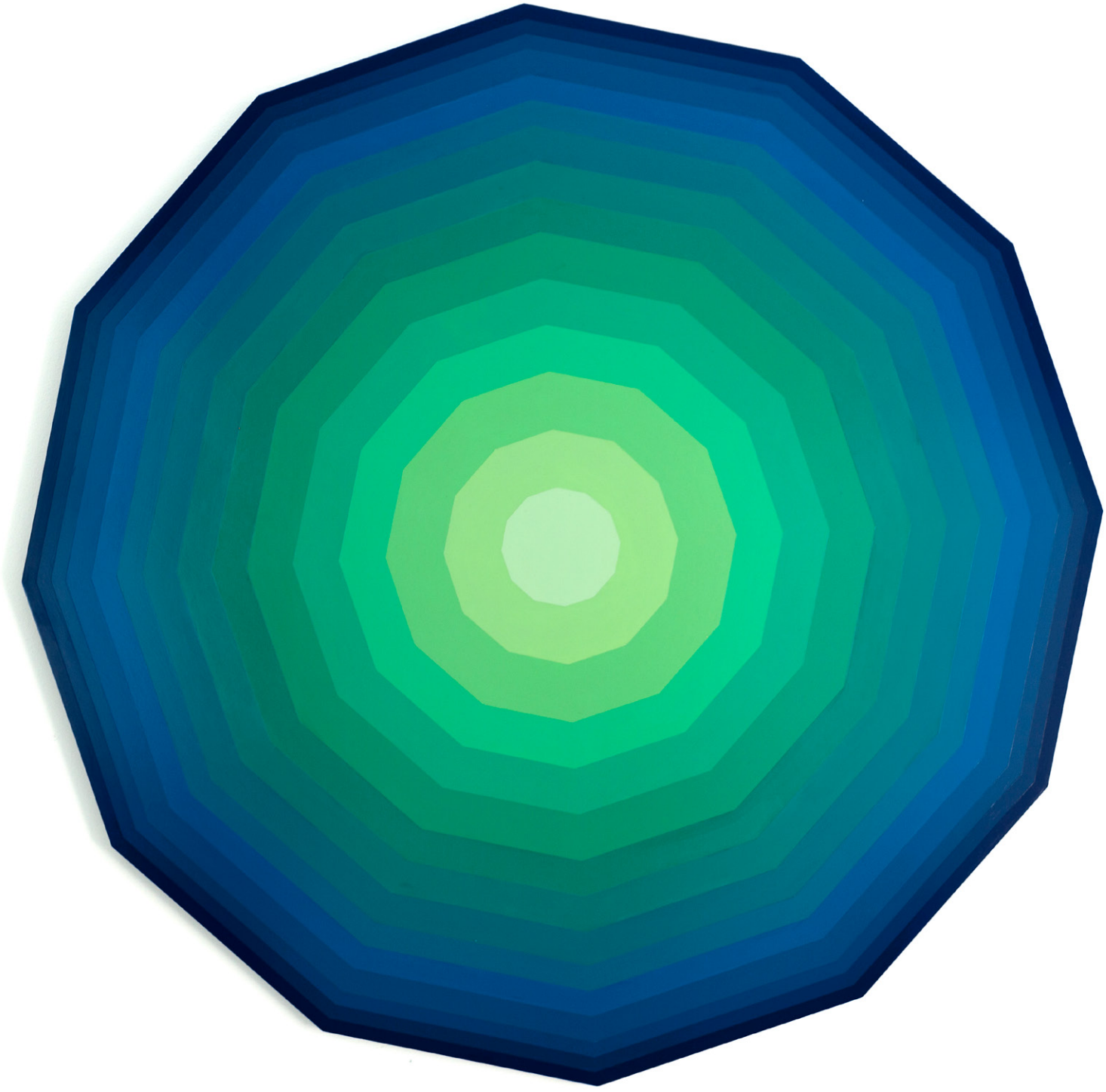
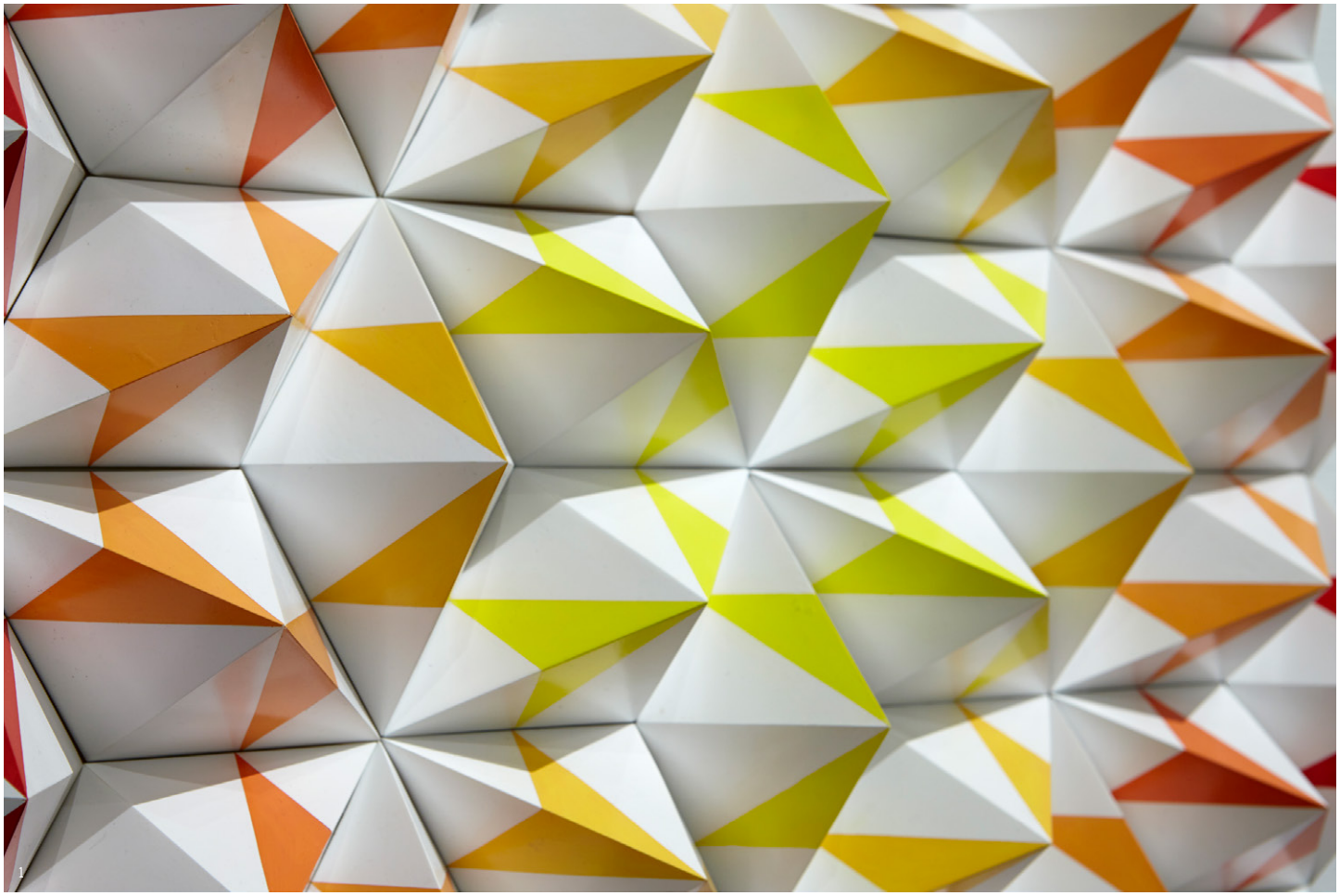


1 Zarah Hussain, *Numina*, installation view, Barbican, 2017.
2 Zarah Hussain, *Dynamic square series I*, 36 pieces of cast resin, gesso, plaster, paint, varnish, 60x60x7cm, 2018.
3 Zarah Hussain, *Inhale III*, acrylic paint on panel, 110cm diameter.



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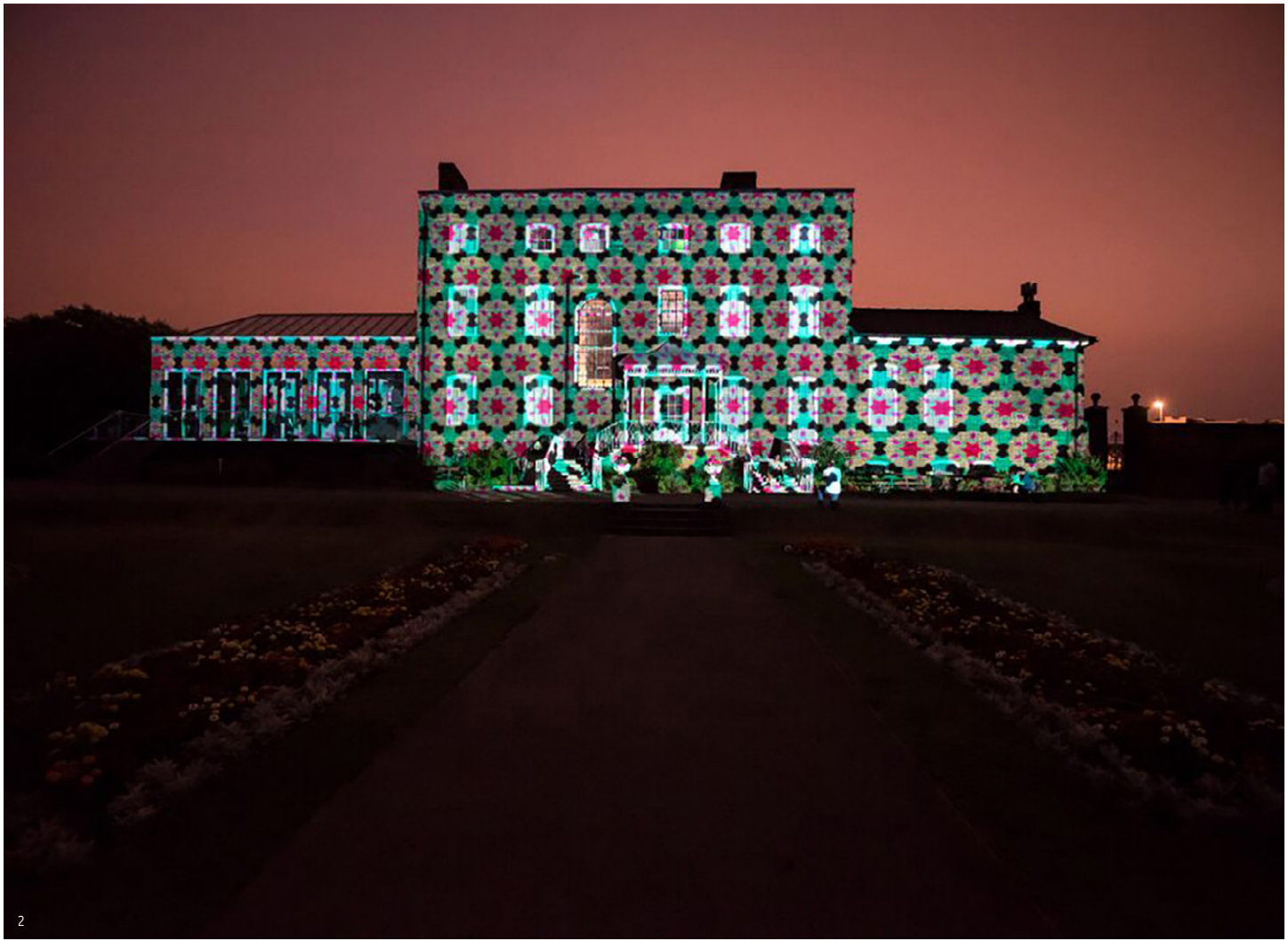

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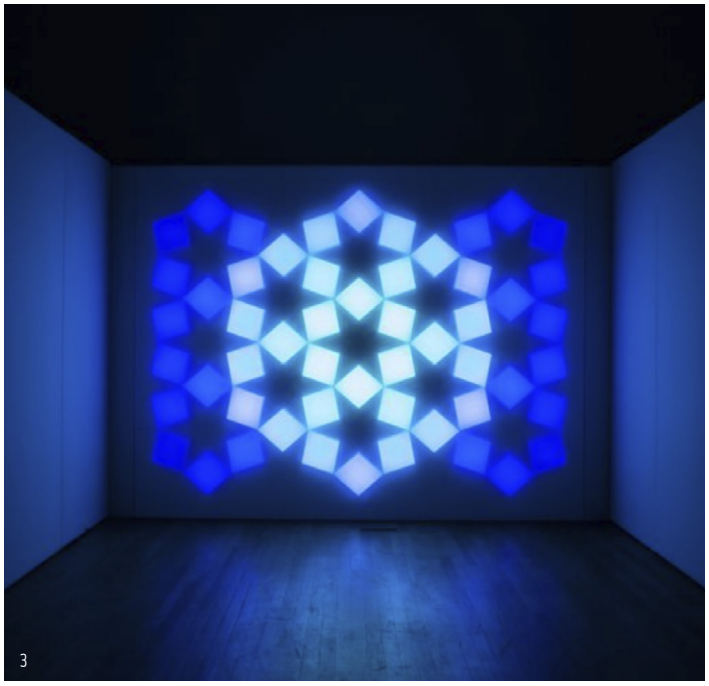
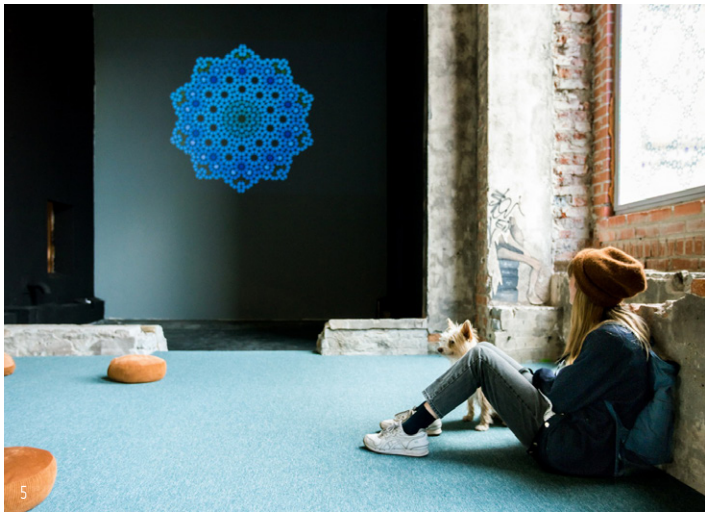
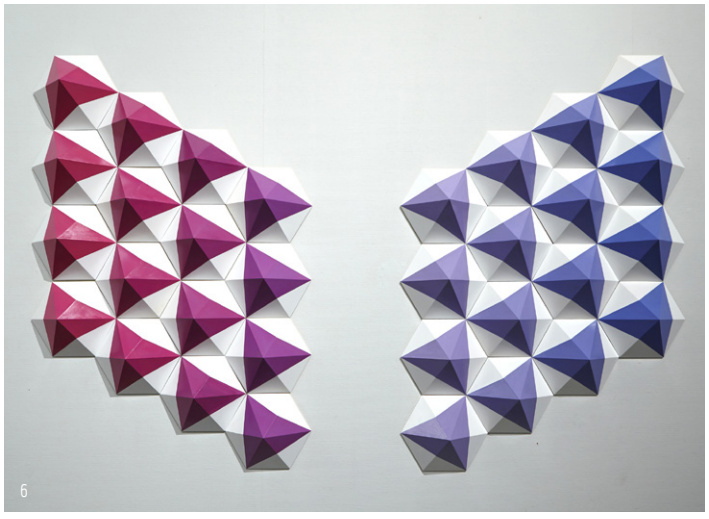


1 Zarah Hussain, *Double Star Supernova* (detail), 42 pieces of cast resin, gesso plaster, paint, varnish, 80x80x12cm, 2014.
2 Zarah Hussain, *Magic Carpet II*, animated projection commissioned for the Walthamstow Garden Party, 2015.
3 Zarah Hussain, *Invisible Threads*, light installation. Commissioned by: the Barnaby Festival Macclesfield in 2018
4 Zarah Hussain
5 Zarah Hussain, '*Forgotten Enlightenments*' exhibition at Halle 14, Germany, 2019. Photo: Walther Le Kon
6 Zarah Hussain, *SuperSymmetry*, 32 pieces of cast resin, gesso plaster, paint, varnish, 166x140x12cm, 2014.





become so much easier to have a presence in the multiple digital spaces out there. It is much easier to share work, to collaborate, to find other creative people, to pursue niche ideas and interests.

If you have a specific painting query, there will be a forum somewhere that can answer your questions. In my everyday practice, this easy access to tech can be a blessing and a curse! Sometimes, I will force myself to keep my phone out of the studio because I need some mental space to figure out issues in my painting, or simply because I need to think. I am the queen of procrastination and the buzzing and beeping of my phone can be a huge distraction. I can spend hours and hours just scrolling on Instagram, so while it is a good thing overall, for me it has to be used in moderation.

20 years into the 21st century, what is the role of art and the artist?
In 2020, I spent my time thinking deeply about two things: Covid-19 and the death of George Floyd. Both these things will have a deep and profound impact on the arts.

Firstly, the global pandemic has made me reflect and think about my work in a new way. I personally believe that artists have a huge role to play in helping society process the trauma and difficulties we have faced because of Covid-19. The art world won't be the same as it was before the pandemic. There are already job losses and huge financial difficulties for many. I don't want to downplay the challenges ahead, but artists are resilient and creative and I think we have a huge role in healing, processing and making sense of this collective global trauma through creativity and making art.

Secondly, if like me you are from a minority background it is something you are never allowed to forget. It is the dark current that underpins everyday life. All my working life I have worked in the creative industries – firstly in television production and then in the visual arts. Often, in both these arenas, I have been the only person of colour in the room. I believe that the role of art is to increase understanding of other people, cultures and backgrounds, to see things from multiple perspectives – to shine a light on creativity from all over the world, not to only see things through the viewpoint of old white men. Many in the art world have responded to the Black Lives Matter movement by promising to change. I really hope that they do.

Louisa Buck is a writer and broadcaster on contemporary art. She has been London Contemporary Art Correspondent for The Art Newspaper since 1997. She is a regular reviewer and commentator on BBC radio and TV. As an author she has written catalogue essays for institutions including Tate, Whitechapel Gallery, ICA London and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In 2016, she authored The Going Public Report for Museums Sheffield. Her books include Moving Targets 2: A User's Guide to British Art Now (2000), Market Matters: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Art Market (2004), Owning Art: The Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook (2006), and Commissioning Contemporary Art: A Handbook for Curators, Collectors and Artists (2012). She was a Turner Prize judge in 2005.

Hair Stands on End, digital print, 2021

Nora Silva is a Spanish-Chilean researcher and artist based in London and Madrid.

Hair Stands on End rethinks the validity of material, questioning the degree of realism in digital presence. Moving gradually towards experience mediated by technology, Nora is curious about how feasible imagined touch is, and how close it can get to a legitimate encounter. Forced out of the studio due to impossible rent prices in London, Nora has moved her studio into a 3D environment, where sculptures and performances are not bound by health and safety or the limitations of physics. She wanders in-between states, projecting sculptures using Instagram filters, and pushing her 3D skills to achieve realistic material effects for a confused pseudo-real. Sculptures can then perform for the viewer in their own self-contained context.

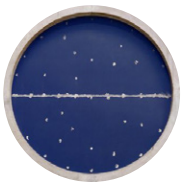
Nora graduated from the Royal College of Art, and as an artist has performed at leading UK institutions such as Tate Exchange, Design Museum and Camden Arts Centre in London. She uses performance as a signifying tool, an active process in the genesis of alternative cosmologies, a mechanism to resist imposed subjectivities. As a researcher, Nora is interested in the role of food in the arts, the post-natural, and contemporary socio-political theory. She also co-directs The Gramounce, an exhibition supper club, and MilesKm, an arts collective for the research of collaborative practices within the arts.

norasilva.com
@noramutcho

You can use Nora's sculpture filter by scanning the QR image with the camera in your phone.

Click to download printable PDF of Artwork

I can touch with my mind
and feel the plastic
with my eyes closed.
My hair still stands on end

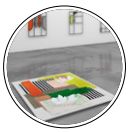


Slow Install: an online project space

George Eksts explains how he works with other artists to create exhibitions on Instagram, plus five a-n members describe how they've responded to a special Slow Install a-n Instagram takeover.

Slow Install is an artist-led project run by artist George Eksts and hosted on Instagram @slow_install. An online project space without any physical or commercial aspect, it is a place where artists can test ideas for work they'd like to make, as well as explore connections between existing works. It has a non-linear exhibition format, avoiding the install > opening > exhibition > deinstall schedule of a physical gallery. This means that artworks can be added, repositioned, stacked, removed, and reintroduced at any date, like an endless (and slow) install.





A Q&A with… George Eksts, Slow Install founder

Holly Willats: How did Slow Install get started?
George Eksts: It started with performance – I'd motion-captured a series of looping dances with Fernanda Muñoz-Newsome and needed a space to show them in. The gallery space seemed the most neutral and simple. I showed one of the performances at The London Open at the Whitechapel Gallery, and while making it I realised that I could easily invite other artists to show their work in the space: a digital exhibition within a physical one. It was nice in a large group show to dissolve the boundaries between artists, which is something I've tried to continue – I don't do separate shows but the works just join a larger flow.

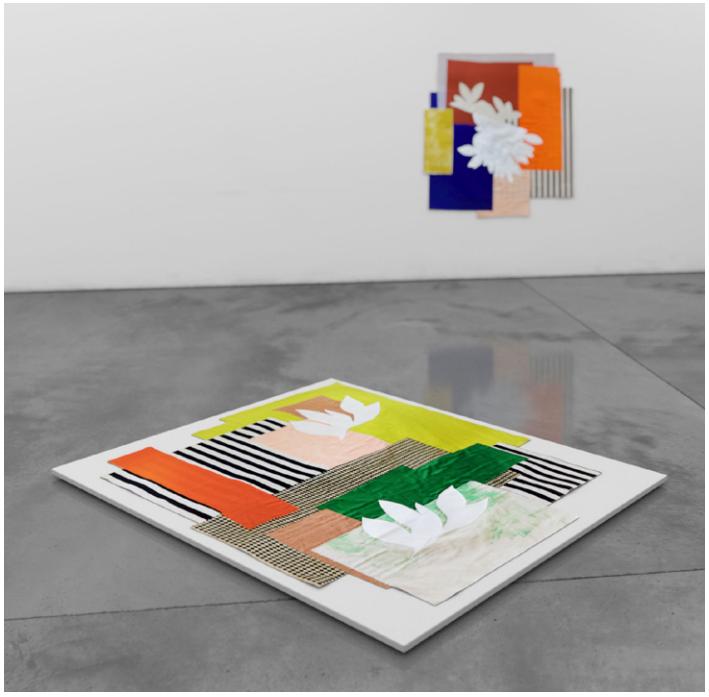
What does an invitation to a participating artist look like, how do you approach working with them?
It's quite open-ended at the start of the process, and the process can be lengthy, depending on how involved the artist wants to be. I want it to be useful and enjoyable for them, so I'll suggest a range of involvement, from copying existing works (which is a simpler process), to showing a prototype – a work that doesn't yet exist but could (which is more complex). Either way, there's a lot of going back and forth, changes to make, and sometimes new ideas or variations come out of this process. It's quite collaborative but in the end it's always the artist's work, and I think most artists are pretty good curators of their own work. I try not to interfere too much and just let the work do its own thing. As there are no deadlines, I let the process go on until we're both happy.

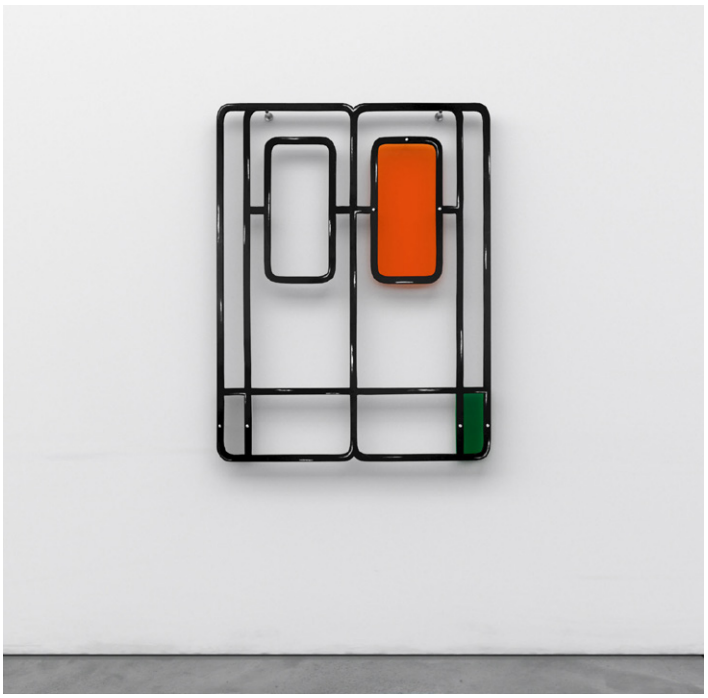
Why did you choose to host the project on Instagram, rather than a website or another platform?
I've been showing my own work on a personal website for almost 20 years and have never had much of an audience or engagement! Since I started hosting projects on Instagram, I've just had so much more viewing and feedback. It's limiting in some ways but limitations can also be helpful. For example, the limit on video duration [which used to be 15 seconds] and how it seamlessly looped, led me to develop the short, repeating dance animations.

The Slow Install Instagram bio says, 'OPENING SOON / NEVER'. How do you view the narrative of the project and its timeline?
There's no opening and closing and therefore no separation between shows and artists, everything just flows along loosely; works disappear but don't technically leave the space, so they can come back at any time, and the entire history of the project is preserved in place but invisibly. This comes from my older moving-image work where I always tried to get away from linear time and narrative structure. As well as this, it makes the project more enjoyable, in terms of the open-ended process and the lack of deadlines and associated stress. It's all quite unplanned and intuitive, and feels like it has its own slow force and direction, and I try to just let it happen. Making exhibitions digitally really helps with this as it's so easy to reposition and try lots of different configurations until something works.

How have you designed the space that the installs take place in? Does this change?
I started with a very basic white cube and added an alcove and a doorway. The floor was borrowed from Newport Street Gallery, via a photograph looking down from an upper level. I worked as a gallery invigilator for a while so spent a lot of time in those kinds of spaces, with nothing to do but look around. I added faint scuffs to the walls, where people would lean or brush against them, for a trace of physical attendance. A problem with creating virtual spaces is that anything is possible, which I think leads to bad fantasy architecture that detracts from the work. At first I thought I'd adapt the space more frequently but it seems to have settled into a form that works well enough.

How have you gone about including works like Michelangelo's *Crouching Boy*, and Kazimir Malevich's *Suprematist* Painting?
The *Crouching Boy* is scanned from a plaster copy in the V&A Cast Courts – it's already a 3D copy using 19th





Top left: Fiona Curran, *I Live By Leaves*, 170 x 149 cm, (top); *Like seeing fallen brightly away*, 170 x 149 cm, (bottom)
Top right: David Murphy, *X (forty-first)*, 38 x 28cm, (left); *X (forty-ninth)*, 38 x 28cm, (right)
Bottom left: Nika Neelova, *Stalactites*, 301 x 116 x 74 cm
Bottom right: Milly Peck, *Alight (4)*, 122 x 161 x 7cm

century technology, while the original marble is in the Hermitage Museum, so this is the third generation. The Malevich paintings were in the Stedelijk Museum and were recreated simply through photographs I took whilst visiting, which anyone can do. I've also used images downloaded from museum websites to recreate works. I tag the institutions but they're never interested enough to give an opinion. With these classical artworks, I don't need to get permission and can treat them with some levity, for example by reframing, turning them upside down or stacking them up quite carelessly. It's nice to do this alongside the works by living artists, which conversely I have to treat with much more care and consent.

What opportunities has Slow Install offered for you and your own work?
I've continued to show my own work in the space and have used it a lot to prototype works that I've then had fabricated, so it's helped with decision making; also with writing proposals and applications, as it's good to have well made and accurate visualisations. But mainly, it's been great to connect with other artists and curators. It can be quite isolating to work on a computer most of the time and it's so good to involve other people and expand the space in that way.

What has been a Slow Install highlight thus far?
I really enjoyed making the post which starts off with a lot of artworks (shown previously and separately) and then proceeds in a sequence of gradually removing them until a more considered arrangement remains, like a kind of curation by subtraction. At different times I was working backwards as well as forwards in terms of the sequence, which was interesting to me. It's always good to bring works back in, too – all the hard work is already done and it felt very playful.

How did you select the five artists you have collaborated with for Slow Install's takeover of a-n's Instagram account?
I usually make choices based more on the work than the artist. For this exhibition, I was looking for work that could function at any scale and hold its own in a large space. I don't often show five artists' work at the same time so the approach was different to normal. Although the works shown were arrived at after a period of discussion, and reevaluation in the context of the other pieces, that seemed to be a good starting point. I look at thousands of artists' accounts online, and keep hundreds of screenshots of those that just have an immediate aesthetic appeal, so I already had a large pool from which to start.

Ryan Orme, *They always bring you flowers*, 300 x 210 x 76 cm

Slow Install's a-n Instagram takeover

3-10 September

Fiona Curran, David Murphy, Nika Neelova, Ryan Orme and Milly Peck.

View at: instagram.com/anartistsinfo

Nika Neelova, *Fragments Shored Against The Ruins*, 550 x 437 x 230 cm

Nika Neelova, *Stalactites*, 301 x 116 x 74 cm; Michelangelo, *Crouching Boy*, 54 cm;
David Murphy, *The X Series*, 38 x 28cm (each)

The five artists answer one question

How did you approach this unusual opportunity from Slow Install, and what does it offer your practice that is different to your usual project brief?

Fiona Curran My practice moves between studio and site-specific commissions so I am used to working with a range of media across different scales. Collage plays a central role in my work and I often make models and maquettes in the studio to explore ideas between two and three dimensions. I enjoy the way that models can offer endless possibilities regardless of whether they are actualised.

The ethos of Slow Install seems to follow a similar playful and experimental sense of possibility using the tools of the digital, rather than my usual low-fi approach to working with materials. Cutting and pasting, however, translate across from the scalpel and cutting mat into the screen and pixel.

We spoke about the horizontal and the vertical, about the wall and the floor and about the different scales of the work – real and imagined. I have always been interested by the idea of imaginary places, and in some sense Slow Install is about that space of imagination but also a space of illusion, fantasy and perhaps also trickery. It's an intriguing space and I was happy to trust the process and to see how it made me look at my work from a new perspective.

David Murphy Slow Install presents a 'can't believe your eyes' moment, where the slip between real and virtual is almost imperceptible. I liked that it is a space where veracity is contested, or just ignored if it stands in the way of something exciting, and where renditions of existing work can join flights of imagination that might otherwise be physically unbuildable.

For someone who does a lot of playing with and teasing or testing of materials in the studio to find intriguing outcomes, this new approach is really freeing. It increases and extends the scope of works or techniques I thought I knew, and opens up new possibilities for thinking about (and conveying to others) where the work might go next.

Nika Neelova In approaching this project, I was very interested to think what it means to make work that doesn't occupy physical space, and with a production process that doesn't take place in the studio. My work is usually very labour intensive and having the opportunity to step out of my default production sequences has allowed me to focus on very different elements of the work.

I was attracted to the collaborative aspect of the project, in particular channeling George's amazing skill and vision to create digital copies of existing works, as well as prototypes of pieces and ideas not yet/ever realised irl. Many of my sculptures survive only through documentation, and Slow Install has created this incredible Instagram-based platform with no physical presence that in my opinion also underlines this side of object making today.

Creating 3D models from existing works was for me a way of giving them a digital afterlife. It was also a kind of reversal of the process of making work, from sketches that often involve transforming something 2D into 3D. I was very curious to explore this leap between dimensions, and to imagine how an existing sculpture can fold into a digital copy addressing gravity, material properties, and surface reflectivity in the digital realm.

Ryan Orme Sculpture is an impractical habit at the best of times, and I somehow made it worse by getting into architectural-scale structures when I studied at the Slade. I've not been able to work like that since

studying; I had to move studio during the pandemic, and now we have a young baby who has her own storage/stuff-related challenges as well! I've ended up working on small desk-sized works for quite a while but unavoidably my sketchbook has started filling up with expensive-to-make, hard-to-store looking objects.

This project has been a fantastic way of developing these ideas in a light-footed, practical way. The collaboration has been a very satisfying and headache-free process, which I'd like to return to in the future. (It has also left me with a new book of bad ideas!)

Milly Peck My work sits between the two and three-dimensional, so the digitally rendered environment of Slow Install is very interesting to me as it embodies both the territory of flat digital image and sculptural entity. The series titled *Alight* that I have used for this project was made for a previous exhibition where the works were part of a larger installation and so were visually more fragmented: acting more like frames through which to see other aspects of the exhibition.

With Slow Install, the series can be seen in a more unified, regular format allowing the sculptures to function in a newly graphic, almost painterly way. Their linear, hand-drawn quality becomes exaggerated in this virtual hang so they are suggestive of something diagrammatic or functional and I think simultaneously become less architecturally suggestive. It also permits the coloured layers of the work to contrast dramatically with the virtual white walls in a way they could not previously.

In this sense, the project brief has given me the opportunity to realise this work in an untested context, one which plays very directly with the indeterminable space between the two and three-dimensional and gives the series a unique viewing distance which has not been possible in reality.

Fiona Curran (b.1971, Manchester) read Philosophy at the University of Manchester before studying at Manchester School of Art and the Slade School of Fine Art. She teaches at the Royal College of Art in London, lives in Hertfordshire and works from her studio at Wysing Arts Centre in Cambridge. Fiona has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally including solo exhibitions at the Broadway Gallery, Letchworth Garden City; Cornerhouse, Manchester; Chapter Gallery, Cardiff; MAC, Birmingham; and Touchstones, Rochdale. Fiona has also undertaken a series of site-specific public art projects for organisations including the National Trust, Kielder Forest Trust and Vital Arts. She is currently working on a permanent sculptural commission with the Contemporary Art Society for Eddington in Cambridge.
fionacurran.co.uk / @fiona_curran_

George Eksts (b.1978) is a London-based artist using animation, photography, drawing and sculpture to explore ideas of progress, potential and completion. He studied at Falmouth College of Art and Royal College of Art, and has participated in residencies at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris and Bemis Center, Omaha. He was Digital Print Fellow at Royal Academy Schools, 2011-13. He has exhibited in group exhibitions at New Contemporaries, ICA London and Liverpool Biennial; and London Open, Whitechapel Gallery. Solo exhibitions include: Hayward Gallery Concrete, London (2012); Fondation Espace Écureuil, Toulouse (2013); Mansions of the Future, Lincoln (2019); Sidney Cooper Gallery, London (2016); and Tintype, London (2020).
cargocollective.com/eksts / @georgeksts

David Murphy (b.1983, Newcastle Upon Tyne) studied at the Glasgow School of Art (2006) and currently lives and works in London. He was the recipient of the Kenneth Armitage Foundation Fellowship, London (2015-2017), completed a residency with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (2014), and exhibited at the John Moores Painting Prize (2016) and the Jerwood Drawing Prize (2017). Recent exhibitions include New Art Centre, Roche Court, Wiltshire (2020); Bartha Contemporary, London (2020); ALMA ZEVI Venice, Italy (2019); British Council, Cairo (2016); Galleria Monica de Cardenas, Milan (2015); PEER, London (2014). Murphy has worked on large-scale commissions for the National Trust; The Dales Museum; Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop; and The Blanket at the Piece Hall, Halifax. Forthcoming projects include a permanent new installation for Oxford House, Oxford Street, London (with Great Portland Estates and Modus Operandi Art Consultants, 2021) and a new public sculpture for the historic St Mary's Church, Harlow, in association with Harlow Arts Trust, Essex (2021). He is represented by ALMA ZEVI (Venice/London), Monica De Cardenas (Milan/Zuoz).
davidmurphystudio.co.uk / @_davidmurphystudio

Nika Neelova (b. 1987, Moscow, Russia) lives and works in London. Neelova graduated with a BA from the Royal Art Academy, The Hague, and an MA in Sculpture from the Slade School of Art, London. She was awarded the Kenneth Armitage Young Sculptor Prize, the Land Security Prize Award, the Royal British Society of Sculptors Bursary Award, and was the winner of Saatchi New Sensations. In 2017 Neelova attended an alternative study programme organised by the Wysing Art Centre. Neelova's work has been exhibited in the UK and internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include 'EVER' at The Tetley, Leeds (2019), and 'Glyphs', Noire Gallery, Turin (2019). Selected group shows include: 'Silence is so accurate', Geukens de Vil Antwerp (2020); 'Seventeen. The Age of Nymphs', Mimosa House London (2019); She Sees the Shadows, DRAF (London) & Mostyn (Llandudno) (2018). Upcoming exhibitions include, solo show 'SILT' at Brighton CCA, and group shows at the New Art Centre Roche Court, and NITJA Centre for Contemporary Art in Oslo.
nikaneelova.com / @nikaneelova

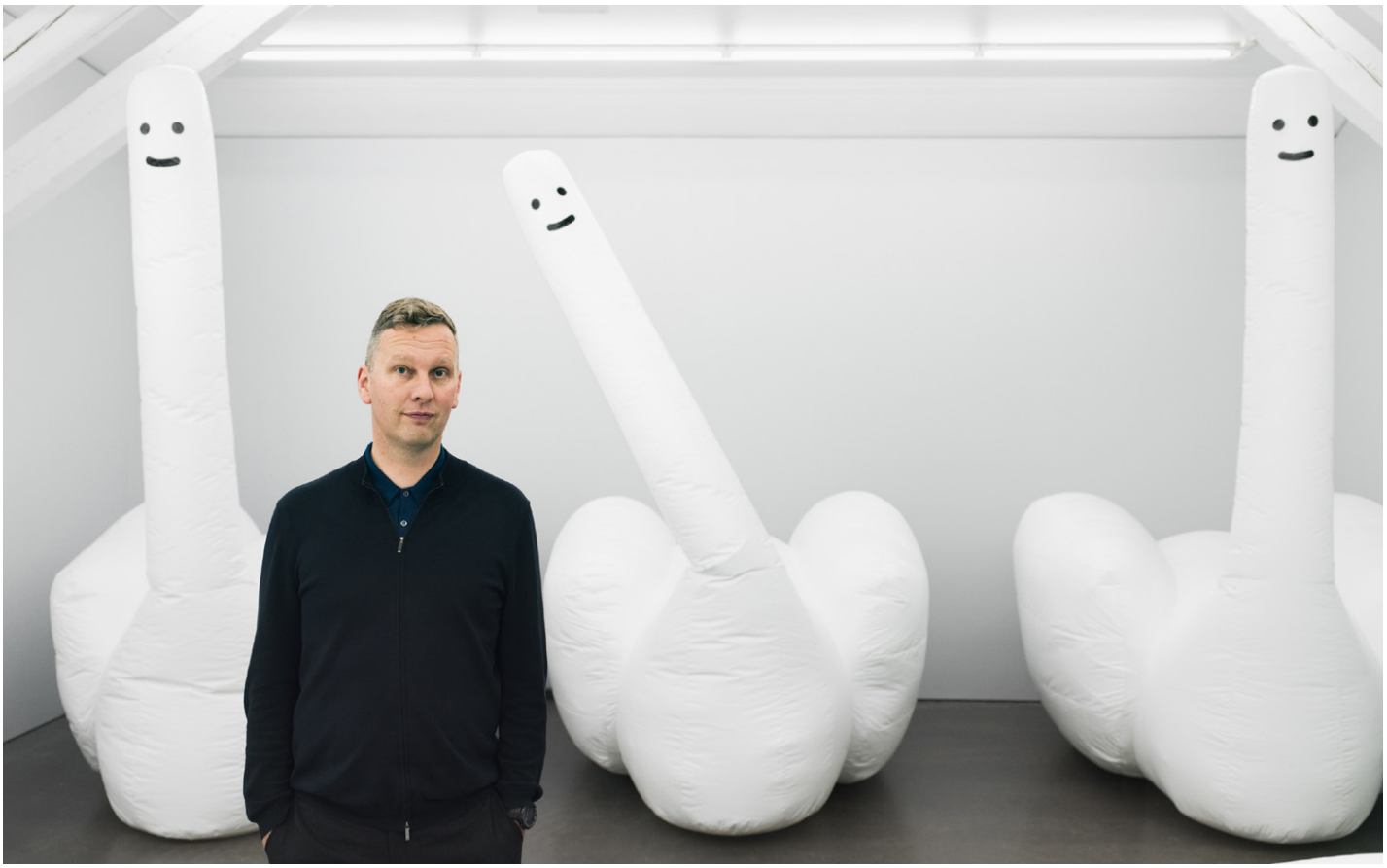
Ryan Orme (b.1986) is a London-based artist working across drawing, painting and sculpture. He studied his Fine Art (BA Hons) at UWE, Bristol 2009 and Sculpture (MFA) at the Slade, 2019. While at the Slade, he was awarded the Felix Slade Bursary and the Prankerd Jones Memorial grant. He was also selected for the prestigious HKBU residency in Hong Kong, 2019. Ryan was selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2019 and Tower International 2020.
ryanorme.com / @ryankai_orme

Milly Peck (b.1990) is an artist based in London whose work encompasses drawing, sculpture, painting and installation. She is currently undergoing a six-month residency, The Bridget Riley Fellowship, at The British School At Rome, Italy, until September 2021. She holds a BFA in Fine Art from The Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford (2012) and an MA in Sculpture from The Royal College of Art (2016). Recent exhibitions include: 'A Matter Of Routine', solo exhibition, VITRINE Gallery, Basel, Switzerland, (2020-21); 'ebc023', East Bristol Contemporary, Bristol (2019); 'Survey', Jerwood Space, London (touring to g39, Cardiff; The Bluecoat, Liverpool; BALTIC, Newcastle, 2018-19). Recent awards include: Jerwood Visual Arts Artist Bursary (2018); David Troostwyk/Matt's Gallery Studio Award (2016).
millypeck.com / @millypeck

40 YEARS **40 ARTISTS**

DAVID SHRIGLEY

David Shrigley discusses the importance of art for health and wellbeing and how social media is "a forum, like an exhibition or a book." Interview by Louisa Buck



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1 David Shrigley at Spritmuseum, Stockholm, 2018. Photo by Jonas Lindström. Courtesy David Shrigley and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

2 David Shrigley, *Dear Mother*, 2018, neon, 171.5 x 176.5cm. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. © David Shrigley. All Rights Reserved, DACS. 2021.

David Shrigley OBE (born 1968 in Macclesfield, lives and works in Brighton) is known for his cartoonish ink drawings, usually accompanied by words, which satirically capture the banalities, cruelties and failures of everyday life with dark, deadpan humour. He also makes sculpture, photographs, prints, paintings, installations and films, with subjects ranging from the serious – unemployment, child welfare, mental health – to the absurd – the sexual fantasies of animals, the inner thoughts of aliens, or a taxidermied kitten holding a hand-lettered placard stating, 'I'm Dead.' In 2013 Shrigley was shortlisted for the Turner Prize. His sculpture for the Fourth Plinth in London's Trafalgar Square, titled *Really Good* (2016-18) consisted of a giant bronze hand giving a thumbs-up with an exaggeratedly lengthened thumb. In an a-n article announcing the commission he described the work as "slightly satirical but also serious at the same time".

Shrigley appears in the a-n archive numerous times, including in Artists Newsletter, November 1991 when 'students and staff from Glasgow School of Art Sculpture and Environmental Art departments [took] part in a scheme to create sculpture for Callendar Business Park, Falkirk'. In December 1999 a-n Magazine published an interview with Shrigley, who responded with handwritten answers sent by fax. In reply to the question, "Is there an end to your drawings, can they go on forever?" Shrigley wrote: "They've gone on forever so far. I think I'll always make drawings because I've always liked doing it. Sometimes I get bored with it, I go and make some sculpture for a while, but I always go back to it."

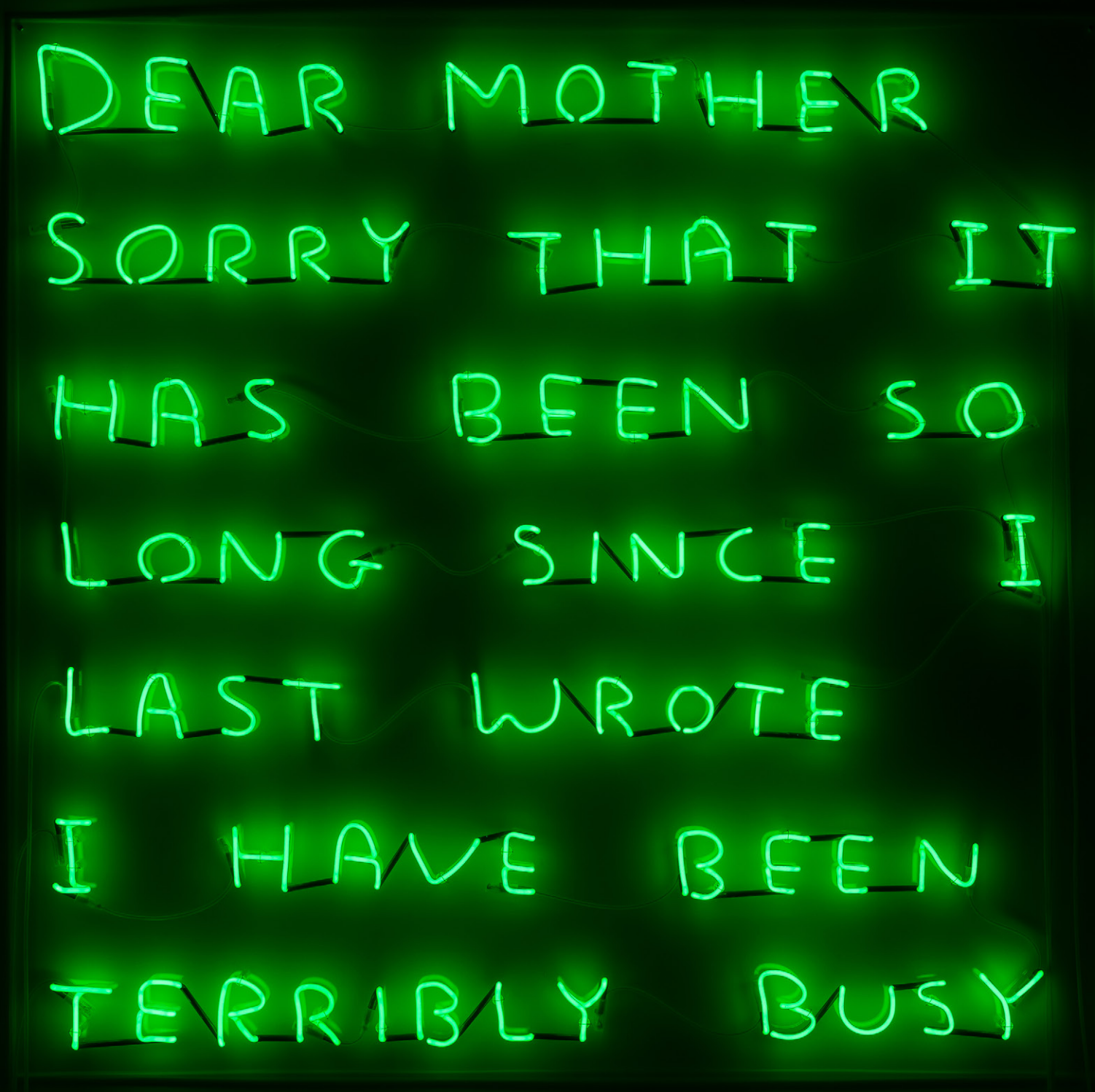
In August 2015 he appeared in an article about a mobile exhibition of Scotland-based Turner Prize winners and nominees, ahead of that year's prize opening in Glasgow. In June 2012 Shrigley provided the cover artwork – a hand-drawn speech bubble against a yellow background, which read 'What the hell are you doing?' – for the final print edition of a-n Magazine.

What have been the main changes you've experienced as an artist over the last 10 to 20 years?

I'm not a very art world person, really. I'm not one of those people that gets excited about going to Art Basel, Frieze or whatever. It's a necessary evil as far as I'm concerned. The privilege of being an artist for me is just to be able to make the work and to be in the studio and to do what you want to do. I've never really understood what ambition one should have within the art world: I think you're lucky if you have a choice of things to do and if you make a living, then you're lucky, too.

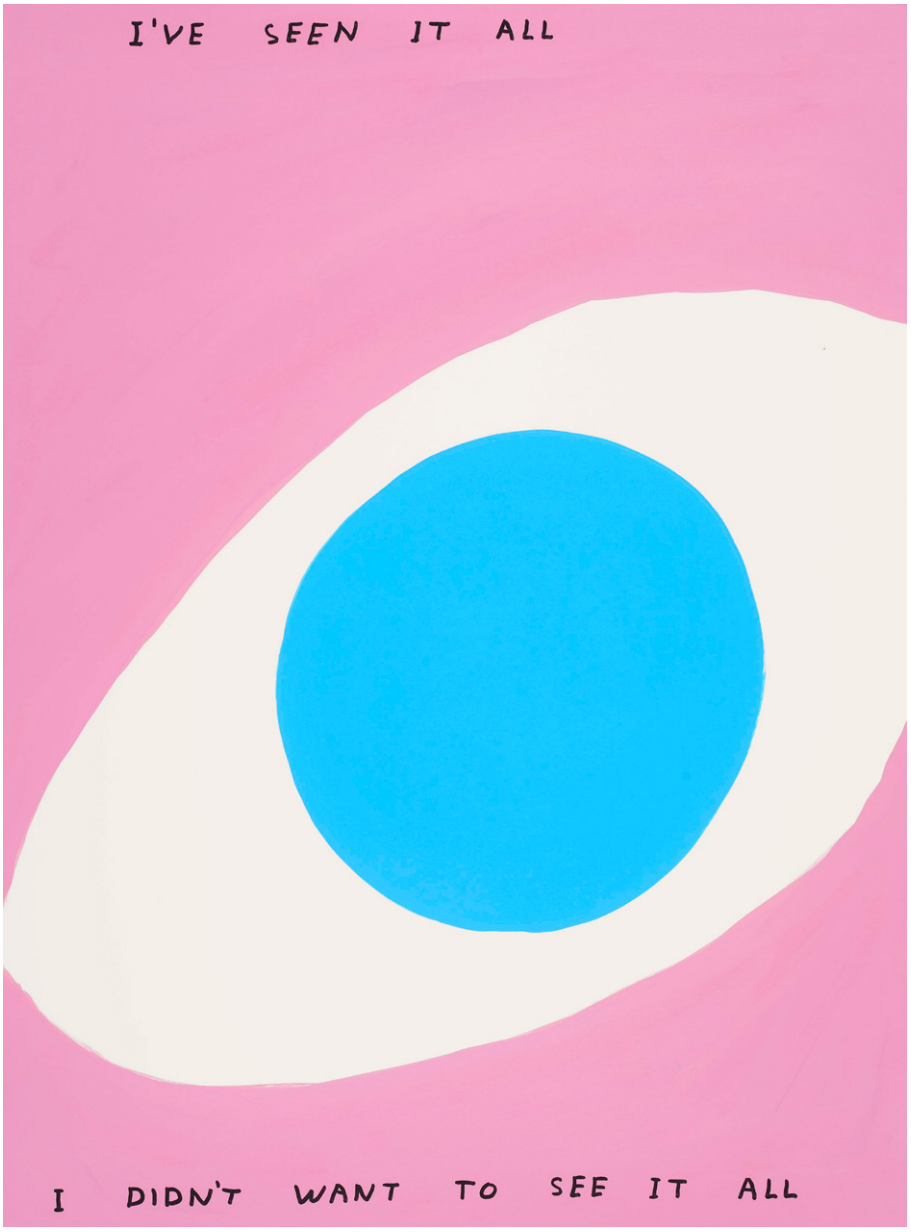
I've always been seen as a graphic artist, the guy who does the funny drawings within the world of fine art. I've always published books and that's how I came to be known as an artist, through publishing. 2010 was a moment of change when I stopped publishing with Redstone Press, a small one-man-in-an-office publisher, and started publishing with Canongate, a large independent publisher.

Then I did an anthology of my graphic work and they said it would be really good if you did some social media, Twitter and Facebook. And that was a novelty for me at the time and I just went along with it. And


DEAR MOTHER
SORRY THAT IT
HAS BEEN SO
LONG SINCE I
LAST WROTE
I HAVE BEEN
TERRIBLY BUSY

THE HORSE DOES AS HE PLEASES

THE RIDER MUST ACCEPT IT



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3 David Shrigley, *Untitled*, 2020, acrylic on paper, 76 x 56cm. Framed: 82 x 62cm. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. © David Shrigley. All Rights Reserved, DACS. 2021.
4 David Shrigley, *Untitled*, 2020, acrylic on paper, 76 x 56cm. Framed: 82 x 62cm. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. © David Shrigley. All Rights Reserved, DACS. 2021.

then when the next book came round a couple of years later, I noticed that the number of followers I had on Twitter directly correlated to the amount of money I was given as an advance – and so I was like, Oh, so I now understand how it's monetised.

The end to the story is that I realised that social media is a forum, like an exhibition or a book. And it took me quite a number of years to refine that idea. And then once Instagram came around I started doing that, as it's the most popular form of social media. Now I've realised that it's not just a necessary thing in order to sell books, or to advertise my wares, it's publishing in itself. The book is to promote the Instagram account, rather than vice-versa.

Instagram is more important than publishing a book and probably more important than anything else I do in terms of actually reaching an audience. So that's quite a realisation.

I'm not that excited about Instagram necessarily, but there are things that you can do on it that are unique and interesting. And you can't ignore it, otherwise you're a total fool. And it's not just about publishing, my Instagram account is about selling the work as well, it has a real impact on that. It's really important to the gallery. So this is a big change.

20 years into the 21st century, what is the role of art and the artist?

Well, the role of the artist is to make the art, but what's the role of the art? I suppose a trite response is that art is good for our health and that engagement with the arts improves our health and wellbeing. And this is something that I'm becoming increasingly interested in.

When I first made a living as an artist, there was always a feeling of, Oh, this is a very fortunate situation I find myself in, and then you meet somebody at a party or whatever, and they say, what do you do? You say, I'm an artist, and they say, Oh, do you have a website? And then they'd look at your website on their smartphone, and they'd say, really? You do this and you make a living? You need to have some kind of self-delusion in order to get over that feeling that you're just some kind of imposter in the real world, somehow.

Realising that art is really important for people's health and wellbeing – not just to engage with it, but to make it – is important for me. I have a lot of correspondence with people who have had difficulties with their mental health and who seem to have a connection to what I do. It's quite difficult to unpick that or to process it, because my job is just to make the work and I'm happy that people have that response to it. I don't see myself as some kind of Pied Piper to lead people out of depression and anxiety, but I guess my work is comedy to some extent and I embrace that.

Then when one is asked to help charitable causes, if you have a certain level of success and affluence it becomes your duty to do that. I think in the next few years when the consequences of our current situation kick in, we will have some serious problems in terms of people's mental health and wellbeing that will need to be addressed and which aren't going to be funded by the NHS and the state. That's a role that I've started to really think about recently and it's clarified what I feel I need to do and the causes I want to support.

TOTALLER says: It's Better 2 Be AN US, 2021. 297x210 mm,
watercolour, marker pen and gum strip on paper

TOTALLER is an assemblage of artists based around the North of England.

Garfield fridge magnet says: defund the police. Work till your paw pads bleed. We're knuckle deep in debt. Give us a commission. The proceeds split. Ideas pooled. A bad smell blowing in from the '90s. Garbage pail kids. Riding a 50cc motorbike down a concrete drainage channel – the Los Angeles River. Skateboarding in an empty reservoir on a Yorkshire hillside. Singing Hawkwind karaoke-style in a Tyneside pub. Having a party in the studio and James Bond brings the pizza. Takeaway menu bunting. The origin story. The sacred seed. The Thing. We sit in silence. A circle of friends. Sounds of summer drift up from the street. We shuffle, we speak. We are together. At work, in friendship. It's better to be an us. An us is a portal.

Right now we feel very close to you.

@totaller_
totaller.net

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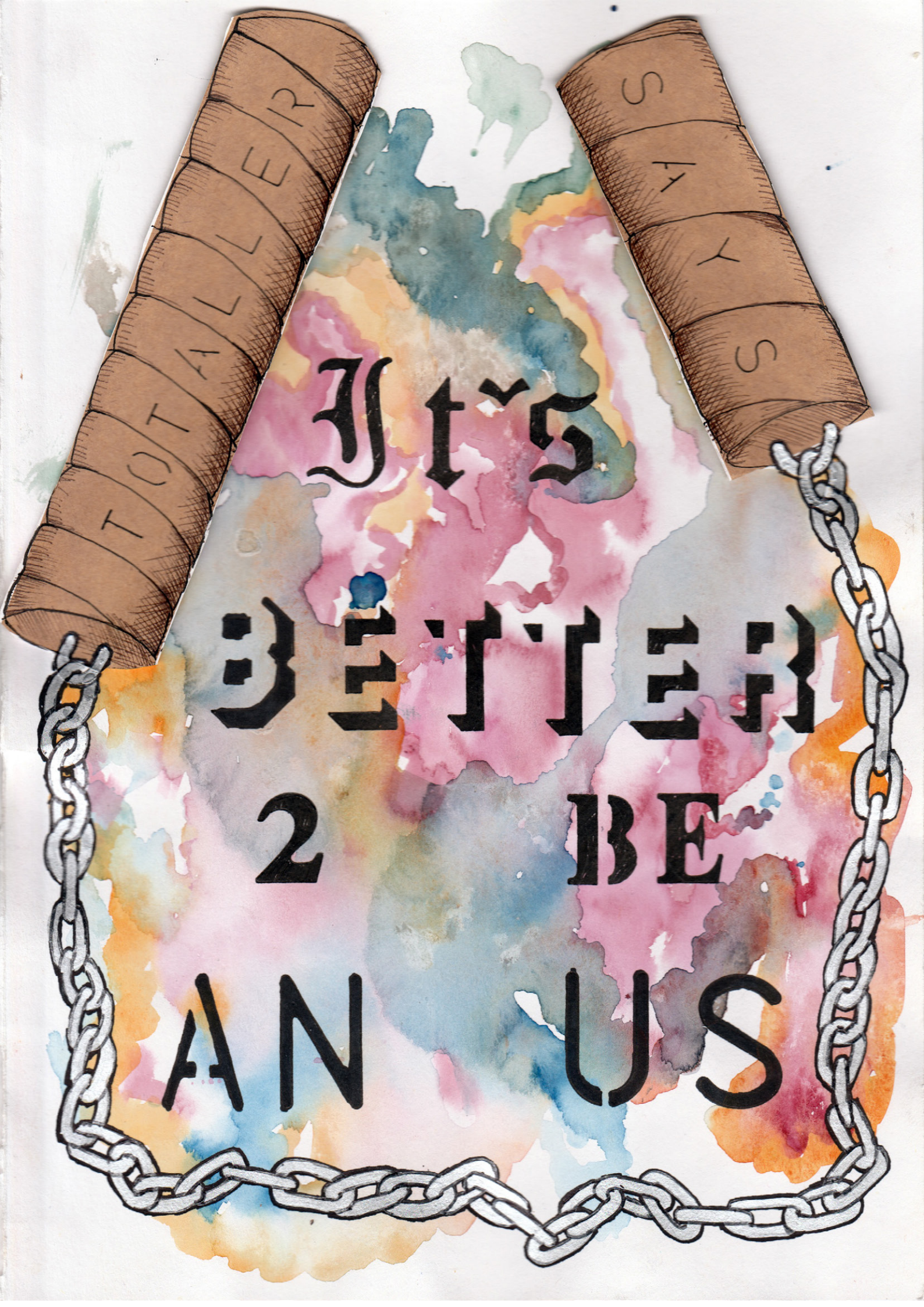
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