

DISCORDER

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???
2020

"THAT QUARANTINED MAGAZINE FROM CİTR 101.9 FM"
The Lost Months

Local + Free

I CANNOT
FIND THE
TIME EVEN
THOUGH
IT'S ALL I HAVE

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LOST MONTHS

April - August, 2020



Illustration by Abi Taylor

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That QUARANTINED Magazine from CiTR 101.9 FM

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cover courtesy of Julia Cundari

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@KITZKERS

illustration by Katrina Gulane

This issue is a marker of major disruption, and it exists now as a strange object that straddles them all within its pages and stories. I've always thought of *Discorder* as a magazine which told stories through tangential conversation, and here we have that in it's most honest form. It's all conversation, with little topicality. As a combination of the April, May and Summer issues, you'll read stories here that are far more liberated from their time cages, to be consumed like a capsule of all the major disruption we've faced in the last 150 (?) days. So be warned, this is not a current issue, nor a perfect one, but you are welcome to these words.

As the pandemic continues to make nonsense of our contemporaneity, it also circumvents a long-trained, and self-consciously strict desire to sustain the status quo. I will admit it is a privilege to say the pandemic "changed everything," where in other spheres, COVID played in the same key, but with a much flatter, grim timbre. In his *Ten Premises for A Pandemic*, Ian Alan Paul writes, "a pandemic isn't a collection of viruses, but is a social relation among people, mediated by viruses," suggesting first, to think reflexively of whoever suffers. Second, that the pandemic is not a question of equality, but a call for interdependence. It's a unique opportunity to question the pre-pandemic blueprint we had grown accustomed to.

I'm writing this note in bed. Sunning under a daylamp. Metabolized by two screens — one for visual connection, one to access work. This is a "work day". In pandemic times, strange inversions proliferate. Time becomes something to be in, rather than to fill. To use a popular narrative mold — it is a marker of these strange and uncertain times. The significance of which, to me, is that we are exactly within the opposite. The platitude soothes, but comes with an asterisk. We are not within a moment of strangeness, as much as we are in a moment of exposing normalcy for what it has been: Abject. Not good enough.

My point is that the things of right now — of April, May, June, July and August 2020 — should seem neither strange, nor uncertain. It was strange for Britney Spears to become the new leader of social democracy. I am uncertain if I really *get* zoom raves. It is not, however, strange that the intolerable and unending damage both to individual bodies, and to the body politic, at the hands of policemen, the prison-industrial complex, or the accumulation of institutional violence, is being

protested. Nor, am I uncertain about it. Contempt and power is most dangerous not just when it is held in the hearts of individuals, but when it remains preserved in systems. This system has long since needed dismantling, defunding and civil disobedience. Of this, I am certain.


It is in ways both certain and necessary, we will meet these impervious, and frankly, complex dynamics of class and race, of systematic oppression and colonial violence, with a change to our narrative. I will admit to you I am not an expert at any of this, and *Discorder* has its limitations as a medium — but we are changing. My understanding is that, being socialized in a white settler-colonial state means that we are always deep in the canyon of colonial, white-centric, institutional conditioning. That anti-racist and decolonial work is a constant state in which we interrogate our default settings. Where we readily admit failure, or weakness, and participate in social transformation. CiTR/Discorder has been learning in public — perhaps you will glean it through these pages, or through your pursuits with us. Know that we — and myself, in this strange, dual-citizenship with professional life — will keep working. That we want this work.

Here are some notes on this issue, which you can use like a roadmap: In the beginning, there was Growing Room's resonant exit interview (with Jessica, Aimee, Jillian, Serena) therefore: No feeling abstracted, instead everything made concrete, and shared. *All This Time*, from #3 Gallery and Maria Lima, makes normalcy a transgression, and time a liminal space, therefore: glittering autonomy. Brendan Reid's review of Amna Elnour's *Tip Of Your Tongue*, delights in the esoteric, therefore: intimacy. Marv Hounbo's work with U.N.I.T.Y Collective — which practices community not as something to do, but something to be experienced, therefore: to witness, and to be witnessed. And finally, Sara Bakke writes about Kurt Walker and Michelle Yoon's *s01e03*, in which the intimate visualization of our reality is actualized through interdependence. That our connective tissue is not our technology, but the human bodies behind it. Therefore: we bake the bread, we grow our hair, we dismantle, we friend, we eat, we listen, we argue, we play videogames on Tuesdays, we don't just live through it, but in relation to it.

I hope this helps contextualise this issue, and if not, it is all subject to change by the time this ends up in your tired, but clean, little hands.

Peace, true enlightenment, and fairer distributions of wealth,

\$\$\$<(-_-<) T.



SD Strong

APRIL & MAY
2020

DEE STACEY

WORDS BY MECHAN TURNER

WORDS BY MEGHAN TURNER
ILLUSTRATION BY HAYLEY SCHMIDT
PHOTO BY ALISTAIR HENNING





I haven't had a sex education lesson since I was roughly 14 — I don't remember them well, but I can tell you they weren't like this. Dee Stacey and I go for a Sunday afternoon sangria and I laugh, gasp, and overshare. I listen back to the recording and realise how quickly I had redefined terms I thought I knew — everything Dee said seemed to make more sense.

Such things as, safe sex is about more comfortable, more enjoyable, more pleasurable sex. Yes, you still need to use a condom if you're having a kind of sex that requires it, but there are ways of having sex that don't put you at risk of pregnancy. In fact, there are many ways to have sex that your sex-ed teacher definitely didn't tell you about.

Dee Stacey is a sexual health educator currently working freelance in schools and for an organization called Real Talk. They got a BA in Psychology at UBC, and went on to train with Options for Sexual Health (BC's equivalent of Planned Parenthood). Dee tells me how their experience working as a high school youth worker helped build her syllabus, which includes far more nuanced lessons than baby-making. We talk about the sex-ed I received from ill-equipped and awkward science and P.E. teachers; teachers with whom you feel uncomfortable in the company of anyway — made worse by words like "penetrate." Gender is another conversation that comes up a lot in the classroom. Dee starts the class by writing their name on the board, followed by their preferred pronouns: she/they. This speaks to the

people that need to hear it, and often, those people will approach her after class. It's funny — but not surprising — to hear that a concept as complex as gender is a much easier conversation with second graders than seventh graders, as they can be more open.

Consent is another topic I don't remember coming up in my high school lessons. This is a hot topic with the ninth graders they teach, Dee tells me, "The kids will ask, how do I know if this girl wants to make out with me? I can't just *ask that*." If you feel like you can't have these conversations," she asserts, "maybe *you're* not ready."

Working with a diverse pool of people means that Dee is often faced with conflict, "when you're interacting with someone who's misogynistic... or someone who is super homophobic, you have to speak up," Dee notes, asserting that boundaries are important, but everything can be a teachable moment. Adversity, after all, is exciting in the classroom and it promotes conversation. Although most of what she teaches is science-based, learning with Dee isn't about being right or wrong — in instances where you can't understand another's perspective, it's about respecting that you don't understand, and just being kind.

Dee provides their workshop attendees with the tools to make their own decisions. It is a challenge, for example, to teach that a big age-gap is a red flag, while reinforcing sex positivity and promoting choice. Dee also tries to avoid making people scared of the Internet and strangers, but is there to offer information if you're going to go down that road. She speaks of her own mistakes as lessons, and understands that while sometimes we need to make our own

mistakes, knowledge is power. Through these workshops, she can help people make those safer choices themselves.

Dee works for an organization called Real Talk, which hosts monthly "Pizza Parties" — a meetup offering sex-ed to people with a range of cognitive disabilities. "Pizza parties are really empowering," Dee explains, "People's perceptions of what they deserve in life change in a 2 hour sitting." This is powerful and inspiring, and proof that Dee's brand sex-ed works. Prior to Pizza Parties, there was little support for people with diversabilities and limited access to sexual health advice. Advice — instead of education — was given ad hoc by family members and carers, and in the absence of inclusive spaces, vulnerable populations become even more so. In the many cases where disabled folx experience sexual abuse, it is from their support staff, thus Real Talk hosts workshops for family members *and* the support staff of attendees. It creates a sustainable support system and promotes healthy conversations, and healthy sex lives.

Unlearning is hard, and if we all received the kind of education Dee is offering from the outset, the world would undeniably be having better sex.

Check out:
www.sexualhealthwithdee.com
or follow her:
[@sexualhealthwithdee](https://www.instagram.com/sexualhealthwithdee)





JOE BUFFALO

What about skateboarding had this power?

It taught me life skills and how to tolerate pain, it also kept me sane and out of trouble. The reward of trying a trick a thousand times all summer and finally nailing it. But being in the prairies and kind of isolated, I know how it feels to not have anybody to run to when you've accomplished something awesome. To be able to push that vibe onto the kids, and to show them that if you keep at it, the payoff is huge. Having that power feels pretty wicked!

How was growing up in Maskwacis, Alberta?

It was really rough growing up on the reserve, the land under it was the richest in oil in Canada, so the government paid us off to extract our resources. It created all kinds of greed and violence. It's still a really strong, rich and powerful reserve. My people pre-contact never had a monetary system, so to be given large sums of money kinda messed [us] up, made for a rough environment. I'm still proud to be from there regardless of how bad the media makes it out to be. Also because I am fair — I'm not dark, I'm not white — I got it from my own people, calling me “dirty white boy” and all this. I had this sense of not knowing where I belonged. Back then, everyone who skateboarded was a total outcast and I was like, “Perfect, this is who I belong with, the guys who are getting made fun of and get bottles thrown at from moving cars. Yeah, I wanna roll with those guys.”

What is the difference to other sports for you?

I started skateboarding because there were no coaches, no teammates and no rules. It's individualistic. Every skater has a whole different approach. I grew up playing competitive sports. I went to residential school because my whole family had gone there. I also went there because the hockey was the best and I was

good at it. That's where the scouts would go I was told. I wanted to go to the NHL. So I had that drive and determination, but at the same time I didn't want the label of being a jock. I was a good hockey player, but then the skaters were like, “Ah, you don't wanna be one of those guys.” But that's me! I'm one of those guys! I didn't want to be labelled, but really, I was right in there.”

So you often find yourself in the middle?

Yeah, like mediating, which is okay, I don't mind it. It just sucks at the beginning, that's all.

Skateboarding seems to be the red line in your life. Sounds like a lot of the good came from it.

Obviously getting sponsored right away and traveling opened my eyes to a lot of what's going on with the skate world because we never had that out on the reserve. All this “Hey, I like your skateboarding, here's some free stuff.” What? There's got to be a catch. But there was none, and it led to having even more support. I was skeptical because of the whole “team” feel but it turned out to be filled with so much love that I was proud to be a part of it! Big part of what I never had in hockey. I didn't think there was such a thing. Having sponsors felt like a dream for a kid fresh off the rez!

So you didn't get that kind of support from hockey?

I haven't played hockey to this day, because my dad blew it for me. Everytime it comes up he says, “I should've let you have fun, my son”! It didn't teach me anything. And just, the whole organized sports thing, having teammates and my dad coming down on me 'cause he was vicariously living through me. How good I was at it got outweighed by the seriousness. The ugly side of hockey. That was when I was of age to pull myself out of residential school.

Hi Joe, thank you for talking to me. I just saw you're launching a new project called Nations on social media. How did it come about?

Kristian Baseraba, a rad teacher, had started a program called “Exploring Colonialism, Creativity and Reconciliation through Skateboards” at Salisbury Composite High School. He asked me to speak to the kids and tell them about growing up in Alberta. They loved it and more schools approached me. But when I came back to Vancouver, I couldn't even open a newspaper without losing my cool. I was breaking off chunks of my energy, and taking in that of other troubled youth. So my friends Rose Archie — the backbone of the group — Adam George, Dustin and Tristan Henry and I founded Nations. It's a non-profit based out of Vancouver, and I'm truly stoked to be a part of a necessary movement like this.

What is your approach?

To teach native youth the fundamentals of skateboarding. Growing up on the reserve and being a residential school survivor, skateboarding was a vital tool to have.

Joe Buffalo is a pro skateboarder and actor from Maskwacis, Alberta (Samson Cree Nation). As a direct descendant to Pitikwahanapiwiyn (Poundmaker) his first pro model out with Colonialism Skateboards pays homage to the great leader, and their shared dedication to social justice.

words by
Lisa Mayerhöfer
illustration by
Amrit Krishna
photo courtesy of
TJ Rak

“ I found strength I never even knew I had. That particular feeling is my new addiction. It’s unexplainable! „

How old were you?

I was turning 15. Everybody was getting ready to go back to school, and I'm skating off to the side 'cause I knew that I had pulled myself out. My dad didn't know yet. “Joe's not registered? What?” — yeah, I got into shit. I probably got smacked, but it broke the cycle. Had I not taken the necessary steps to healing, I probably would have just self-terminated like they wanted me to. ‘Cause that is what those schools were put in place for. Just another genocide, like smallpox, tuberculosis and wiping out the buffalo. I was taught to not trust anybody, and always have my guard up. Those schools were just designed to fucking make us fail, to kill the Indian. There's about a handful of people that came out of these schools and succeeded, and it's only because they took the steps to heal themselves. It took me a long time and I still have more healing to do! It's forever ingrained in me so...

What made you ready to heal?

It's because I cheated death so many times. I overdosed on heroin three times in one summer. On the surface you would be like, “Joe looks like the life of the party.” But really deep down inside I was fucking miserable, man! It was a lot of unresolved childhood trauma that still lingered, and I was taking it out on the booze and the drugs. Toxicity still rears its ugly head every once in a while, but I know once I pass these tests, the creator will bless me with more gifts. Rock-bottoming was the best thing ever, because it made me fucking analyze my shit and all the hard times I've endured. As soon as I had this, I realized that I didn't need alcohol to function, ever again. I found strength I never even knew I had. That particular feeling is my new addiction. It's unexplainable!

You had many offers, but Colonialism Skateboards was the company that finally got you to go pro and put out “Pitikwahanapiwiyyin

(Poundmaker)”, your pro model. What changed your mind?

It just seemed right. Micheal Langan, owner of Colonialism Skateboards, is using his platform to educate people on what really took place in Canada's dark history. My story matches all the stories he tells. I was going to put that board graphic [by Vince Dumoulin] out on a different board company, but it wouldn't have had the same impact as launching it with Colonialism. Speaking truths and educating the masses is the aim! Beautiful time to be alive!

What does that board mean to you?

A serious sense of accomplishment after all these years growing up skateboarding. I was presented with opportunities before, but I always thought I wasn't professional enough. Again, it stems back to these institutions, where you're constantly being told you ain't gonna be shit, don't bother trying. You hear that enough you eventually start believing it. So definitely having my name on a board, I can breathe now, and pass along good vibes, and show a strong message to indigenous youth; It's possible if you dream of it! Might have taken 35 years, haha, but it can happen!

Is skateboarding a platform for activism for you?

I was born into this. Having a board, and being a part of a company like Colonialism, that's just an added bonus on top of it. I've always been educating people, and my mum plays a huge part in how I roll. She definitely instilled my morals and values in me. Sure, she'd be compassionate with you, but she wouldn't hesitate twice to stick up for herself and educate you either.

What is she doing?

She served as the National President of the Native Women's Association of Canada from 1997 to 2000.



Right now she is the Chief Executive Officer at Nechi Institute: Center for Indigenous Learning. Marilyn Buffalo, [...] she has a 50-year history of activism and Indigenous policy development behind her, and just keeps on kicking ass and persevering. A truly badass single mother of six whose “make it happen” attitude is how I was raised! I'm so proud of her.

The acting started out kind of accidentally?

Back in late 2015, in Alberta. I was not doing so well, and I got contacted by a skateboard friend of mine, Liam Mitchell, who also made local skate videos. He was filming a music video for A Tribe Called Red and thought I would make a great FIT skateboarding in it. Through this, I met short film director Kevan Funk and he was like, “I'm making my first feature film and I'm kind of stuck on casting the costar... it's about hockey and the dark side of it.” Immediately my residential school hockey stories started coming out — it was sort of an audition that I didn't even know was going on. When my phone rang again in February, it was Kevan. He asked “Have you ever acted?” I said “no.” He flew me in, and we shot in Prince George for 8 days. That film, *Hello Destroyer*, then went on to win all sorts of major awards — we killed it. I ended up getting nominated for a Leo in my first film ever. It has opened the door to so much for me, super fortunate and grateful.

What happened afterwards?

Other people were approaching me for work and I was like, what have I gotten myself into? At the same time I wasn't considered an “actor” because I wasn't properly trained. Back then I was on a street level — I was just starting to get myself together and giving it a go. It became obvious that I couldn't juggle my addictions and acting. It was a whole new world I had to learn — by sobering up, reaching out, getting

training and actually doing the work. Of course, I can shoot from the hip, but to be able to harness that skill and unleash it, that's when you can truly call yourself an actor. I'm still new at this, so it's all pretty intimidating but I'm learning!

There seems to be a family history here too?

My namesake is from my great grandfather, the late Joe Buffalo, who acted in “The Sheriff Of Fractured Jaw” in 1958 with Jayne Mansfield. So we both have an IMDb page, haha. My great-grand-uncle is late actor Gordon Tootoosis, so acting is in my blood. Acting chose me, so I'm gonna channel my energy, hard work, and focus into this and see what can come of it all.

Next to a lot of filming, any other exciting plans coming up?

Colonialism Skateboards has plans of launching another board graphic of mine soon. And there's a fun skate video we're gonna be working on for Menu Skateshop. Aside from the COVID-19 pandemic, I had made some plans for Indigenous youth skateboard workshops this summer alongside Nations. As soon as the dust settles, we can move forward in helping provide for the youth.

Big shout out to my mom Marilyn Buffalo, @Nationskatheyouth, Vince Dumoulin, Micheal at Colonialism Skateboards, Syd and Teen at Menu Skateshop for being super supportive. Vans shoes, Sky Extracts and Michelle Pezel for being so awesome! Also to @Coastterrabc.

Check out Pitikwahanapiwiyyin (Poundmaker) and follow Joe @therealjoedionbuffalo.



OLIVIA DREISINGER

WORDS BY MILENA CARRASCO | ILLUSTRATIONS BY TATIANA YAKOVLEVA | ZINE IMAGE AND 3D RENDERING COURTESY OF OLIVIA DREISINGER

Fear tends to expose the best and worst parts of what makes us human. Be it the greed that guides a hoarder's cart at your local supermarket, to the uplifting sound of cheering against pots and pans. COVID-19 has given us a taste of what living in isolation means and what this might look like for people with chronic illness and disabilities — a reality that artist Olivia Dreisinger is quite familiar with.

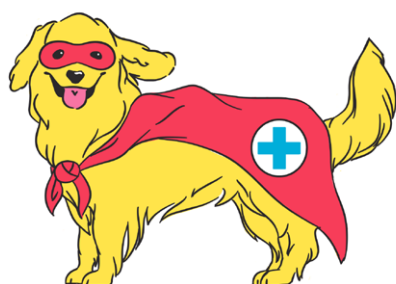
Olivia became chronically ill after a viral infection triggered an immune response that never went away. She describes herself as a “sick independent scholar specializing in all things disability,” and her work ranges from educational pamphlets like “Make Events Accessible,” to a documentary about a cosplaying service dog team, as well as interactive short stories, zines and animations. Speaking with Olivia, I wondered how she deals with isolation and pandemic as a chronically ill artist.

Tell us about your creative process, I understand it takes place inside mostly?

Yeah, it's actually never been that much of a problem for me, to be honest, because I've been intermittently sick since I was a kid. I have always been the home-dweller type. I think what you'll see in the work that I do now is I've always put what I've learned from my own isolation into my creative and academic practices. My work has always built accessibility into it and, because of my illnesses, I need to work slowly. I need to sleep a lot and I need to stay home, or at least, really close by in case I need to return home to rest. And so, I think the medium has just grown out of that. I write a lot. I taught myself how to make 3D animations just so I could sit at home and be very physically still while working. I used to also take photographs when I was more able-bodied, but I've had to re-evaluate how I do that now. I'm still working on how to make photography work with my body. More recently, I've been working with plants. I've been making herbal salves and teas and vinegars to support my body through illness. I'm also trying to figure out if there is a way to bring that into my creative practices. You have to be really resourceful, I think, when you work from home.

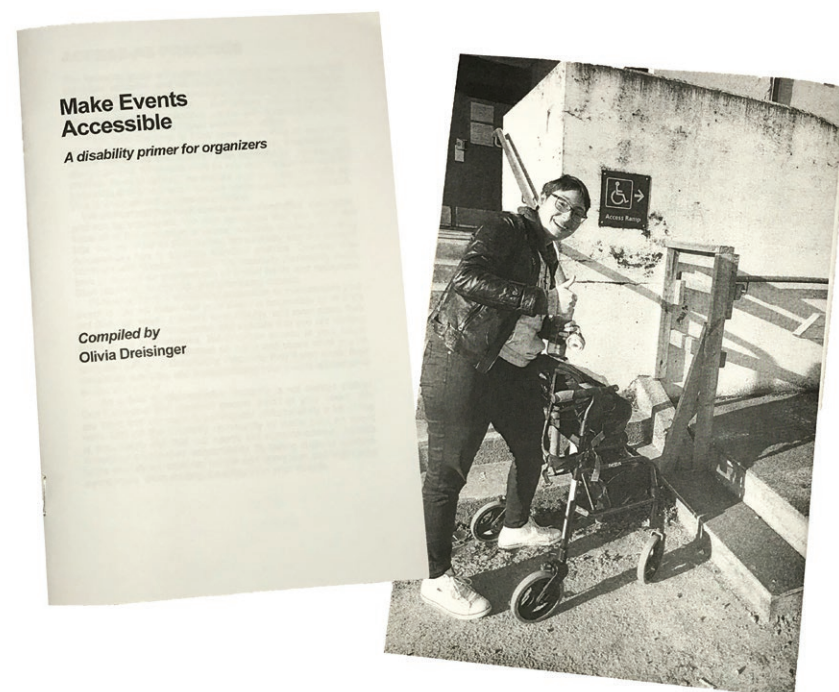
There's a constant unpredictability and spontaneity spurred by illness that Olivia has allowed to shape the space her art

inhabits. I imagine it kind of wrapping around her computer, a viney growth that bolsters a certain strength around her pieces. The necessity for resourcefulness has sprouted a freedom of versatility in her crafts. This similar source of strength can be felt from the story told in her documentary, “Handler is Crazy,” which can be streamed on Youtube.



You received a grant to create the documentary “Handler Is Crazy.” Would you like to talk about that?

Yeah, sure. So, I was really fortunate to receive a grant through the Canada Council for the Arts to make a documentary and it was my first time ever receiving a grant. The documentary is about a woman named Koyote Moon and her service dog Banner. Banner is a medical and psychiatric dog, who also cosplays, which is why I was initially interested in making a documentary about Koyote and her life. Banner would dress up as characters that had similar disabilities or conditions to Koyote [and cosplaying] became this interesting kind of advocacy thing, beyond Banner's regular service dog tasks. Service dog knowledge



is, I think, pretty limited in Canada, which was another reason why I wanted to make a documentary about this particular team. I think the definitions around service dogs are growing and service dogs are not just for blind people anymore.

A large part of Olivia's art is providing educational resources that create dialogue on how to improve the emotional, physical and financial wellbeing of people with disabilities through sharing sick and disabled experience in zines, digital rendered videos and print-at-home pamphlets. Her zines range from the “little book of herbal vinegars for sober, sensitive, or alcohol intolerant folks” to “what is a service dog? 2-in-1 booklet providing information for the general public and prospective handlers.” She says she's jumped to zines now because zine culture is all about low costs and circulating radical stories and media. They're easy to convey information through, and most importantly, she says, they don't have to be perfect.

Olivia also has a new zine project, tentatively titled Eco-Crips Against Toxic Ecologies, which aims to expose toxic systems like ableism, speciesism and environmental injustices. Even though these topics might sound daunting to someone who hasn't ever participated in conversations within accessibility politics, Olivia explains to me what ends up being a common theme throughout her interests — to make things simple. And, sometimes, a little laughter is the simplest remedy to help get the point across.

Can you speak to how you balance the gravity of these things with a palpable sense of lightness and humour? As in the “Make Events Accessible” zine, which features a photograph of an incorrectly marked accessible entrance?

I don't know if it's funny to non-disabled people — but it's funny to disabled people because it's kind of like, oh, of course, you know, like there's a step. You were so close to making the ramp accessible, but there's a step! So therefore it's not accessible, you know? It's kind of funny how people don't really think about access very well, or they put in like, 90 percent effort and fail at the other 10 percent.

Olivia also explains how the spectrum of disability leaves room for the creative process to find ways of adapting and accommodating access needs that can be exploratory and fun.

It can be fun and also humorous, you know, like having these random, clashing, access needs. And like you said, there's a lot of humour in the work that I do. I think when you live in an unruly body — a sick body — you don't take things for granted because you have to scale back or limit the things you do. You start interacting with systems, other people, and your own body in ways that I don't think non-disabled people do. There's a lot of joy and a lot of pleasure, ironically enough, in being sick and ill.

This deep sense of gratitude, pleasure and joy, garnered from tasks like making a trip to her local supermarket is something Olivia says are routines she misses now within the pandemic. The world has changed drastically with the spread of COVID-19, and the risk for someone chronically ill walking to get groceries is simply not worth taking.

Sometimes art serves as an eruption of feeling, other times it lingers between survival and hope. Sometimes it is meant to inspire — other times to soothe. Olivia told me about how she had begun foraging for poplar buds to make anti-inflammatory ointments to help alleviate pain. Crafting these herbal elixirs and tinctures are a new way she's begun to find ease.

Since we weren't able to carry out a photo-shoot for this piece, a precautionary measure due to COVID-19, Olivia was gracious enough to accommodate by creating a 3D self-portrait. Using her art as a means for accommodation was actually her entrance into digital rendering, and it all began during her masters program at McGill.

Why does 3D Animation speak to you rather than drawing?

I actually taught myself how to do animation during my thesis. That was when I was getting really sick, and I was almost failing out of McGill. In order to access disability services on campus, you had to have a definite diagnosis and I didn't have that on hand. And so, without a definite diagnosis, professors will fail you [for not] showing up to class. Animation kind of came out as a way to survive. I opted to do a creative thesis, to make a video essay, and it was a way to build accessibility and *survival* into my practice. I think it also kind of substitutes for the scaling back of my photography practice — I can kind of transplant my photography practice into this 3D landscape and have that work for my body. Another thing to note is that the 3D program that I'm working in is free, so it's financially accessible and there are a lot of free models to use. People are collectively doing this labour, offering resources for free in order to support creatives. I think that's also why I became really interested in [3D animation],



just to see how people were using their time and labour, and putting it into the world.

We spoke more on the solidarity within the disability community, and what it looks like during the pandemic. Another space which displays this collectivity and built-in accessibility, is the fan-fic community, which also inspires Olivia's work.

What brings these communities together and how has this collective action changed in the midst of the pandemic?

So I think fan-fiction pairs really well with the 3D universe that I work in because they have these built-in access interests. Now that I'm moving towards more academic terrains, or with the *Make Events Accessible* zine, for instance, disability representation has become really important to me. I also recognize that I come from a very specific point of view with my own health, and I can't know everything about other disabilities. So, you know, just talk to other people who have different disabilities, and make connections with them, and hope that they offer their valuable knowledge to you so that you can also represent them accurately so that people also

start caring about them and what they need. I think that's also, like, the academic in me — I want to know it all. I want to know inherently in my body, all of the disability experiences, but I just can't. *laughs* With the fan-fiction community, it's the same thing. It's like everyone is contributing to the 3D universe. Everyone's contributing within the disability community. If you look now at disability Twitter, or disability Instagram, with the pandemic, everyone is trying to provide care and mutual aid to each other because everyone's pretty scared right now. Going back to the reality of COVID-19, a lot of people's really important medical appointments are being canceled, or they're scared to go to the hospital, or they already have run out of nitrile gloves and hand sanitizer. So, you know, everyone's kind of sharing what they can. I shared my hand sanitizer with my neighbor, who is also sick. We've been dropping off care packages outside each other's doors. I'm going to be sewing fabric masks later today and kind of helping distribute them. So, yeah, you can't really work in disability in an isolated bubble. You need to be caring and working with everyone else in the community.

Is there anything else that comes to mind that we haven't touched on?

I mean, I have one other thing to say, and it's funny because with this quarantine, it's actually been the most social I've ever been online. Now all of these non-disabled people are coming up with creative ways to interact with each other online and I feel like pre-pandemic no one

would have extended that gesture to people who are in isolation all the time anyways. It's been weird because people are now making an effort to make socializing accessible to me. I hope that once quarantine lifts, people start caring about the disability community all year round.

The comradery felt within the accessibility community is contagious, and Olivia Dreisinger's art demonstrates the power found within uncertainty. The versatility of her work is an ode to endurance and gives us the opportunity to rethink our pain and forage pleasure from places we never thought we'd be in. But beyond indulgence, her art seeks to expose the diverse ways we interact within the sick and disabled experience. It also demands that the crucial infrastructures created under the pandemic which serve these experiences do not end with the virus. Because after it passes, there will be problems which cannot be solved by vaccines — those which require our continuous vigilance. Some of us are simply visitors to the troubles of our time in the pandemic.



You can find all of Olivia's work on her website at: oliviadreisinger.wordpress.com

Her Instagram is @bodyintrouble and watch her documentary Handler is Crazy on YouTube. For a copy of her zines, you can email her at: oliviadreisinger@gmail.com

POST-GROWING ROOM

words: TASHA // photos: courtesy of the participants.

[DISCORDER HAD PLANNED ON SITTING DOWN WITH JESSICA JOHNS, MANAGING EDITOR FOR *ROOM MAGAZINE* AND PROGRAMMING DIRECTOR OF GROWING ROOM LITERARY FESTIVAL. OF COURSE, IN THE WAKE OF THE PANDEMIC, THIS BRIEF NEEDED TO PIVOT. FACING THE REDIRECTION HEAD-ON, I SAT DOWN WITH JESSICA AND FELLOW WRITER/PROGRAMMERS, AIMEE LOUW, JILLIAN CHRISTMAS AND SERENA BHANDAR TO TALK POST-CANCELLATION THOUGHTS, IDEAS, EMOTIONS, AND LIBERATIONS. THAT WAY, WE COULD STILL ORBIT THE IDEAS ROOM LITERARY FESTIVAL SPARKED, JUST IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE FOR RIGHT NOW.]

TASHA | TODAY AT 12:39 PM

Hello everyone! First I want to say, thank you for meeting with me, especially under these funny circumstances – I have never used Discord to conduct something like this before. Coming to you all from my single-windowed living room, messing with my split ends in front of a computer screen. <3

We’re here to talk about Growing Room, the annual literary arts festival Room Magazine hosts, which was sadly cancelled as a cautionary measure in the COVID-19 outbreak. Was there anything particularly challenging, or even enlightening about this decision?

JILLIAN | TODAY AT 12:47 PM

From the perspective of a programmer and artist, it was devastating to know how much work Jessica and her team put in, and how little would be seen. But honestly, there was something really important in the knowledge that care is always first and foremost. I think all of the writers really appreciated and acknowledged how impactful that was.

JESS | TODAY AT 12:50 PM

It wasn't a hard decision to make in the sense that it was for the safety and care of the community; however, it was certainly difficult to do. This festival was a year in the making. It was made up of love, hours and hours of labour, and care from the festival staff, volunteers, and artists involved. So making the decision to not see it through is one that still hurts my heart. But the enormous amount of support we received from our artists, even though they were negatively affected as well, and from the community was amazing. It reminded me why we did all that work in the first place.

JESS | TODAY AT 1:00 PM

I also think it's important to mention that I felt a lot of guilt afterwards. I felt guilty for feeling so, so, sad about something that was ultimately the right thing to do. But I had to learn that just because it was right, doesn't mean that the feeling of loss – grieving something so important – is negated.

JILLIAN | TODAY AT 1:01 PM

Ooof, that's so true. Grief was the feeling for sure. I think paying attention to that, and honoring when it shows up is really important.

SERENA | TODAY AT 1:03 PM

I also had a poetry residency at the Banff Centre get cancelled soon

foreign to me, returning to online spaces more. But I miss contact, for sure, I miss gathering in person.

TASHA | TODAY AT 1:49 PM

Serena, you were involved in "A Scale Not Merely Human," the panel which had the description, “Speculative poetry borrows techniques from fiction, using storytelling’s narrative, character, and plot while still eating language alive.” Can you elaborate on the capacity of speculative poetry to bend to, or benefit from, this adaptive moment?

SERENA | TODAY AT 1:52 PM

Totally. [...] I have a strong background in fantasy writing – it's really where I got my start as a writer growing up. The way I approach fantasy is the same way I approach speculative poetry – the story, at its core, must tell something true. I'm currently working on a book of poetry and lyric prose adapted from a Punjabi folktale [...] and the truth of that story, and my reinvention of it, comes from the parallels it bears to my own life and the experiences of trans women of colour like myself. So, in fact, I see speculative poetry not reimagining bodies so much as I see it affirming knowledge and truths that we have always known.

When my residency got cancelled, I had the temptation to just finish the book during social distancing and self-publish it online. While that idea was a bit too big, I am really grateful for the lessons I've learned from this transition. That we need to prioritize self and community care [...] This crisis has illuminated all the diverse ways we can be reaching more audiences – particularly underserved ones – beyond the end of social distancing. I'm excited to see how we can move forward with these panels, and our own creative projects, through this.

AIMEE | [TRANSCRIBED FROM VOICE CHAT] TODAY AT 2:00 PM

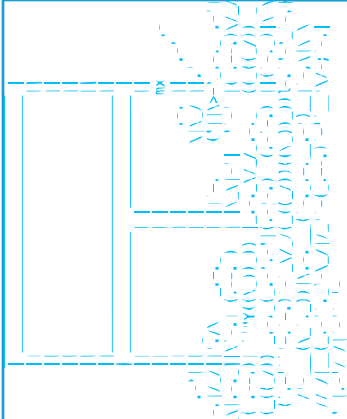
I'm glad to hear that you also think [we] should focus on being ok first. Because I've heard a lot of people say this is the “perfect residency”. If that’s true for people – and I’m not judging that – I’m also aware it may be hard to concentrate while things are so uncertain. And, you know, creating something isn’t just about having a few weeks. It’s about being in the right mindset. Having the right energetic resources, and being able to balance writing. Like, for me, I swim a lot. Not having that, [...] I don't have the same balance, and it takes a different type of focus to center myself.

SERENA | [TRANSCRIBED FROM VOICE CHAT] TODAY AT 2:05 PM

I really appreciate you adding that. So much of my writing style – my ability to write – is based on my ability to connect with my community. So the fact that we have all this alone time is actually counterproductive, in a way, because so much of my writing is based on my communal relations, which I can't really engage with in the same way.

JESS | TODAY AT 2:28 PM

One of the main things I kept coming back to was wanting to honour storytelling in its many different forms, not just the written "literary" form. [...] Because storytelling surpasses writing,



JESSICA JOHNS



SERENA BHANDAR

after the festival, and I felt a lot of grief for that too. In general, I know a lot of artists and creators are grieving what we've lost while trying to celebrate what we've gained through these challenging times.

AIMEE [TRANSCRIBED FROM VOICE CHAT] 12:55 PM:

I would agree [there is a] potential gain. It would be great to maintain the attention, and energy in web collaborations after quarantine ends. Not in the context of *Room* specifically, but just in general, to make sure that we remember that this is a helpful way of connecting across distance and different access needs.

JESS | TODAY AT 1:10 PM

Yeah, I agree Aimee. I also think there's a critical lens to apply to this method of gathering as well. Because, as with any gathering space, we still need to think about equitable access, and what safety measures mean in this method.

JILLIAN | TODAY AT 1:11 PM

That is such an important point. I think one big thing that this highlighted for me, is how infrequently this type of access is offered. I really hope that people continue to be creative about connection beyond quarantine. Feeling very grateful to Room folk for directing their focus toward that. It's exciting. We're at a turning point and people are paying attention. It's really promising that Room is putting energy towards that.

TASHA | TODAY AT 1:17 PM

Jillian, you were on the panel “Radiant Flesh: Black Femme Writing & The Body,” which discussed this idea of "embodied memory". To stay on this interesting divergent in the conversation, how has embodied memory adapted in the wake of our retreat from physical gathering spaces?

JILLIAN | TODAY AT 1:20 PM

Unfortunately, that panel did not go forward, [...] as for how my engagement in the digital space has adapted, bringing my work into an embodied place is fundamental to my practice as a spoken word performer and sometimes clown. I've been trying to find ways to utilize the online space to deliver pieces of that show, and I feel lucky to have access to my tools here in my little East Van apartment [...] Trying to find new ways to bring voice to these pieces without the connection of being in shared space. I've had some troll action in Zoom, not nice, [but] I'm preparing all my readings with troll responses, lol. All my poems with teeth are ready. Just in case.

TASHA | TODAY AT 1:29 PM

Yeah, it's a challenge to adapt your practice to a new medium, but it repositions us almost necessarily (we should be so lucky to have more poetry with teeth). I'm thinking about Aimee, being a moderator in the “Accessing Ourselves: Crip Poetries and Writing Our Desire” workshop. It came with the lovely assertion: “witness our origin stories, our fire, the shit we can't say on the city bus or at the doctor's office that we long to say to ourselves, or each other” which I found so striking. Stories affect how we see our lives. What we consume, or create – and representation is at the kernel of all of this. Can you comment on how this practice, this advocacy, has been impacted?

AIMEE | [TRANSCRIBED FROM VOICE CHAT] TODAY AT 1:41 PM

Representation is important when I think of people that I want to speak to – but it's' almost more fundamental than that. A lot of my writing is about actually creating possibilities for the people that I love, and imagining new ways of being together. I got my start online, blogging. So in a way it feels like a bit of a return. It doesn't seem

historically and personally. This meant working collaboratively with many different people [...] Making this thing, and saying goodbye to it, has made very apparent the ways in which we do adapt for survival. It didn't feel right to me that this festival, this thing that so many people put SO much into, would just be cast aside. [...] So while we first, of course, thought of moving everything online, we realized very quickly we just didn't have the resources, background, or support, for that. I also had to shake off this idea to react instantly. [...] I realized moving with care and intention meant moving slowly. So we've been sitting on it for a few weeks, and we think we want to instead have the festival and its artists come together as a special edition of *Room magazine* (also surprise Serena and Aimee because you don't know this yet lol). We haven't announced this yet, though we will be soon.

So that's a long ass way of saying that it has made apparent that the worlds we want to see don't die – because they don't form in the way we originally imagined. We just have to reimagine them differently, and that people have really surprised me in their ability to do this in light of everything that's happened.

TASHA | TODAY AT 2:35 PM

Friends, I have two last questions for everyone. They're somewhat parallel, so I'm going to drop them at the same time. What has been the most important thought you've been carrying around with you this week? And/or, what have you let go of recently that you no longer needed?

AIMEE | TODAY AT 2:37 PM

Trying to actively let go of shame around resting/being witnessed when resting.

SERENA | TODAY AT 2:38 PM

Taking this time to slow down and reconnect rather than speed up. I said previously that I feel like a coiled spring, and while that is true, I think there are ways to relieve that tension, through small projects and conversations like these, so that I don't explode at the end of this, haha.

JESS | TODAY AT 2:41 PM

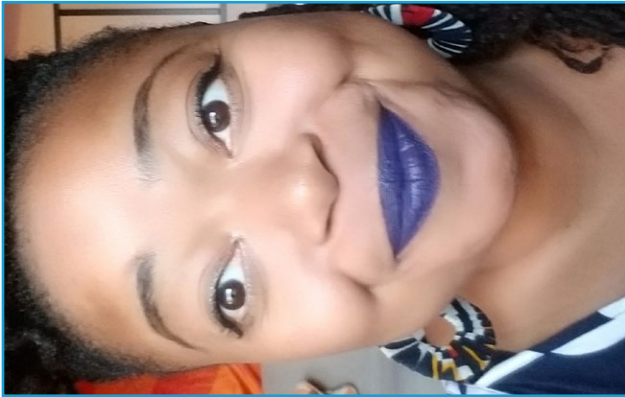
For some reason when I read the second question, I got really emotional. That's a really important and tender question. I feel like I've let go [...] of the idea that I need to care for others before myself. I have grappled with this a lot (which my therapist knows): I have always thought my worth to be in what I can do, rather than just who I am. But I feel this time of isolation has made me really have to look at my own needs first, and that's been a really unexpected gift.

TASHA | TODAY AT 2:43 PM

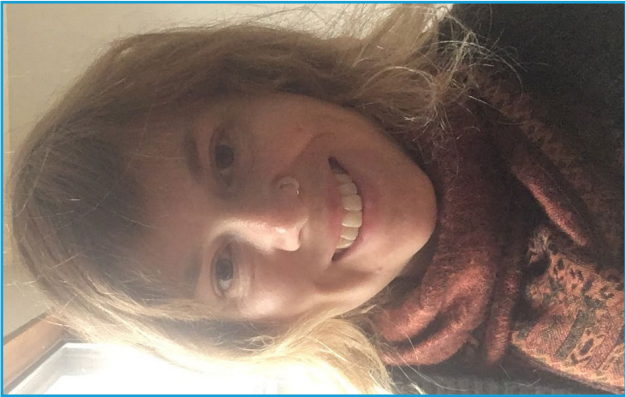
Couldn't agree more with everything that's been said! I feel like I ask this question a lot in order to figure it out for myself – so it's a little selfish of me, but i'm happy it can bring some insight. Thank you everyone for making the most of all of this!

JESS [TRANSCRIBED FROM VOICE CHAT] TODAY AT 2:43 PM

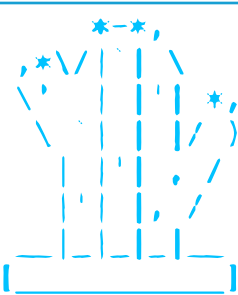
I just wanted to say I really appreciate this conversation, and for the idea around this [interview]. It is really great, and is really important to me – which I didn't realize at first. This whole festival was so collaborative, and all three of the participants in this interview were so integral to the creation of it, so it's really important that this was a collaborative conversation, and I want to thank you for that.

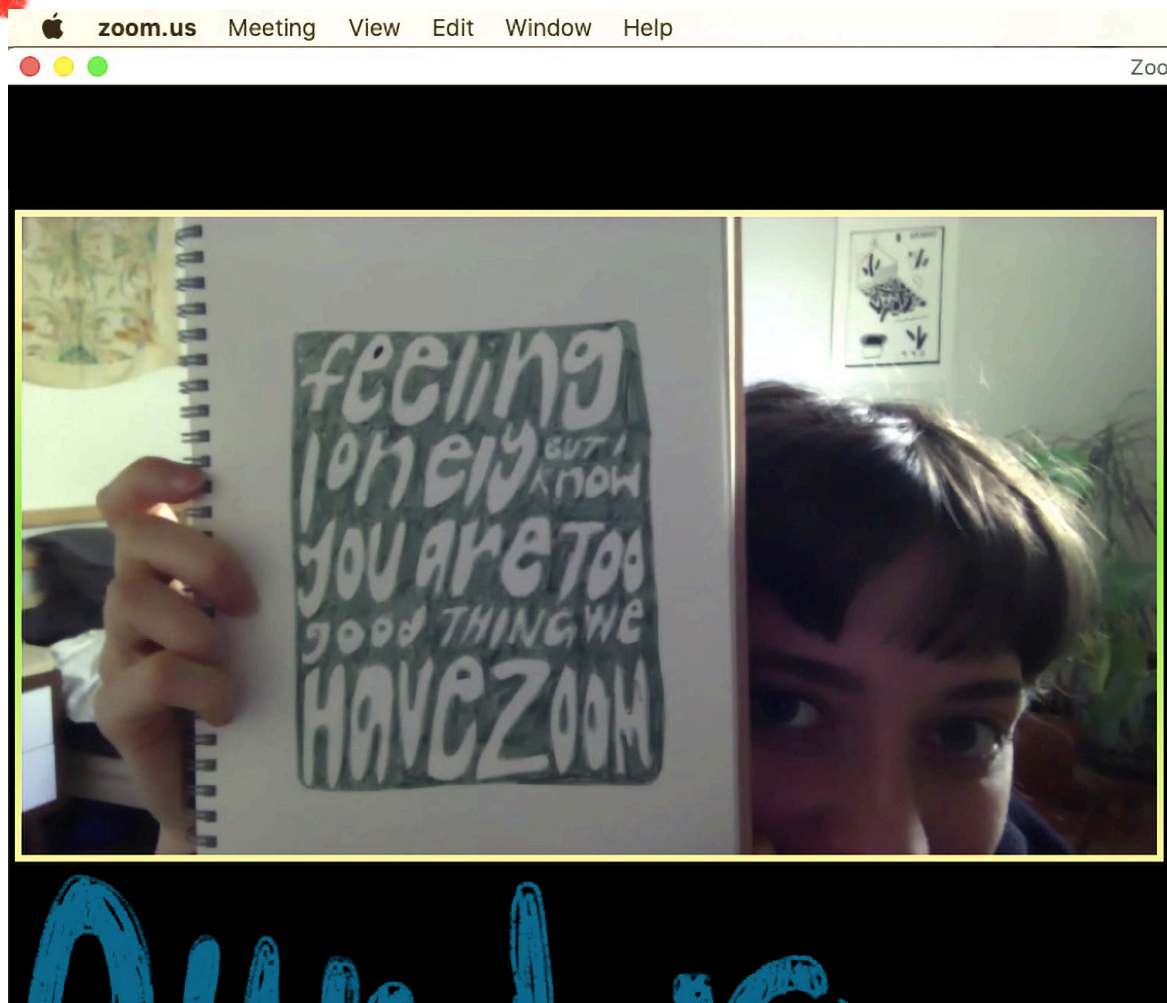


JILLIAN CHRISTMAS



AIMEE LOUW





LITTLE POEMS

Julia Cundari

The outbreak of COVID-19 has triggered the practice of social distancing, enforced self-isolation, and quarantining around the world. Consequently, Western capitalist cultures are buckling under the pressure of undervalued healthcare systems, and to provide essentials like housing, safe supply, and universal income. Capitalism has officially failed, and that's cool and everything, but it is uncomfortable.

Words by
DORA DUBBER
images courtesy of
THE ARTIST

While everyone adjusts to our new reality in their own way, Julia Cundari's series of small, visualized poems sums up this emotional oxymoron perfectly. The pieces are extremely simple and articulate — bursts of melancholic frustration — and are a strikingly honest articulation of a lot of the fears, anxieties, and insecurities that are driving the narrative of this moment.

I met with Julia on (duh) Zoom and our conversation bounced around easily — covering work, anxieties, fears, and tips on passing the time. "The unknown is scary right now. We're all living in this state of hyperarousal in the unknown, and searching for outlets that are maybe not satisfying our needs," Julia pointed out, "and then we feel extra complex because there's nothing to ground those fears in. The whole outer world is going through this process of change and nobody knows what's going on."

The four text-based pieces that prompted this article read:

1. "EMILY AND I MEET IN OUR ALLEY / STANDING SIX FEET APART."

2. "I USUALLY SPEND MOST OF MY TIME ALONE SO THIS ISN'T SO BAD / BUT IT ACTUALLY FEELS KIND OF BAD / MY NERVOUS SYSTEM IS ON OVERDRIVE."



3. “I CANNOT
FIND THE TIME
EVEN THOUGH
/IT’S ALL
I HAVE.”

4. “HOW DO
I TELL YOU
THAT I AM SAD
WE ARE NOT
FRIENDS.”

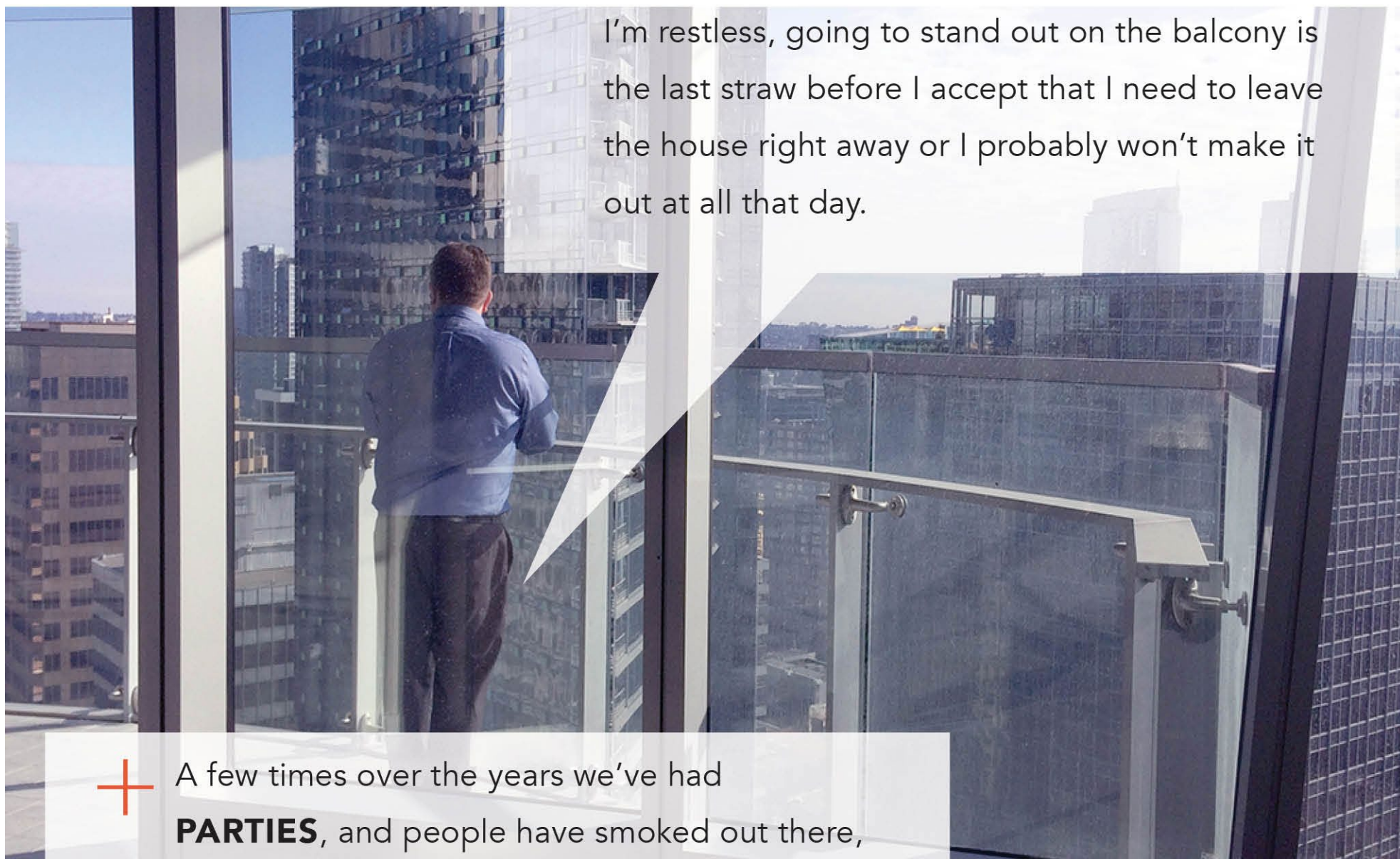
The short poems are bubbled across an entire sketchbook page with the background roughly shaded in around the words. Each piece takes about 10 to 15 minutes to make, “which feels like a long time to be ruminating on only a certain set of words.” Julia continued, “I see this as a time to be self-reflexive, but the only way I feel like I can process it is through poetics and writing these words over and over. I feel like it reflects the loop thinking that’s occupying my days.” And the poem’s form mirrors how Julia has been coping with self-isolation, and all the seemingly tectonic adjustments. “I think there’s this whole other side of things, focusing all of my attention on these words and colouring them in really slowly. Spending a lot of time with each tiny poem sort of emulates this slowness that’s happening right now.”

The series names the arguably ubiquitous experiences of young, relatively privileged, and politically progressive art types; a group I will readily admit that I am a part of. “I feel both connected, and disembodied, and reaching for this attachment, but not knowing exactly the most effective way that we can go about feeling that. We’re feeling — or at least I’m feeling — complete opposite feelings all at once.” Julia laughed, “I’m talking in ‘we’s’ and this is something I don’t even do. I’m referring to the entire world as my partner.” Granted, this group is just a sliver of the COVID-19 experience, and one whose complaints, while still very much being felt, are comparatively non-issues. “A lot of them feel kind of whiny.” Julia explained, “They feel very self indulgent but they’re a bit cathartic.” This catharsis has echoes of that hollowness, while honouring the release that comes with sharing without fear of judgement.

What’s exceptional about Julia’s series is their simplicity and clarity. Fear of aloneness, instability, futility, motivation, and distance are embedded in the poetry and communicated directly to the viewer. They read more like snapshot diary entries than public pieces of art, and the access to just one other person’s anxieties — which feel so strikingly familiar — is a small comfort in a time punctuated by upheaval.

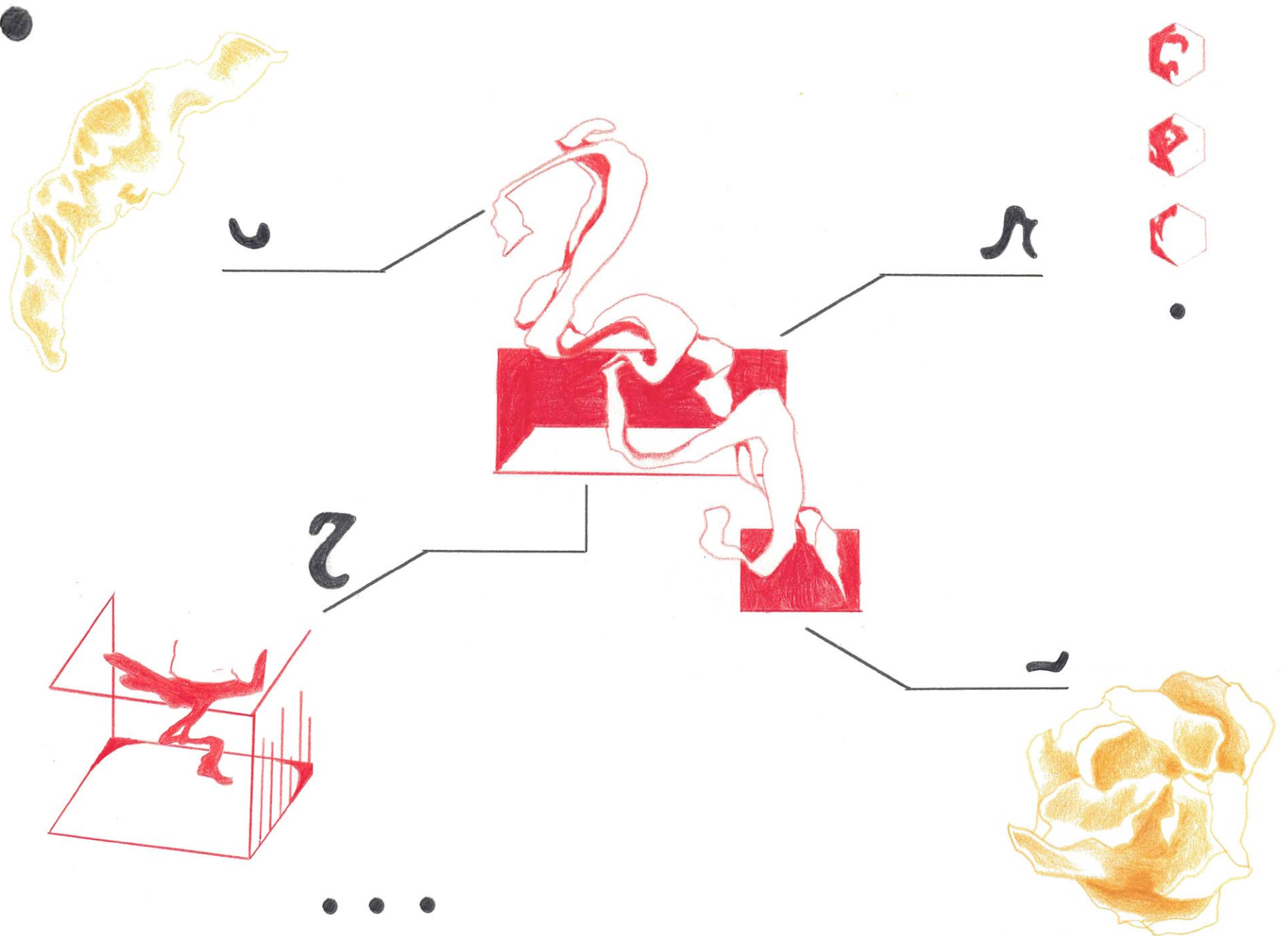


+ I got a place with a **BALCONY** but I never end up going out there. I can't figure out why. Usually if I'm restless, going to stand out on the balcony is the last straw before I accept that I need to leave the house right away or I probably won't make it out at all that day.



+ A few times over the years we've had **PARTIES**, and people have smoked out there, but that's it. Never once have I hung out out there by myself. No matter how I **DESIGN** it, I don't set foot out there. I'll always end up going **SHOPPING** aimlessly if I do.





Hue Nguyen

words by Clara Dubber
images courtesy of Hue Nguyen

The hyperpersonal and the generally relatable are a dialectic that Hue Nguyen expertly balances. Hue is a multidisciplinary artist (and a horse) practicing in Vancouver. With clear and precise compositions, lines and palettes, they needle the connective tissue of their experiences and reflections together with theory and intuition.

Nguyen sees their work as an extension of themselves. They began to work seriously on their art practice in 2017, which was a particularly difficult year for them. They returned to a childhood hobby — drawing — for comfort. “It was healing to put all these drawings out and really put myself into it,” Nguyen explains, “It was a great way to reflect on my mental health while still being

creative.” Their work is an abstraction of their experience. It conveys what they feel less able to articulate in words.

Approaching each piece from intuition rather than a visual plan, they are a process-driven artist. For each work, they first write a poem and then visually abstract it. To them, these poems act as scripts for an emotional timeline wherein “it’s all about how the reader will feel while going through it. That’s what I’m trying to communicate rather than some storyline or actual narrative.”

This intuition, with a basis in Nguyen's own experiences and management of them, binds the content with form. Their pieces have a feeling of being necessarily the way that they are. That line is there because it has to be, that juxtaposition of texture is there because it's what needs to have happened. There is something deliberate in the way their work unfolds — and that deliberateness comes from the artist's honest, self-reflection. Of being a

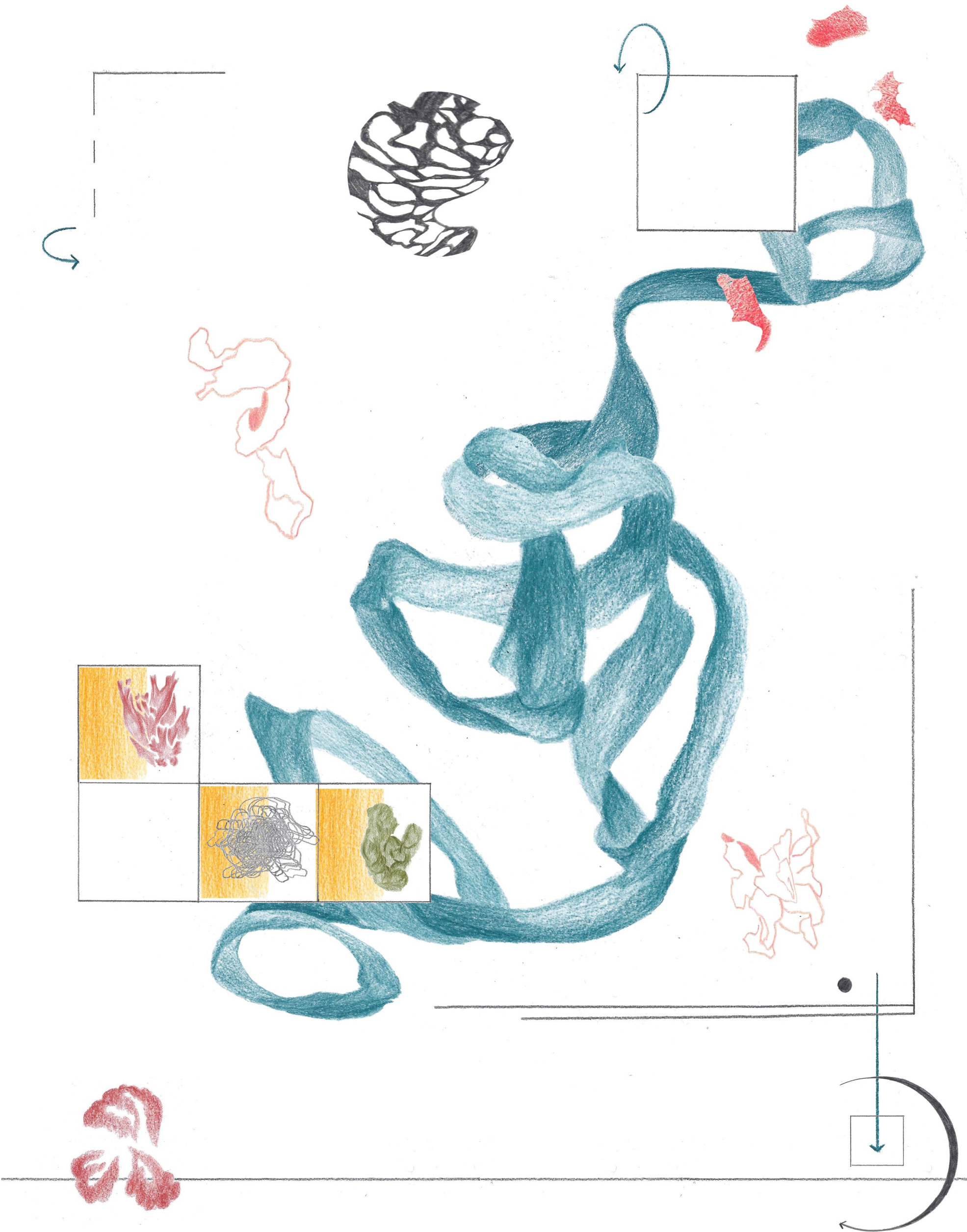
person. Herein, Hue's contradictions are cohesive, their personhood feels inevitable. Being honest about it lends their work cohesion and inevitability.

Nguyen actively toes the line between the hyperpersonal and broadly accessible, and that is what makes their work so resonant. It's hyperspecificity peeks at relatability. "I like to make work about myself, but in a way that can reach a further audience," they explain. "I want it to be personal, but not too personal, just enough that it's general enough to have a relation to the audience." Being honest about their personal idiosyncronities — resulting from their experiences as a first generation immigrant, a Vietnamese-Canadian, a non-binary person, an artist, an (in their own words)

egg-head — simultaneously reveals to their audience their own specificities, cohesiveness, and inevitabilities.

While Nguyen's return to visual art has been their recent focus — and catharsis — they are multitalented, having also experience in film, soft sculpture, and textiles. They admit to having “a strange relationship with physical touch and bodies,” and moving into this third dimension is particularly exciting for them being able to “actually get to do it with [their] own body, and feel it within [their] hands and feel it between [their] fingers.” This sentiment is aligned with their approach to their 2D practice as well, because they prioritize physical, tangible work. “I’m a firm believer in paper. Anything of my own that I have

“ Hue Nguyen ”



the control to publish I want to print physically.”

With that physicality, they have started to explore the physical world as another point of abstraction. Their 2018 publication “Red Rainbow” is an exploration of their experience on the antipsychotic Risperidone — a medication both they and their mother were prescribed. They wanted to understand how it was affecting them and translate that experience visually. To do this, they referenced images of relevant parts of the brain, abstracting the diagrams to ensure they are “taken in a way that [they’re] owning.” From this springboard, Nguyen has steadily incorporated more science into their content, “I’m interested in neuroscience because of its relation to mental health. I was interested in the brain and the body. My work is moving towards the intersection of philosophy and neuroscience, as well language and semiotics.” Importantly, they draw connections between science, philosophy and their own human experience. “Right now I’m really researching how starfish operate, and relating myself back to that in a human sense.”

Their appreciation of the sciences — and biology in particular — as a poetic field compliments their return to visual art. It was a field they were interested in in their

youth and are returning to as a means of contextualizing their adult experience. In this vein, their current research links starfish morphology and psychoanalysis. To Nguyen it explores “the idea of being past the chaotic phase and what happens now in terms of how I understand myself as an individual.” Approaching their practice both from a place of extensive research, and intuiting their emotional response, contextualizes their experiences — it informs the precision and intention of their work.

This braiding of research with intuition also makes Nguyen’s work appealing to a broad range of perspectives — some to whom STEM feels more comfortable, and some who gravitate more towards the emotional tug of the work.



Upon researching Hue Nguyen, one thing that consistently appears is their identification as a horse, or horse child; as they say: “I’m a horse, get over it.” Across artist statements, across publishers, across years, Nguyen has consistently made space for their connection to horses. Never having been obsessed with horses as a child, Nguyen “started to fall in love with horses when [...] going through a rough phase and living with a friend who had a big ranch. The horses were very calming, just big and lumbering.” Nguyen’s connection to horses reflects the steady deliberateness of their work. The playful openness with which they pull inspiration from multiple fields.

Their breadth of inspirations brace their exploration of agency — and this is the crux of their practice. “Agency is such a big thing for me. Some of my work is about how the body is reacting [to being contained] and putting that in a framework and then having the audience member react to that. It’s about how my body is feeling and what it is,” Nguyen explains. Agency is a thread connecting almost every element of their work, from neuroscience, as in how, as Hue illuminates, “self-inflicted pain is a strange form of agency because it’s all on your own. How the body and pain work together is [itself] a form of agency,” to enacting belonging. Nguyen has reclaimed the use of their first name, Hue, as another form of agency and as “an idea of creating [an] agency with individuals,” this is their way of situating themselves in their community. Though they are Vietnamese, they pointed out

that they “always felt like [they] didn’t belong in that community growing up.” Returning to their first name, enacting that agency, allows them and other first generations to “become part of this community where you don’t necessarily feel like you belong.”

This agency is also enacted in their process. Their work being this extension of themselves means they can control how they are perceived. And that sense of control is also present in how they arrange their compositions, as they say, “my work is an extension of myself, and there’s so much room to breathe because I am such a reserved individual. It’s really important for me to have that reservation and delicateness in there.”

The intention of this technique is also present in their textural pieces, or lack thereof. To Nguyen, “the textured portions are the parts of myself that are actually speaking and articulating in some kind of way.” The pieces speak and breathe for them.

Nguyen’s work is an incredible example of an artist using their practice to interrogate their experiences — and reactions to those experiences. This balance of dichotomies — the personal and the general, the scientific and the poetic, the researched and intuitive — not only lends Nguyen’s work a richness beyond the richness of their own personhood, but also an incredible range of entry-points into what is, necessarily, a very personal body of work.



GIL GOLETSKI

WORDS BY **BRENDAN REID**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **SHERI TURNER**
PHOTOS COURTESY OF **GIL GOLETSKI**

If you take life too seriously, you'll only develop ulcers, skin conditions, and a boring by-the-books existence which ultimately leaves one wanting more. At the same time, one could argue that a life lived entirely in free-willed aimlessness is erroneous, irresponsible, and destined to crash and burn. To which extreme should one pledge themselves? Well, to neither of course, and Gil Goletski believes the same should be applied to their artistic practice.



Gil is a multi-talented illustrator, animator and musician. Their drawing style is sharp and minimalistic. It captures feelings of lighthearted whimsy, while simultaneously tackling issues of body image, existential dread, and discomfort. Their musical outlet, shitlord fuckerman, follows a similar dichotomy. On one hand it's riveting, infectious electronica with an undeniably funny name. On the other, it's a lyrical and emotive examination of entropic decay and societal failings. Yet, as we drink tea in their clean, plant shaded kitchen, Gil suggests that perhaps listeners shouldn't draw *too* much from their work.

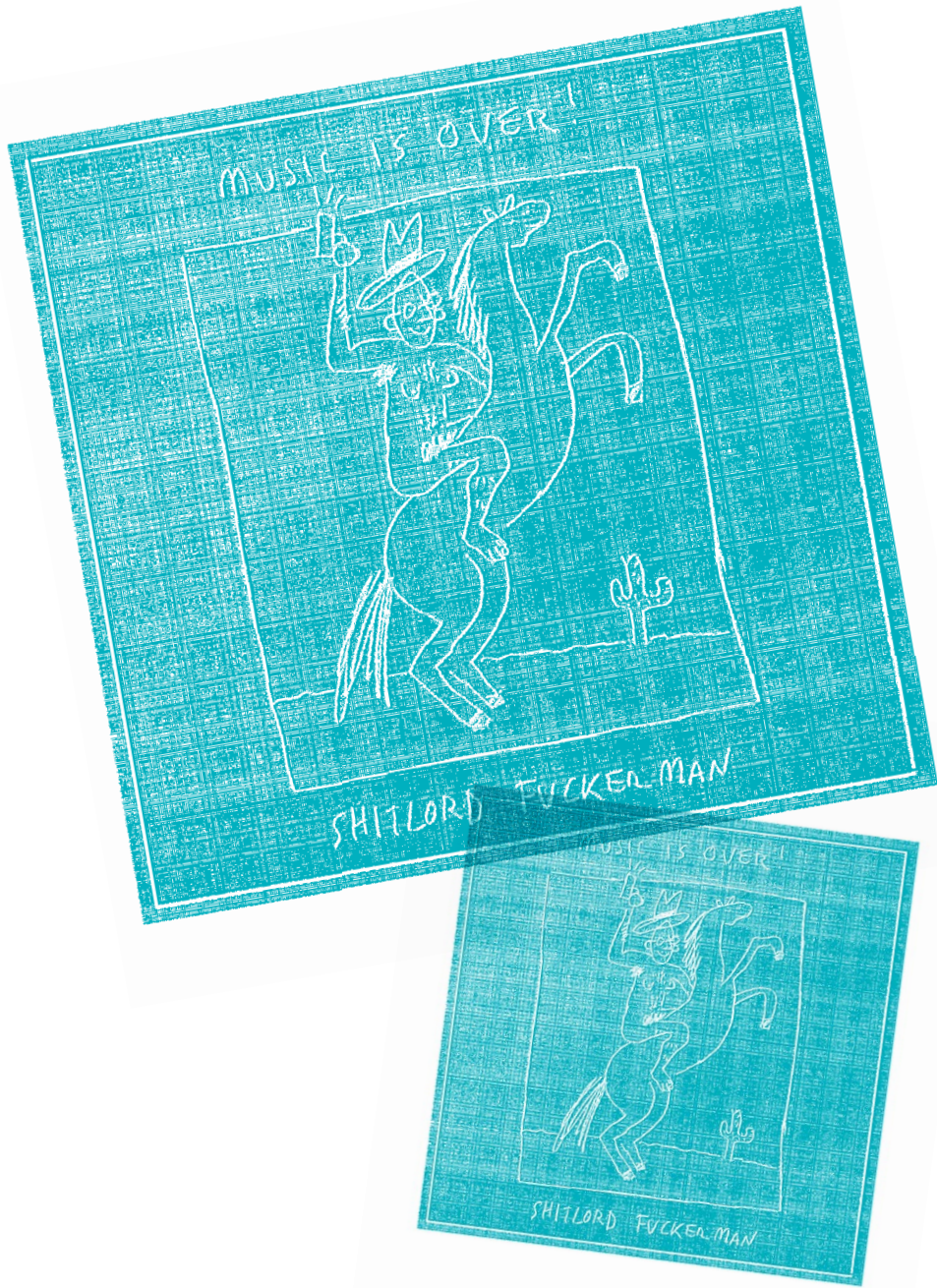
Take "PATRICK COWLEY (IN AGONY)" for example, the opening track from the latest shitlord fuckerman release, *MUSIC IS OVER!* The song is a tribute to Patrick Cowley, an openly gay innovator of electronic music from the late '70s and early '80s. It revolves around a grin-inducing disco beat and lyrical mantra before breaking into the bridge — a sample proclaiming, "my reputation for misogyny is legendary!" Gil's inclusion of this sample comes from a place of authenticity, as well as a desire for lighthearted diffusion.

"[The sample is] from a '70s anime called *Lupin The Third*," Gil explains. "In a really terrible dub of the series, a line from one of the characters that's incorrectly translated says 'my reputation for misogyny is legendary', which I think is funny. To find samples, I just go through things that I like...things that, out of context, are funny. Sometimes even in context."

When asked about how the sample relates to the life of Patrick Cowley, Gil gave an open and sincere answer: "I consider myself part of gay male culture, but at the same time, I find a lot of it misogynistic. [The] song is about existing as a gay male aligned person, but also being outside of it — as a trans person. I'm somebody who [has] experienced misogyny in my life, and even though it may not be my experience any more, I still have huge amounts of empathy for people that [do]...but I try not to look too far into my songs," they emphasized, adding, "a lot of the time when I'm making songs, I'm not thinking about them too hard. It's just something that I made one day."

This honest and untroubled approach to creation is inspiring, and a reminder that not every work of art needs to be taken so seriously. We are inclined to overthink and overanalyze, and sometimes a work of art should be allowed to exist for its

" Gil Goletski "



own sake. This disregard of meaning permeates *MUSIC IS OVER!*, and is exemplified in the title itself.

"I think it's funny, as a complete nobody, to make broad asshole statements about art. Especially in a post post-modern world," Gil stated with a laugh. "I was inspired by the Japanese noise artist The Gerogerigegege. The cover of [one of] their tapes says fuck compose, fuck melody, dedicated to no one, thanks to no one, art is over. *MUSIC IS OVER!* is based off of that."

Many of Gil's creations are borne of a coy sense of unbothered fun. It's this removal of ego that makes their work so enticing—and inspiration often comes from a simple, reactionary response. In the song "Big Eden", Gil's lyrics lament the state of decaying food: "Seal me in there with the leftovers/Rotting food buzzing wires/Airtight refrigerator/Leave me in there to die." One would be tempted to pry deeper into these words, to try and unpack them, to dig for metaphors and references. But Gil assured me there were none.

"I get grossed out by food a lot," they said with a shrug. "It's just about being some rotting fruit in a fridge...sometimes

food is just gross. But I [also] love food, like everybody. Looking at compost is intensely uncomfortable for me — but I also find it interesting at the same time. I get a reaction from it."

Art derived in such a way is immensely refreshing. Not everything needs to have a purpose, another layer, or be some kind of deep statement. First and foremost, art is a response to the world around us, and everything Gil creates is a genuine reaction to their experiences and feelings.

"With everything, I like not taking things too seriously. But at the same time I'm still trying to work through things that are troubling to me," they say as we wrap up our conversation. "But I try not to put too much stock in it, because I'm just one person and I don't have all the answers."

None of us do—and with their music, illustrations and animations, Gil has found the perfect way to express this fact. Their honesty is inspiring, and truly, it makes one feel less alone. We could all learn a thing or two from shitlord fuckerman.

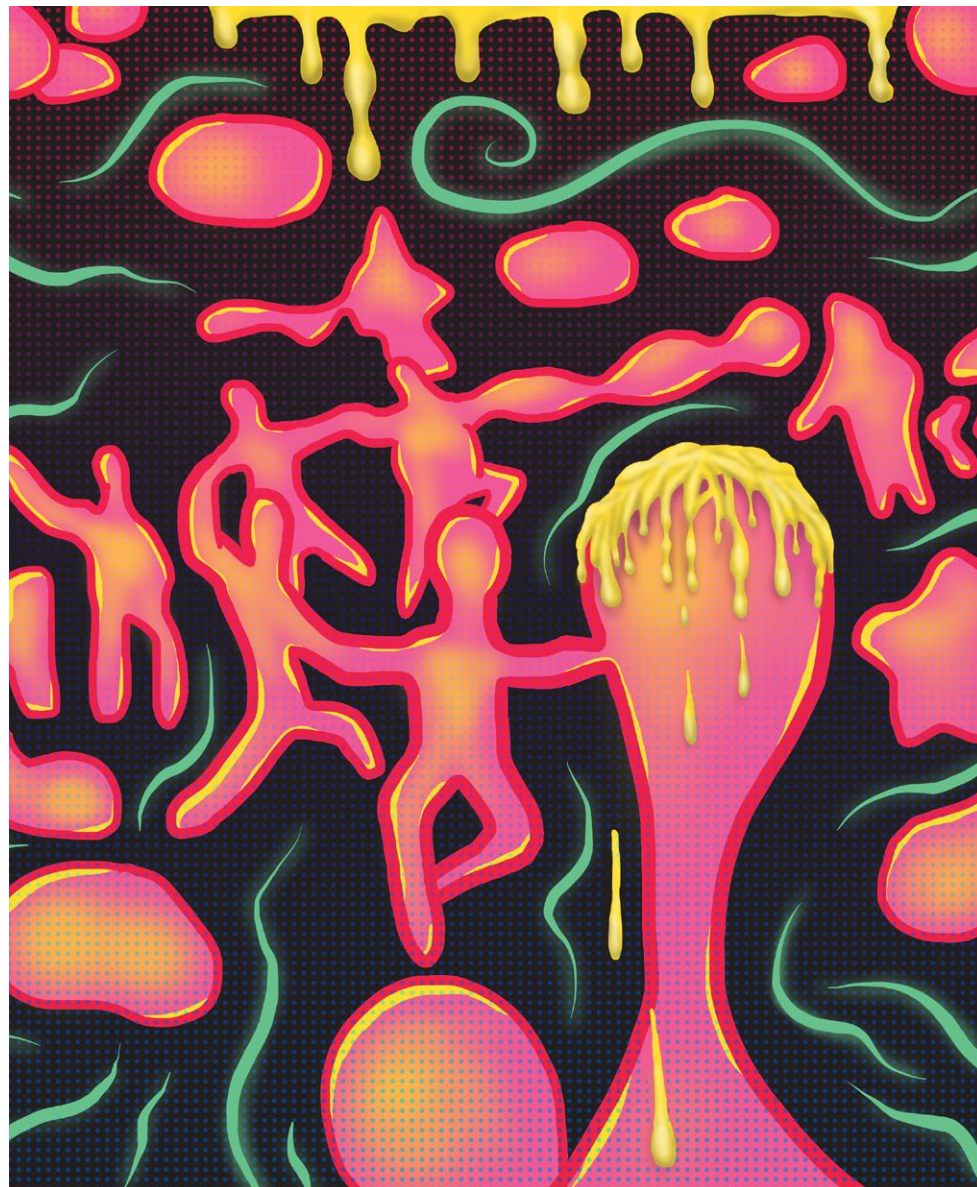


PLASMA.

ONE NAME, MANY LOOKS

words by Jamie Lok // illustrations
by Meghan Lok
photos courtesy
of PLASMA

I remember the very first time I went to a queer, underground gig. Nervous, giddy, and with only adrenaline keeping us warm, we peeked down one nondescript alley to the next, trying to locate the entrance which, arguably, was the toughest task of the night. There were no obvious signs of life other than a burly, stoic figure slouched beside a door. A flash of IDs sent us flying through a long neon hallway and then, after what felt like a tumble down the rabbit hole later, we heard the first pulses of the dance floor. Plunged into darkness, save for intermittent splashes of light across the walls, we joined the mosh of bodies of what might have been a hundred people. Packed safely like sardines in a tin can, marinating in our collective stickiness, I felt strangely at home flailing around carelessly. That was when I knew there was no going back from here.



Before we all got sucked into the chaos of COVID-19, I got to pick the brains of CRM and MX, who operate as designers by day and freaky dance party masterminds by night on their newest event series together: PLASMA. In a JJ Bean somewhere along the Drive, the duo quickly enveloped me in their gentle banter, humble demeanour and generous laughter telling me how it all started.

PLASMA was birthed in a moment true to its roots — on a sticky, cavernous, reverberating dance floor. “We started talking about it at a moment, for me, is kinda lost in the smoke-machine haze of a dance floor of some kind last year,” CRM muses. Chiming in, MX clarifies that while the exact moment is hazy, the intent and mutual desire to create a new event series was there — their affinity for similar aesthetics and spaces made them instant collaborators from the get-go.

Let’s face it, Vancouver has earned its reputation as No Fun City. But somehow, a handful of creatives with the will, vision and hope strong as steel, have managed to find loopholes large enough to make space for fun to happen. The underground scene, albeit small and precarious, is teeming with activity serving its community members with generous slew of DJs/music acts both local and from out of town.

“We wanted to do something that wasn’t happening in the city right now,”

CRM replies, when I asked him if he felt there was a gap in the Vancouver scene, “a lot of these amazing events happening in the city feels as though a lot of the music that is happening right now is driven by a particular genre, and is driven music first.” PLASMA, he explains, was an effort to put space first and let everything else fall into place. “[The] party series we want to create is more about creating a space first, the music could be something mutable.”

That got me curious, why a space-first approach? MX reveals, “we both have a love for spaces and how to transform them,” especially of interest to them is digging deeper into “what [one] can do to transform a space with limited resources”. They both find that by conceptualizing the space — with anything from installation, light design, or manners of breaking up the space to allow for a more intentional and thoughtful process — people can gather with similar intention. For PLASMA, it’s all about what they can bring to familiar and well-loved spaces to make them look, feel and sound a little fresh and new every time. They are hoping that by being reflective of the communities who will show up, the atmosphere of the space could drive interactions on the dance floor, as well as friendships and community to flourish and extend beyond.



While PLASMA will mutate and shape shift from space to space, there is one element that will stay the same — the ability to dance.

Being someone for whom dance is a huge means of self-expression, CRM is thrilled to hold space for folks that share a similar affinity. “It’s exciting to try to create a space for people for whom [dance] is a primary motivation, more so than coming out just to be out, or coming out to hear a particular type of music over and over again. It’s more about a freedom of self expression, in a space that gives you a sense of security to be yourself.”

Dance is not only a way to connect with fellow freaky dancers, it is also immensely cathartic for some, especially marginalized communities. MX tells me, “For many people who are in the scene, especially for queer folks, you have to put up this image for most of your everyday, and dance parties are usually a space where you can be the way you want to be everyday.”

Being intimately entangled in these communities, MX and CRM both understand the need, and power of, dance in

a space to put the safety and wellbeing of their people first. This could mean dance existing in all its forms, from all types of bodies.

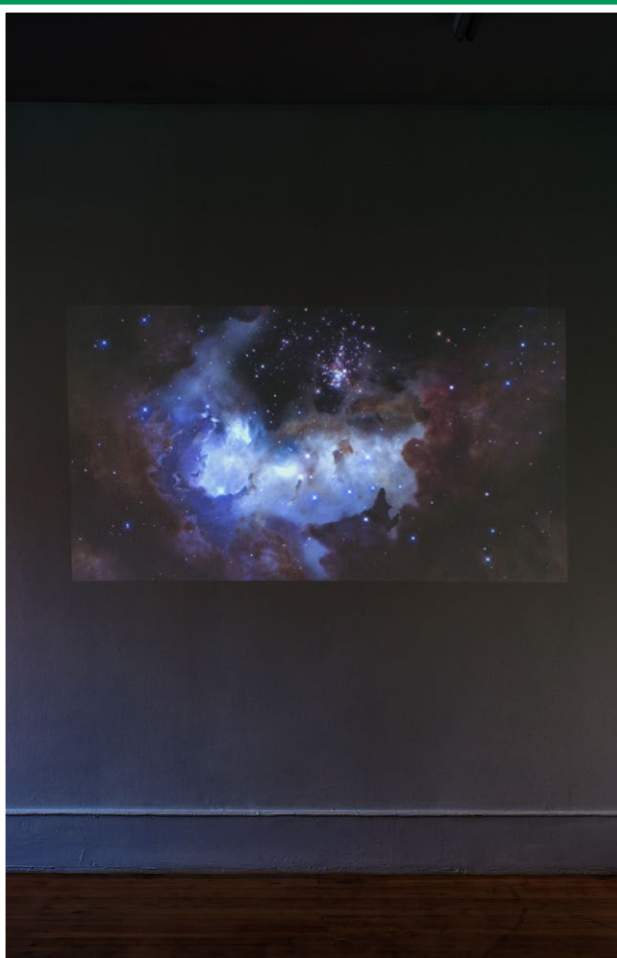
“Plasma is for dancers, that includes people who dance in wheelchairs and of other forms of motion. It is not just for people who are able-bodied. For me its also for the queer, trans, femme, non-binary babies crowd. Trying to create a safer space for [everyone] for self-expression, by building an ongoing series that does its best to take everyone’s wellbeing into consideration, and let that become the identity of it.”

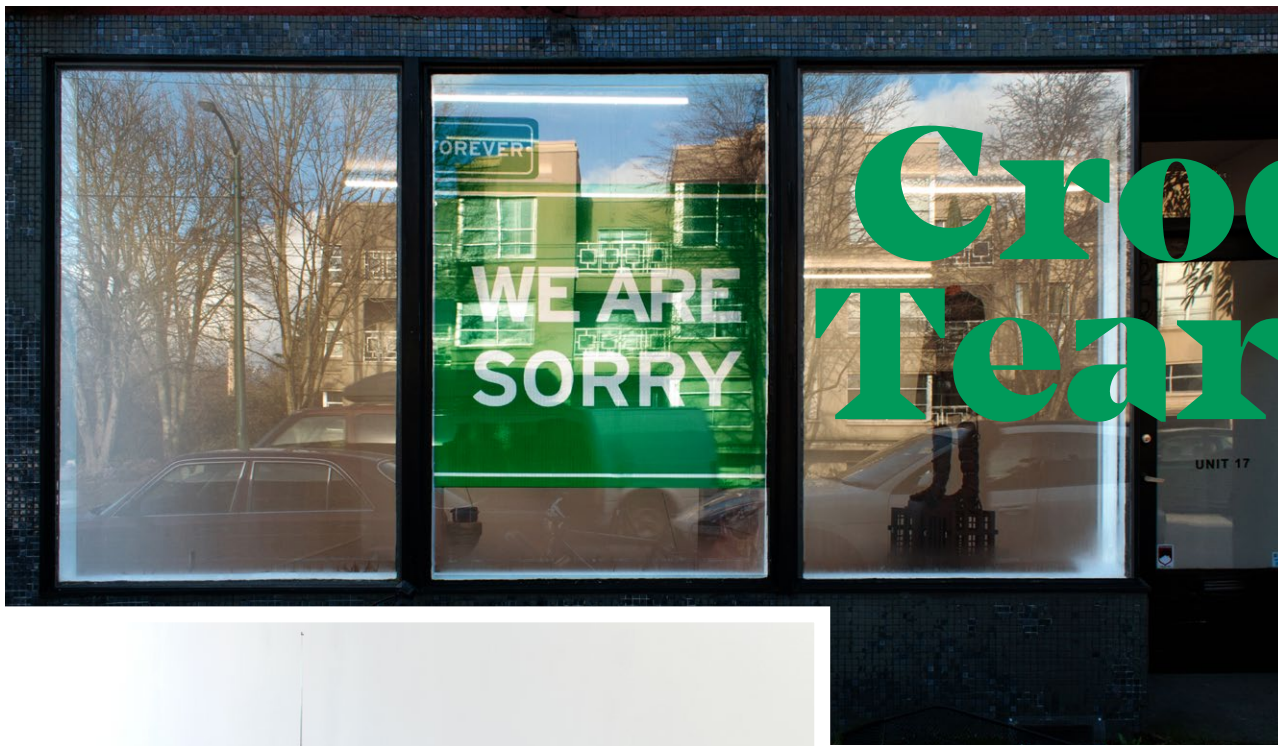
Whether PLASMA seems like the event for you, CRM and MX hope it inspires readers of *Disorder* to go out and start their own thing. New projects, new collectives, new voices filling voids in Vancouver's creative landscape.

“We need as many people doing this as possible and doing it better than us, if possible.”

At the end of the night, we emerged out the rabbit hole completely spent, with woozy grins plastered on our faces. This time donning shiny,

second skins, which kept us warm on that early winter morning. Steeping in the afterglow, a heavy silence hung between us as we made our way home. It was obvious that we had found something special — a whole other world, within the city, where we felt completely at home. There is something magical about these spaces that exist only for those who seek them out, brought together by shared affinities. For a city struck by loneliness, even more so now that we’re all stuck at home, I hope to see more collectives and events like PLASMA adding their unique takes to the scene.





words by
Alexis Zygan

photos by
Cemrenaz Uyguner,
courtesy Unit 17



Crocodile Tears, presented by Unit 17, shares commentary on modern-day capitalism. The exhibition features three installations from a collection of multidisciplinary creators, in addition to a live performance by Lucien Durey and Bess Durey. Rapid industrialization and mechanization is a common theme for Unit 17, while the title itself — *Crocodile Tears* — is an agent for insincere emotional expression. This exhibition pokes at how global superpowers react to industries of mass destruction — such as factory farming — while also addressing the rapid corporatization of our communities. How privatization is hand-in-hand with mechanization. With the words “I am sorry,” displayed in parody of a phoney sympathy towards these global issues, the artists involved in *Crocodile Tears* are unapologetic in their critique of rapid industrialization.



Crocodile Tears also celebrates Unit 17’s third anniversary. The scope of which is to mimic the theatrical phenomena of every day, connecting nature with technology in a single, pan-generational, exhibition. The display utilizes performance-based art as well as sculpture, painting, audio and video. With the anniversary — and by remodelling how the space of the gallery serves this realm of thinking — Unit 17 continues to create exhibits such as this, which blend art discourse within the context of life itself. The exhibit addresses the unified experience of neo-liberal economic globalization, with works from 14 different artists

(Alan Belcher, Mike Bourscheid, Gabi Dao, Lucien Durey, Deborah Edmeades, Babak Golkar, Neil Haas, Karilynn Ming Ho, Nadya Isabella, Anne Low, Isabelle Pauwels, Shahin Sharafaldin, Douglas Watt and Elizabeth Zvonar.)

In Gabi Dao’s *Curled Up in a Spiral*, a white-pink structure holds up a rock upon which sits an old-school radio playing audio. On another framework, rests a radio with an antenna. The installation could be read as memorabilia from a vacation, and the rise of tourism is a direct result of a globalized world. This utilization of props in the installation encourages the viewer to think critically about entertainment and tourism. Globalization reoccurs in the work *Skyline*, by Lucien Durey. There are cascades of yellow fruit-shaped objects, owing themselves to compost bins, and adorned with pressed flowers. The works are attached with strings to a dish rack and splashed with red paint. The banana motif resurfaces in previous artwork and sculpture, and the vibrant colours resurface in Lucien’s other works, as a necessary element.

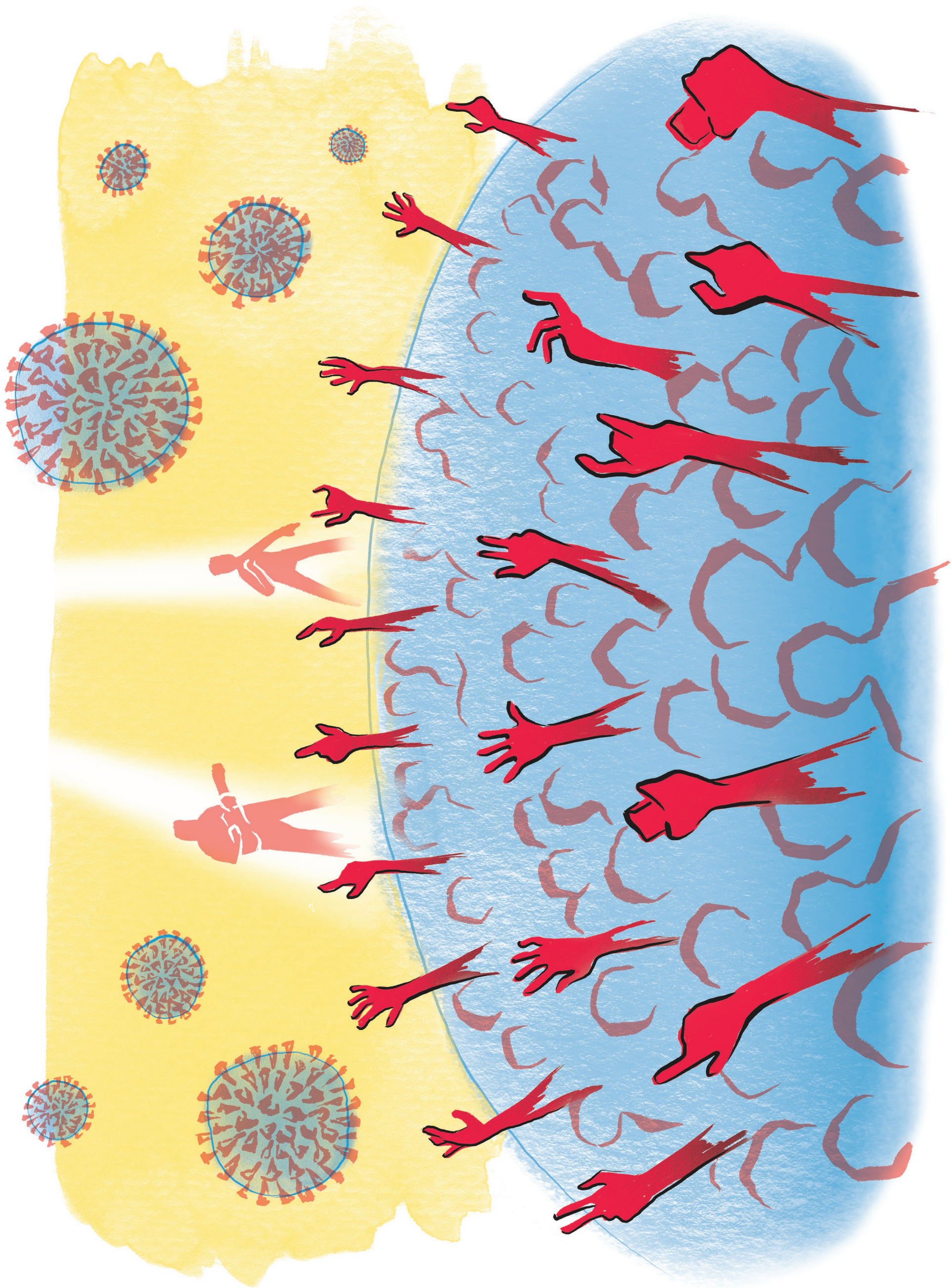
As you peer into the gallery from the street, a green highway street sign painted with the words “WE ARE SORRY” greets you. With closer observation, the term “forever” looms above the apology. The title *Made in Canada* comes as no surprise — artist Babak Golkar’s piece intertwines nicely into the theme of mechanization. It brings the highway indoors and places it residentially, allowing drive-by cars and

people to see the profound apology.

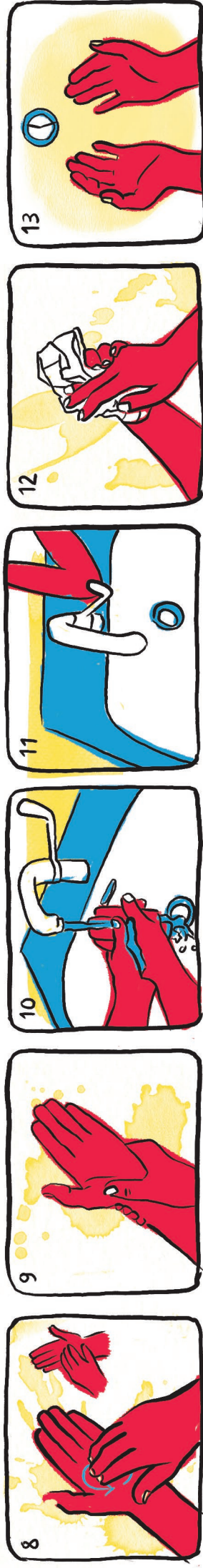
Adjacent to the door stands a mannequin atop a chicken box filled with grass, created by Mike Bourscheid, who’s work reoccurs in each installment of the exhibition. In this piece, Bourscheid presents a costume-like installation by draping a cape over a mannequin body, and attaching an O-ring bearing cooking instruments, ingredients and cutlery. The work also features gladiator strapped up sandals, reminiscent of Greek-antiquity. The composite of the piece suggests a discourse on industrialized farming, by its use of materials such as metal skewers, garlic and chicken feathers. Stitched onto the foam leg-forms are eyes that stare back at the viewer — recognizing their gaze, and therefore, participation in the work.

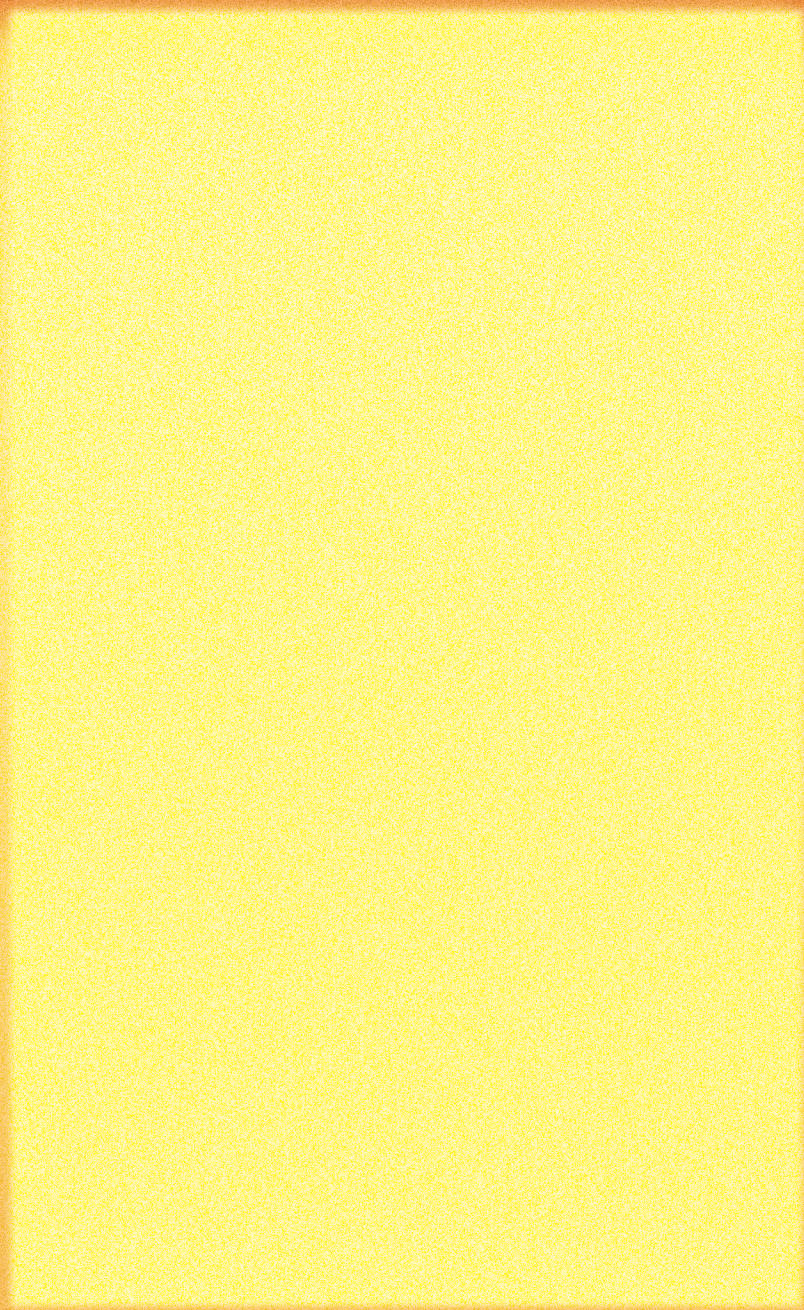
Crocodile Tears was expected to have a changeover of new work exhibited on March 27, however, due to closures for the safety of the community, Unit 17 is now empty of human observation. How can art create a conversation, or change thinking, without the intervention of human meditation? Especially as it aims to critique the consequences of the current climate — human intervention, viewership, is necessitated. The exhibition, lasting until April 19th, will be unfortunately impossible to view in person, though pictures are accessible online to keep the conversation alive.





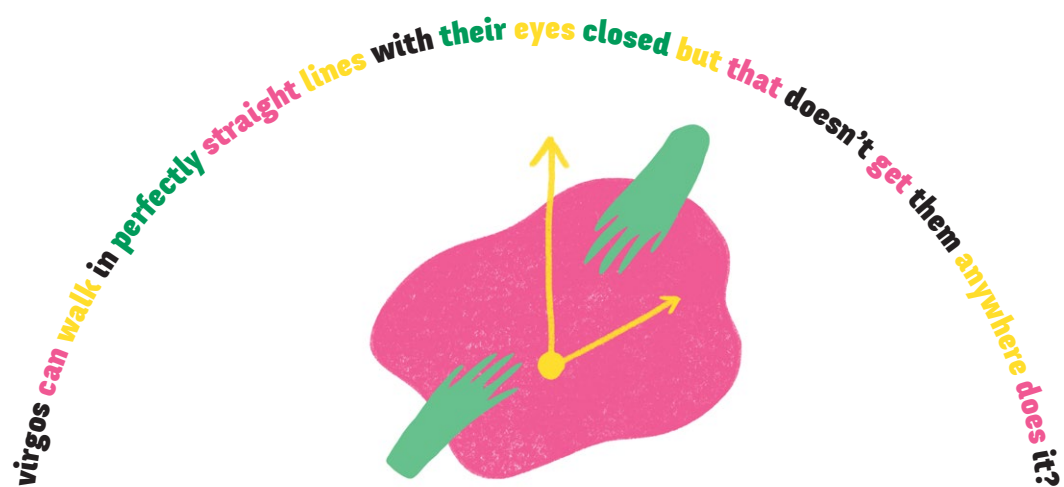
Hand-washing technique with soap and water





HOT SUMMER

June, July & August
2020



by Beni Xiao
illustrations by Alex Smyth

my birth chart says i'm pretentious,
and i don't play nice with others.
so i spend whole seasons hiding from the moon;
because what else am i supposed to do?

in a parallel universe where we (and by we i mean i)
have so much more patience, it takes me a whole hour
to complete one (1) kiss.
this is a world i would be happier in i think

except, would i? with all that patience,
would the night feel longer there?

here is a secret:
all virgos are deeply afraid of the dark.
it is in our nature; nothing
about the dark makes tangible sense
to someone who needs everything to be real enough
to taste and touch and hold.

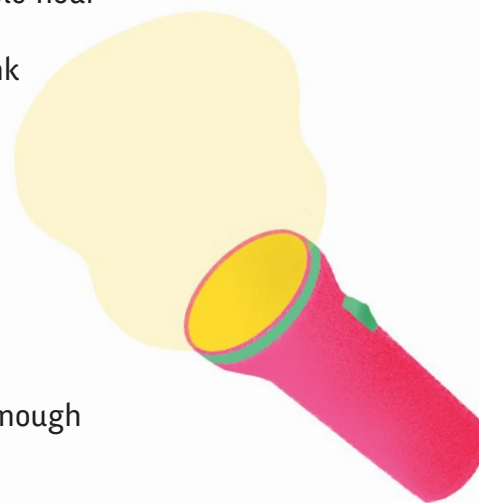
am i a listmaker because i'm a virgo? probably.
so i make lists of everything i fear, and everyone i love, and
everyone i've hurt.

keep them on my nightstand, and
in the dead of night, by string light, rearrange them so that
all the overlapping parts can find each other,
become a body of it's own. condense this
until it is as concise as it can possibly be.

the sun rises and i eat my fingernails for breakfast.
i tell the sunlight around me:

i'm sorry, and
i love you,
and i'm scared.

i'm never awake long enough to hear a response.



Beni Xiao



Reading Beni Xiao's work is a bit like meeting a new friend, and a bit like coming home to an old one.

The uniqueness, vulnerability and joy of their work makes it true; true to who they are, and true to the world they are reflecting. "You can't pretend that art isn't informed by or created by the world we live in," Xiao says. "My work is largely a reflection of what's going on around me at any given time."

Xiao is a queer, trans, Chinese, disabled artist who has been living and writing in Vancouver for over five years. Although Xiao is known for their poetry, they also sew, play piano and draw, and enjoy writing and illustrating their own comics. Even when surrounded by so much art, Xiao has gravitated towards poetry and its potential for direct communication, because it offers vulnerability. "I don't approach [art forms] all in the same way, and [they don't] always feel as personal," Xiao reflects. "Maybe that's why I do so many art forms: because I'm looking for different ways to express myself."

"I don't think art or writing is inherently personal [...] There's so much art that is frivolous, and that's allowed [...] I do find that for me, my poetry is very vulnerable."

It is perhaps Xiao's attention to detail in their work that makes it feel so intimate. Xiao's words turn the most ordinary aspects of life into a well of meaning. "It's not something that I feel like I consciously started doing," Xiao admits. Xiao's writing process has evolved from journaling, and the desire to document

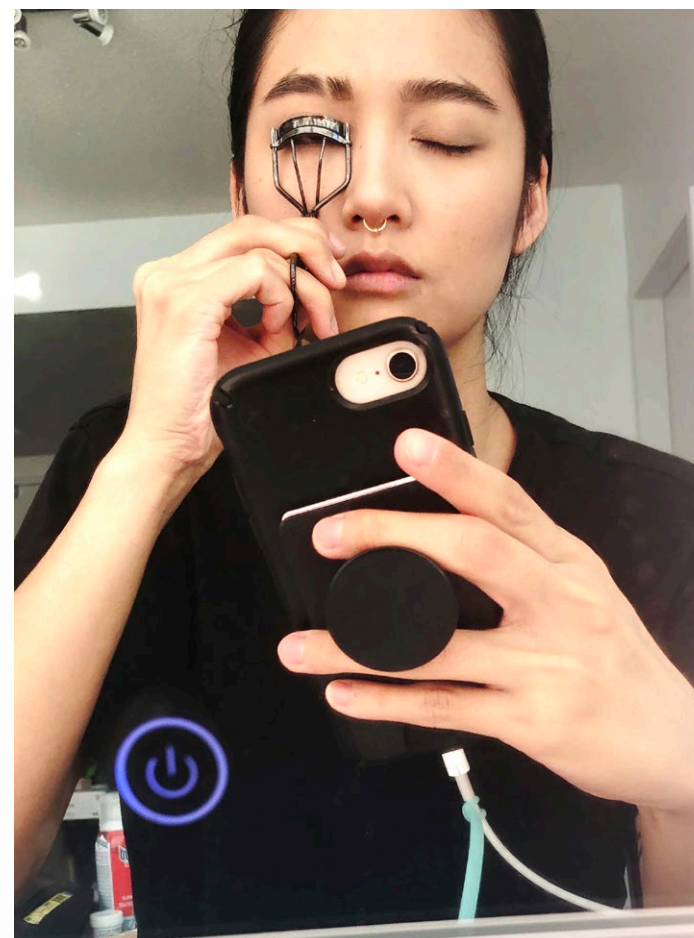


the small memories they didn't want to forget. "I'm sitting on the couch," they offer as an example, "and I'm very content right now, it's quiet, and everything is soft and warm. I just want to write this down, so I remember this moment of joy."

"I guess sometimes I feel like I'm warping the memory I'm trying to preserve," Xiao reflects, "Other times it can make me appreciate it more." Xiao notes the ability for writing to help them uncover the feelings that come up as they write, allowing them to realize the importance of a moment, and why they were drawn to document it. Perhaps rather than preserving or warping a memory, poetry

opens it up, remodels it, and breathes meaning into it.

It is no surprise, then, that Xiao's work has a very immediate, even raw, feeling. The barrier between Xiao's poetry and the world is papery thin. Xiao's writing changes depending where they are, and at what time of year they are writing. The material they wrote while in Italy and Greece feels different from what they write in Vancouver, and the work they began during the summertime is different from anything else they write throughout the year. Somehow, Xiao's environment permeates their work.



There is a strong and unique voice that draws readers into the intimacy and vibrancy of Xiao's writing. "I definitely do think it is me," Xiao concludes of their poetic voice. "Maybe not always the exact person I am, but definitely a version of me, or a part of me." Xiao doesn't write with the aim of replicating reality. "Sometimes in my poetry I'll play pretend a little bit," they explain, "as I'm going through a poem, different emotions come up, or a different mood happens on the page that I'm not necessarily feeling, and sometimes I'll just kinda go with that."



“I’m excited to be writing again.
It feels good to be doing things
I enjoy.”

words by
Katherine Gear Chambers

illustrations by
Alex Smyth

photos courtesy of
Beni Xiao

Xiao’s poems indeed have a life and energy of their own. “advice, or maybe just some ideas” begins with thoughtful, playful snippets of advice — but ends with the calming, grounded reassurance, “no matter how many times you don’t respond to a text, or you forget to eat a meal, or call in sick just to sleep in, try to love yourself / you owe yourself that much.” Xiao will never hesitate to challenge us, and they will be the last person to sugarcoat the truth.

The uniqueness of Xiao’s voice comes from their openness, and they are as keen to share their joy as they are to articulate their uncertainty. In their quirky humour, Xiao invites us to pay attention to the small moments in our lives that are sources of joy. Two things that delight Xiao are “things that fit into other things” and “things that are round.” “I’m a really big fan of stuffed animals and eggs, because they’re round,” Xiao enthuses.

Perhaps Xiao’s work feels so joyful because of their ability to incorporate their sources of delight into their writing process. By allowing their work to flow in a direction, and then harkening back to an early idea, Xiao fits their work together: “It’s kind of like I’m playing tetris on the page, but with ideas” they explain.

“I like bugs a lot,” they add, “and I feel like they’re often there but not focused on.”

Along with celebrating the unnoticed, a lot of Xiao’s current work honours the people with whom they share their life and their joy. “I write a lot of love letters to my friends,” they offer, “That’s a lot of the work that I’m working on right now.”

Although Xiao hasn’t always identified with being a writer, they were a poet even before they knew to claim the title. “When I started writing poetry at the end of high school, for a long time I didn’t necessarily consider what I was

doing poetry,” they remember. Their work was quite unlike that of authors — such as Robert Frost — that populated the high school curriculum. It wasn’t until Xiao’s second year of university that they understood their work to be poetry: “I discovered a lot of American alt-lit writers, and I was like, ‘oh this is what I’m doing!’[...] That just made a big difference for me, and I started writing so much more from that moment.”

Since claiming the title of a poet, Xiao has been featured by *Room Magazine*, *Sad Magazine*, *The Real Vancouver Writers’ Series* and *Can’t Lit*. Their chapbook, *Bad Egg*, was published by Rahlia’s Ghost in 2017. Xiao is grateful to be part of the Vancouver writing community. “You meet unique, like-minded people, and a lot of them are writing from places that are very similar to where I’m coming from, so of course I’m able to relate to their work on a very personal level.”

Where early in their career, Xiao was inspired by Jamie Mortara’s *Some Planet*, and by Ana Carrete, who is still a favourite poet, most of the poetry they read now is written by their colleagues and peers. Xiao admires the work of Jane Shi, Santiago Ureña, Aja Moore, and Natalie Wee, a Toronto-based poet.

“Any time I see my friends read or they ask me to look over their work, or I read their work in a publication, it’s inspiring for me.” Xiao enthuses, “It makes me so excited about poetry, and it makes me so excited about my poetry.”

Xiao is currently working on a manuscript for a full-length book, which they started prior to publishing the *Bad Egg* chapbook. “I was working full time [after graduating], and that wasn’t sustainable for my body,” Xiao shares, “and then I spent most of last year resting and I feel like I didn’t really write much

for about a year, but I’m writing again, so I feel like my manuscript will be finished at some point.”

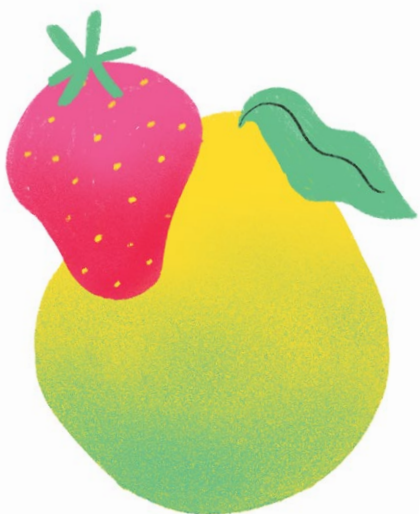
“I’m excited to be writing again. It feels good to be doing things I enjoy.”

Along with writing, Xiao’s daily life is filled with their unique creativity and joy. “Time isn’t real anymore. We’re living in a pandemic,” they shrug, “All I do is play *Animal Crossing*.”

“My favourite thing to do [in *Animal Crossing*] is catch bugs, because I love bugs,” Xiao laughs. “My roommate is like ‘the bugs don’t make that much money, you should be catching fish’ and I’m like ‘but I don’t care about the fish.’” Even in a video game, Xiao will celebrate the smaller things.

In the meantime, Xiao will continue to create, and their work will continue to reflect our world. “Art is a byproduct of where we live,” Xiao affirms. “I think it’s the artist’s responsibility to be mindful of how their art is influenced by the world they are bringing it into, and how this art will exist in context. This doesn’t mean that every piece of art has to be made specifically for, and only to, address social issues. Just that you need to consider the impact of what you are doing, and why you are doing it.” There is no denying that Xiao’s art is mindful — maybe it is exactly what we need right now. Xiao’s work invites us to find joy in what surrounds us, to honour the smaller moments that make up a life, and to celebrate those we have the privilege of sharing that life with.

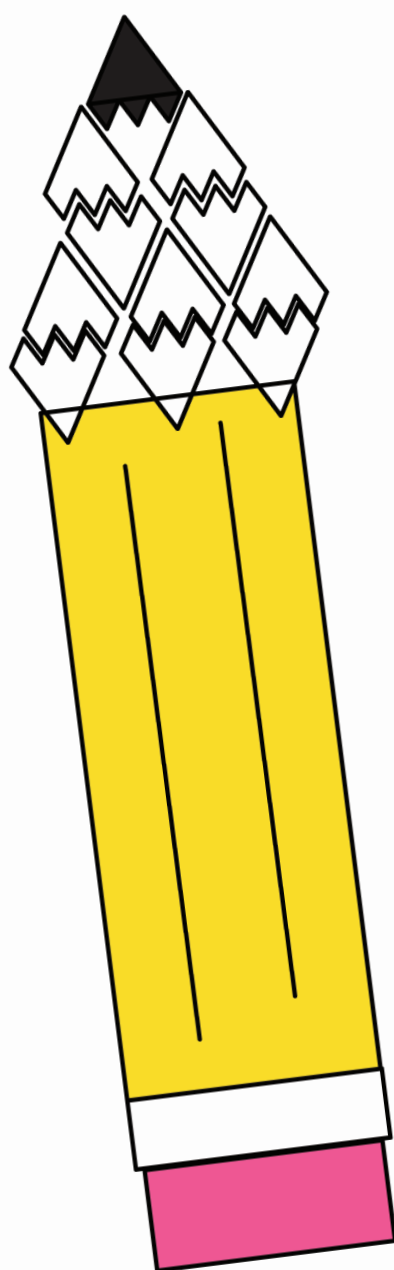
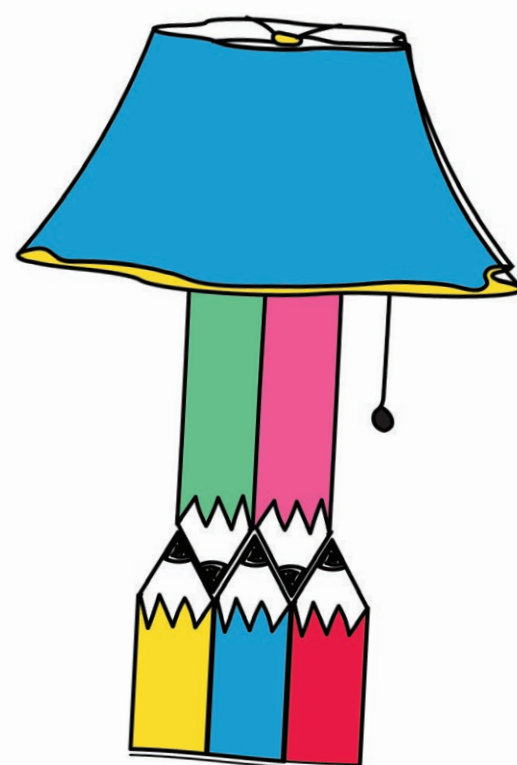
Xiao reminds us, “we can’t ignore that this is the world we live in.” Their work will make sure we’re paying attention.



DRAWER

CLUB

words by
Zainab Fatima
illustrations by
Neetu Dha
carpetsample94 avatar courtesy of
Anna Firth



From *Swampcone Magazine* came the ultimate quarantine virtual escape for art enthusiasts: **Drawer Club**. A choose-your-own-adventure — *Drawer Club* allows players to create characters that get to navigate a world they control.

Swampcone is a publishing platform for Anna Firth, where every season she sends out a theme, and members of the magazine submit comics related to it. The purpose behind starting this platform was to allow illustrators to have an accessible place to publish their work.

Given that *Swampcone* is an illustrator/art enthusiast haven, it seems pretty natural for them to introduce an interactive drawing game where the amazing contributors of the magazine and new participants get to connect through their avatars. Best thing about it is that being a talented artist is not a prerequisite, “it’s about the story, it’s not about skill,” said Firth, “so there is no expectation that people are expert drawers for joining which is nice. When all these little drawings are put in the room it looks nice no matter what level people are drawing at.” In this case having a *unique* art style can add to your benefit, and create a spicy aesthetic.

Since *Drawer Club* is pretty much a collage of different artists’ work, looking at a screenshot of the game without contest is in itself an adventure. For those of us who have played avatar games in our childhood, such as *Club Penguin*, *SIMS* or *Stardoll*, *Drawer Club* allows players to customize items exactly how they want, because they are drawing themselves.

To play the game, players would send their avatars, and then be given drawing prompts everyday by Firth. The essence of the game is pretty chill, with no strict time obligations that players have to follow: you get to come and go as you please. This in particular is much appreciated

in quarantine, because having to balance between *Animal Crossing*, Tik Tok and binging *90 Day Fiancé*, can be chaotic.

Another unique feature of *Drawer Club* is that the actual narrative of the game also depends on what the players want to do: Firth sends over the beginning of a prompt and players choose how the story develops from there, including creating the richest, most funky backstories for your avatars.

Drawer Club also has its own currency: Swamp Coins. Players can spend Swamp Coins to add items to their house, or they can earn them by performing several tasks in the game. One of the ways they could earn Swamp Coins one day was by talking to another player in the game. This turned out to be an amazing opportunity for players to *exploit the bank* because there was no limit placed on how many characters you could talk to.

A choose-your-own-drawing-adventure game with valuable life skills: a Quarantine Love Story.

Swamp Coins also allow players to add new things into the virtual world of *Drawer Club*. For example, you can spend Swamp Coins to be able to destroy items in other characters’ houses. Or, you can live out your best Randy from *Recess* fantasy by snitching on everything you see for an extra buck. Both are equally satisfying.



hi drawer club! i'm carpetsample94 and
i will be your neighbour.



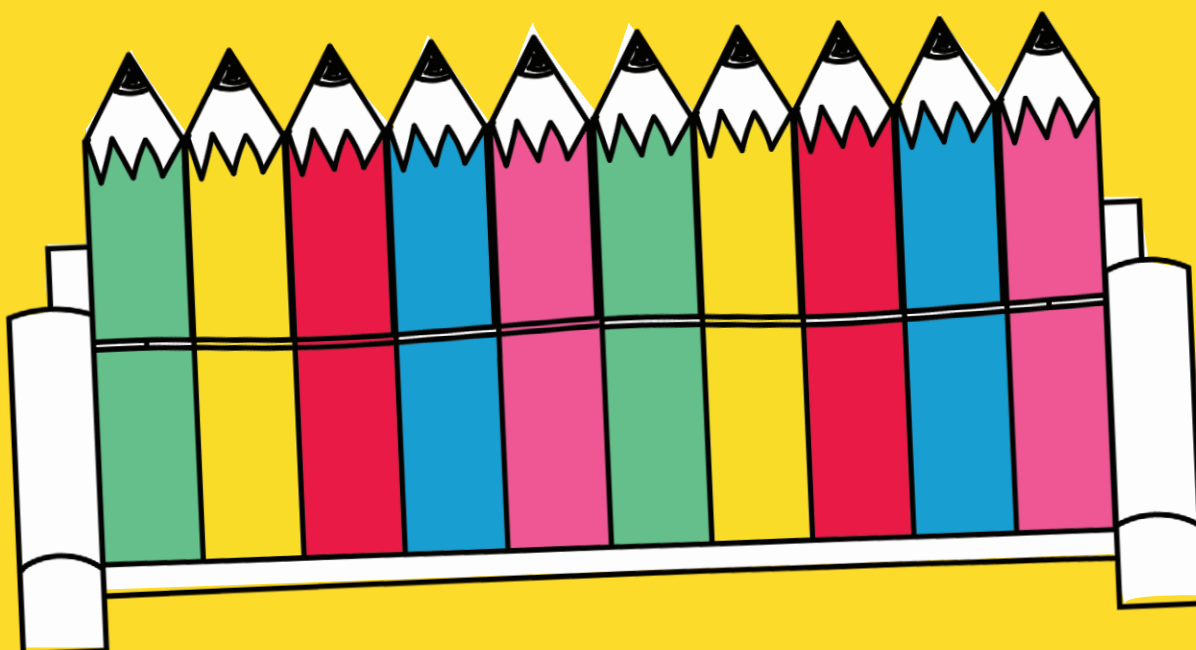
lthough *Drawer Club* began as a simple quarantine activity, it soon became a place to find your new best friend. When characters are added to the game, their identity is kept anonymous, but as the game went on, “people were starting to communicate not just through me, but through each other,” said Firth, “and I thought that was really cool, how many people got in touch with each other just through the game.”

And that is what Firth loves most about *Drawer Club*: “having a community interconnected through these personas, but then, also, they’re sharing their real art with each other.” A pretty neat thing to have during grumpy and slow quarantine days.

And because of this Firth might want to resume *Drawer Club*, even if quarantine ends, “I think people are starting to get back to their regular lives, and they aren’t looking for an escape as much, but I think there is still a place for it.” To accommodate people’s changing schedules, the potential re-start of the game would include weekly prompts, where just like before, players can come and go as they please.

As for *Swampcone*, upcoming updates for the magazine are uncertain due to the pandemic and interruptions in services like printing. So, for the time being, “the future of *Swampcone* might look a little bit like *Drawer Club*, something that’s social media based and an online drawing, digital art kind of thing,” said Firth.

Even though there is a global pandemic looming over our heads, causing uncertainty in every direction, Firth wants *Swampcone* to stay, “it’s about elevating people that don’t have access to the comics world. The illustration world is so tight-knit and hard to access for most people, if I can use my platform to share people’s work and help them out then I don’t wanna stop doing that.”



(Honky) TONK

words by Conrad Hendy // illustrations by Abi Taylor // photos by Alistair Henning

Tonk write lighthearted and amusing, yet pensive, ballads, calling forth time-honoured images of corralled cattle and a life on the open range; their recent debut provides the ideal means to yee one's haw during these surreal days.

Tonk are a home-grown country band with a welcome personality and sense of humour. The vignettes of sinewy agricultural workers and blue buckaroos that appear on their debut record, *Songs to Glorify the Peasant and His Tractor*, evoke a sense of isolation and adversity which act as a fitting analogue of life sequestered at home during these long days in lockdown. This project, which was released from isolation back in April, is both compelling and sincere, weaving a vivid tapestry of beer drinking, heavy hardware lifting and cowboys with a predisposition to the blues.

Despite the preconceived notions some may have about country — perhaps predicated on encounters with tasteless, cliché-riddled pop country or “bro-country” — the genre is (and always has been) deceptively diverse. Increasingly, the traditional tenets of country are challenged by alternative and independent artists; those looking to defy boundaries, offering an antidote to the formulaic and commercial sound prevailing in the mainstream, particularly with respect to the heteronormative and culturally conservative status quo. Yet, it is feasible to achieve an innovative or unconventional sound whilst simultaneously honouring the traditional motifs of the genre, as well as the resonant and poetic songwriting upon which it was founded. Tonk strike this balance effectively. The nascent band's balladry is both refreshing in its approach and brazen in its country twang.

There's some deliberation as the members of Tonk consider their affinity for country. “Personally, I think I got hooked on country when I finished school and started doing physical labour,” says vocalist Quin McCormack, who, along with Ogwaho Powless (guitars and banjo), Nick Short (drums), Grant Whitaker (bass) and Dan Thow (vocals, guitar and piano), have carved out a niche in the Vancouver scene during the year and a half or so they've been playing together. They may not have appeared on stage alongside many other country acts but with a local indie circuit which is so diverse, nobody arrives at a show expecting to hear a line-up of bands that sound alike. “We definitely stand out genre-wise but audiences have been receptive,” Dan observes. “I think our take on country fits in with the bounty of other sounds in Vancouver. Hopefully we have made some new country fans or inspired people to start country bands.” Grant continues: “... I think people are more into country than you'd expect.”

When asked about their shift into country from other genres, the group describe a natural transition. “It was actually rejuvenating for myself transitioning to country. I bought a Gibson acoustic and started writing songs,” Dan explains. For Quin, it involved picking up a new instrument altogether, the lap steel guitar. The gliding country staple, used for mood enhancement and soundscape formation, was an acquisition both challenging and rewarding. “Most



“Tonk”



of the slide guitar on the album is on a lap steel which has less moving parts [than a pedal steel], but I am definitely a beginner. Country is kind of a nice genre to practice music and technique because the traditional songs are usually just a few basic chords. Which doesn't mean it can't be complex. [I've] been practicing the pedal steel a lot during quarantine so, hopefully, that'll be in whatever future Tonk stuff."

Songs to Glorify the Peasant and His Tractor is a collection of tracks brimming with playful and intriguing lyrics. The lead single, "Silt," is but one example of the rich and creative narratives which appear on the project, with its infectious "hard body, soft brain" hook. "When I started writing Silt I was kind of aiming for it to be about a romantic labourer but I think I got kinda disillusioned after the first verse," Quin recounts. "I was working as a painter and coming home covered in dirt and stuff everyday and like relishing the muscles I was getting but also mourning my arts degree I guess."

"I remember talking to Quin about lyrics when we were working on songs," Ogwaho recalls. "It often seemed that the lyrics ended up sounding like a medieval peasant trying to write a Bakersfield country hit."

A balance of irony and sincerity is one of the salient features of the record. Quin reflects on the process of writing songs: "I think for most of the songs I sing on the album, we would be jamming and [would] come up with something we kinda liked and then I would go home and labour over the lyrics. For a lot of them I was pulling lines from these kinda stupid medieval limericks I was writing a few years ago, haha. Dan's songs are definitely different, he shows up with like fully finished songs to practice. I was really hesitant to record honestly 'cause I wanted to keep editing the lyrics. I think part of why country music appealed to all of us is because it often makes fun of itself a little. [The] lyrics can be incredibly sincere and heartbreaking but they also don't take themselves too seriously. John Prine and Billy Joe Shaver are really great examples of that." When Nick was mixing the album, he asked the rest of the band how they wanted it to sound. "Like Honky Tonk Heroes by Waylon Jennings," was the unanimous reply. Other primary inspirations for the album include the likes of Gram Parsons and

the Flying Burrito Brothers. "We definitely got real into outlaw country, but also the unique take Gram Parsons had on the genre," Grant explains.

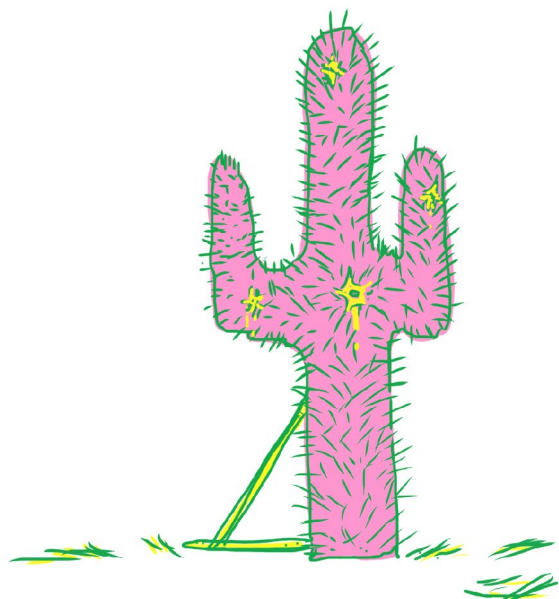
The album was released at the end of April, so how did COVID affect the launch and promotion strategy for the record? "I don't think we really had a strategy to begin with," Quin muses. "But we canceled our release show which was too bad. I think [it would have been] mostly a chance for us to have a bit of a party and play with some other really good bands. We made the album on a slim budget so it wasn't like we had to cover costs. People have still been super supportive and kind though."

Grant agrees: "It was weird to just send it out there so unceremoniously but it did give us a chance to focus on how we got it out and to what platforms." As I lament the unfortunate nature of the situation, Ogwaho interjects: "I think one fortunate thing is that people have more time, and maybe more willingness, to listen to music on streaming services during COVID." I looked into this and, as it happens, when it comes to country, he's completely right; data provided by Spotify suggest that country music specifically has seen an upsurge of streaming during lockdown. Intriguing.

So, what's next for Tonk post-lockdown? The overarching sentiment is that the band are eager to get back onstage again, playing alongside other people. "The release show was postponed and hopefully we can play that when the time comes," says Dan. "In Nashville too, of course."

"Hopefully someone from the Grand Ole Opry is reading this," adds Ogwaho.

For the time being, Nashville will have to wait. At present, Tonk seek to get back to making country converts of the patrons of dark Vancouver bars; by means of deadpan stories which can detail anything from struggling with rental payments to inadequate equine knowledge. They'll continue to play their alternative brand of dusty, "tear-in-your-beer" ballad, which can be witty and self-aware, but often vulnerable and always unpretentious. Above all, Tonk prove how, by challenging the audience's expectations, a true-blue country band can, in itself, be a subversive thing.





MARV HUONGBO

U.N.I.T.Y. COLLECTIVE
U.N.I.T.Y. COLLECTIVE

words: CLARA DUEBER
illus: SUNNY NESTLER
photos: MARV HUONGBO

Talking with Marv Hougbo, it's impossible not to be excited about what they have to say. Talking to them, listening to their music, seeing their photography, attending community events they've coordinated — it's obvious that they approach any type of interaction with intent and care. His genuity isn't plastered. He's not trying to impress upon you how much he cares, he simply cares. And doesn't have patience for not expressing it. As they put it, "I just wanna be a good person. I don't care about being cool." They believe that "what you do really reflects who you are.", and their work reflects this authenticity. It is never farcical, nor does it stray far from their family and personal history. Being a Black, queer person, being a person who was born in a tight knit community in East Africa (and has since lived across the western world), being exposed to many different life experiences — these have all been imprinted upon Marv's creative practice. Being also young — they're 21 — that history is immediately grounding, contextualizing, and fascinating. They've said: "I'm so fucking obsessed with knowing history and knowing my history," and that history continues to be a huge inspiration for them.

" Marv Hougbo & U.N.I.T.Y. "



“**Nivram**” is Marv’s music moniker for their ambient hip hop and rap project.

Through it, they’ve been able to flex the processing of their emotions. Where they can be like, “ ‘I love you, but fuck you. Look what you not only put me through, but my people through.’” The music that Marv makes with Nivram works like therapy by “writing about stuff and releasing it.” Like any effective therapy, what they’re writing about and releasing isn’t self-contained; they’re navigating their emotions as they feel them, but also through the broader waters of their family story. Always aware of how they fit into a larger context, historically and communally.

Marv works in many different mediums to give a voice to the many different parts of themselves — but communality is always woven into their practice. They often use their photography as a conduit to raise awareness of their community. Their style is inspired by the African family photos they grew up with: photos of their mother, their aunts and uncles, and themselves. These photos “remind [them] of who [they are] whenever [they’re] lost.” For them, photography is sentimental. It documents people and community. They use that to uplift their peers and give their friends a platform; they explain “When I take photos of my friends, I want people to know who they are. I want people to know what they do.” They want to document their friends, alongside themselves — always aware of the representation they were missing as a kid.

Their latest photo series, *Home is Not a Place, it’s a Feeling*, was sparked by the discovery of the self-timer button on their camera. It expresses a reflection Marv has had for a long time — having had to move a lot growing up, and that kind of transience can feel untethering; “So many of my friends have their childhood homes that they can always go back to. A lot of my white friends have lived in the same house their entire lives. For me, my friends are my home, my friends’ homes are my homes.” This series documents Marv’s feelings about beauty and their relationship with having, and how having is related to wanting. It’s accompanied by a list of what they pray for, “things [they]’ve never had, things [they] have now, and things that [they] will have”. Something they haven’t always had is the privilege to “see [themselves] in a lot of artwork. [They] didn’t see Black joy in a lot of artwork” and photographing it now both honors that past loss and celebrates its gain.



A lot of my white friends have lived in
the same house their entire lives.
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Working towards those havings, Marv started U.N.I.T.Y. Collective to create a space where BIPOC queer and trans people can “meet other BIPOC queer and trans people they would’ve never met before.” From a place of genuine care, Marv believes community is about making connections that enable sharing resources, to them it’s fundamentally “being like ‘Oh you need this? I know a person, let me introduce you.’” U.N.I.T.Y. had their first show in the midst of Covid on July 1. The event’s germ was as a community photoshoot project (*Unity in Quarantine*, in which Marv photographed and interviewed friends and colleagues) to counter the necessary isolation of lockdown and social distancing. The shoot became an event showcasing BIPOC, queer, and trans artists in Vancouver. Marv wanted to show that “with BLM, and the pandemic, Black joy still exists and BIPOC folks hanging out & having fun is still a thing.” The all BIPOC Lineup — comprised of Nivram, HoodieBrowns, DeadnYoung, Dani Your Darling, DJ Brat, and Della Orrey — is an essential feature to Marv’s vision for U.N.I.T.Y.’s events. The show had a 35 person capacity and was streamed over Zoom. For the physical audience, Marv prioritized Black, queer and trans folks “because we need spaces that are ours, period.”

That need, and U.N.I.T.Y. itself, aren’t ideas limited to Vancouver. As a network for resource sharing, Marv wants to use U.N.I.T.Y. to “be putting on more younger people, and Black people, and Indigenous people, and people of color who come from the suburbs.” People who are excluded from the resources that are centralized, and hoarded, by the city’s white-elite.

The scope of this value is extended to not just through Vancouver-adjacent spaces: “in the next year what I want to see, [and] in the world in general, is more community.” In keeping with this hope, U.N.I.T.Y.’s future isn’t constrained to North America. Inspired by their aunt’s artist residency in Kenya, and their mother’s nonprofit Mamba Support Society, Marv wants to “take U.N.I.T.Y. to communities around the world who don’t have access” — especially those in Africa. They’ve seen how, because of the ways colonialism, capitalism and white supremacy have shaped western cultures’ perception of people in Africa, “people don’t realize that there’s an underground scene in Africa too. There’s queer and trans poeple in Africa too. People assume that Africa is this jungle with lions and it’s like — there are cities in Africa. There are people who DJ, there are people who are in the scene.”

For now, U.N.I.T.Y. is shaping into a platform to elevate local artists’ work. They’ve put out a call for submissions to post on their Instagram, but mainly Marv’s “waiting for the pandemic to end because [their] whole life revolves around not being in a pandemic,” waiting and working on their music, which Marv’s been developing for years. They’ve been feeling “scared to put it together, but it’s going to be so exciting because [they] have such a good feeling that something so beautiful will come out of it.” Recently, they’ve been struck by the word sublime, to them, “it’s very noble, it’s just beauty. That’s where my beauty comes from.” Their sublimity is their authenticity and care that makes their vision for community so strong.





He howled *through the microphone and its reverb shook the floor.*

Or maybe it was the leg work.

Dosh's relationship with sound begins in the loud and boisterous city of Lagos, Nigeria. Moving to Toronto as a twenty-something, and now in Vancouver, he never forgot his hometown. Where music is as common as air, it's hard not to breathe in deep.

words by
MILENA CARRASCO

illustrations by
IVANNA MOSQUEIRA

photos by
PHOEBE TELFAR

Milena: How has music played a part in your life?

Dosh: Music has been like a companion, like a friend in some ways. Mainly in my house it was kind of different. I grew up in Nigeria, so there was music around us but there were no devices. There's no 24-hour electricity, we could have no electricity for like a month. We would make music ourselves. We would play around, [there was this] clapping game called *Ten-te*, played out on the street. So the environment was musical, but also just the noise of the city itself — because there's no electricity, a lot of people had generators, and generators make a lot of noise. Imagine everyone on the whole block having a generator. It's funny, there was this BBC documentary called 'Sounds of Lagos', and [it was about the] street vendors who, in order to attract customers, do these different

musical things. For example, there are food vendors who would have these bowls on their head, filled with food, and forks that they'd tap to attract people. So, I'd say for me, in my household, there was music around, but my parents weren't really musical.

In your music — I noticed this with your freestyles — you're always playing . Even if it's just like a freestyle, or just a beat, you know, you're still like humming. I don't know if that makes sense.

Yeah for sure, I like how you said it. You know, again, growing up in Lagos, it's something that we always used to do — there's a huge freestyle culture there. There's this place we used to call "The Waterside," and everyday after school everyone would go down there and rap. But again, the artform, the music itself, was about the voice as an instrument. I definitely appreciate artists, rappers, who know how to move *with the* music rather than being stiff with their art form. So yeah, it's an interesting observation.

So swords, I want to talk about swords. Why do you like swords? I saw that there was a picture that you have where you have a sword and you're cutting a Macbook in half.

I think it's maybe a metaphor for life, you know what I mean? I think that's more so what I get from being "like a sword." It's like, when you have a skill, when you have a talent, it's kind of like a blade. Because samurais have a discipline to the maintenance of their swords. They have to clean it. They have to sharpen it after a fight, or before a war. I think it's like life — we're like swords and if we don't maintain ourselves, or sharpen our skills, then we can't slice through the toughest of foes, or the toughest of things. I think I've been more cautious of the sword thing lately, because [it can be a form of] cultural appropriation. But I've always been fascinated with them. I actually own a sword, but I think I lost it.

How do you lose a sword?

It's my second sword. I'm just clumsy. I moved and I think I lost it somewhere.

Well, hopefully it doesn't land in the hands of the wrong person.

Yes, yes haha hopefully not.

Um okay. So also talking about movement. I wanted to talk about dance because performance seems like it's a really big part of your stage presence for you. I don't know if you do it on purpose, but it's

ADEWOLF & the 3ribe

very contagious. Like you said, your songs are playful and that energy is definitely conveyed through movement for you. I also saw you include choreography with Alyssa Marshi for the song "Dangerous," and I think that's something I wanted to talk about because not all artists take the time to make choreographies for their songs.

You know what? Every artist has their way to express a show, you know? Personally, I don't play any instruments, I'm just a vocal artist. And maybe in some ways, you know, I kind of use dancing as a type of instrument. You feel the music, and what do you gotta do? You gotta dance! Yeah, I think dancing is just how you feel the music. Dance is just an essential form of human expression. Some people say they can't dance and I honestly believe there's no such thing as that. Maybe you don't know how to do movements that other people are accustomed to, or you can't move in a certain way. But there's no such thing as not being able to dance. It's just like cooking — everybody can cook. Some people can cook better than others. It's just like, you never saw it as a priority. But everybody can do it.

Dance for him is a response to music that asks us questions. The body answers. Similar to the rhythm that makes feet tap and hips sway, sometimes you need to feel it heavy in your spirit to be light on your toes.

So before I ask about your team, the 3ribe, I should ask if I'm pronouncing it right — is it Thribe?

Yes. But it's honestly just Tribe. I think after I did it [replaced the T with 3], I realized — people are curious. It's just interesting that it walks into your memory when you are trying to figure

out how to pronounce something. Makes it more memorable.

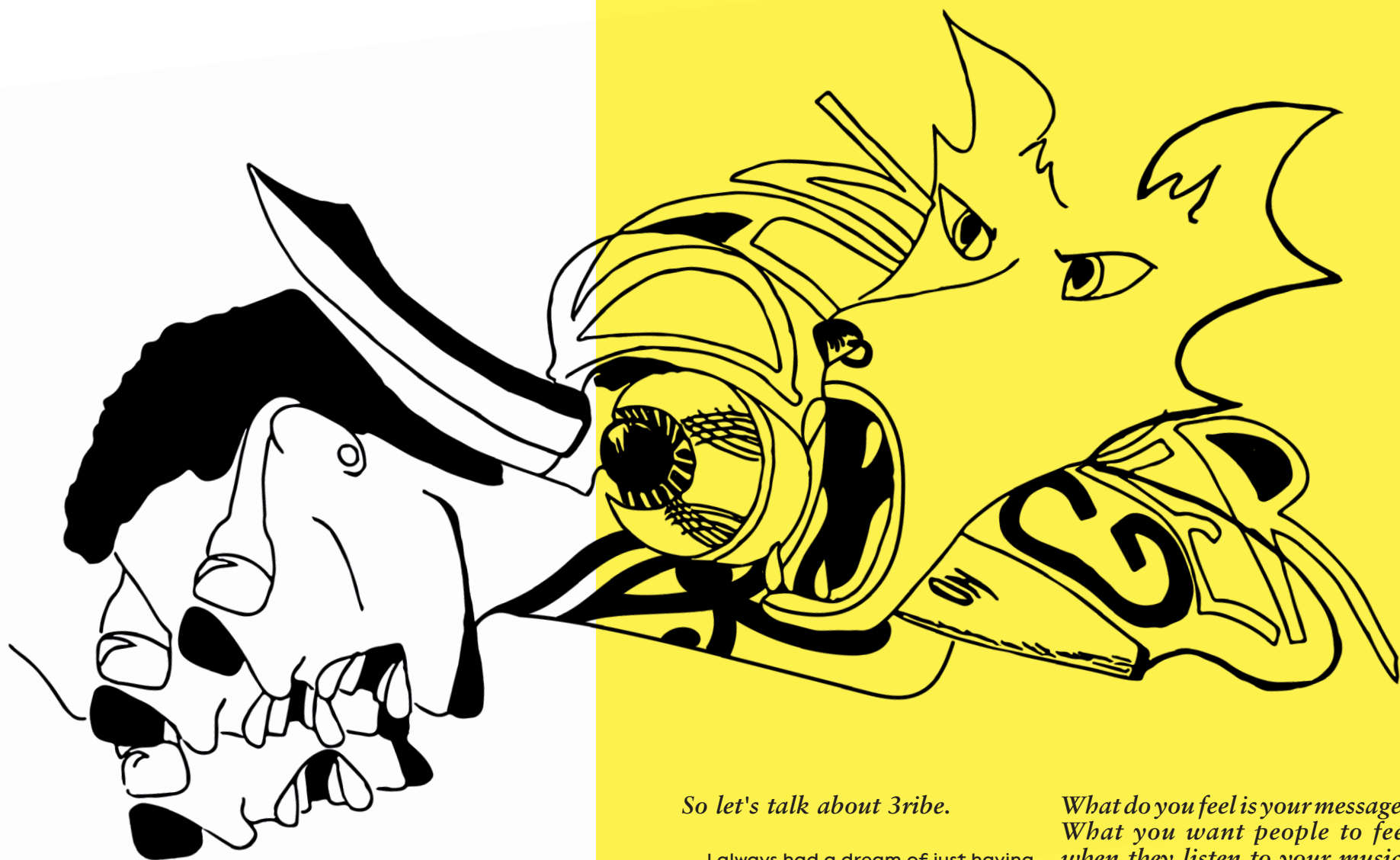
Constantly working on sharpening that blade, building crafts and finding grooves to fill within it. Writing rhymes with a heavy hand and entering the stage with a right hook. They say the pen is mightier than the sword — for Adewolf they're not in competition. Writing rhymes with a heavy hand and entering the stage with a right hook. Through his music you'll hear that risk and danger is a match he's willing to fight for.

It seems what you have is like a mentality of like...wanting to create statements, because you look up to people who are recognizable. Who have built an empire of themselves through their art. So would you say you have something that you're building right now for yourself?

I guess more like the Egyptians said — just immortality. They say, life is like a fruit, and it's just like how much you squeeze, and I'm still squeezing. Seeing what juices come out. See, I'm just having fun with it. I think my legacy is just making sure you push yourself. Reach better versions. I think we have an obligation to. We consume a lot of music. I feel like it's greedy to take all these amazing things: art, music, all these forms — we can't make it one sided. You gotta give back something, I think we all have something to keep back. So maybe my form is this, in whatever capacity, big or small, it doesn't really matter but so far, it's making the world better, especially now. A lot of people are not going as deep. They're just going wider. They don't want to go deep, there's something deep this time of isolation has shown us, how the capitalist system is moving the pace for the world. That is just dangerous — we can't let money decide how we should be moving.



“ Adewolf & the 3ribe ”



"We're like swords
and if we don't
maintain ourselves,
or sharpen our skills,
then we can't slice
through the toughest
of foes, or the
toughest of things"

So let's talk about 3ribe.

I always had a dream of just having a crew, a band, where we can make music together like a family. I initially just kind of set it up to perform for a release party and well, I think we just kind of chilled. Jammed. The whole crew. We have Chris Bede on the drums [...] Max Gage playing the piano, and also the guitar, and is like, an awesome musician. He's also a producer and an engineer. Same thing with Ron Nazal — he plays the piano, but many other instruments as well. Then, we have Omo Iruoje. Omo was actually the first guy I met that introduced me to everyone. Omo is, again, a creative person. He's a graphic designer. Then we have Abby Agnes, who is a singer. Abby's a newer member. There is also Stephanie Aigbe-Joseph and Nayeed Toriola who are singers.

So genres — well, just tell me what are the genres that you feel, you play with 3ribe, describe the music to me.

I would say like, definitely aspects of hip hop, and aspects R&B. I think we definitely play around with some jazzy elements, definitely Afrobeats because I'd say that's more my background. We throw in some reggae there too, and some Dancehall cause yeah, shit, I grew up on that. Bob Marley and all those things.

What do you feel is your message? What you want people to feel when they listen to your music? Although I understand how that could be different based on the song as well.

Uh huh. Yeah, I'll say maybe that it's more like it's OK to be yourself. You know what I mean? To be like, kind of awkward and insecure sometimes. It definitely takes a bit of courage, you know, taking time to understand yourself. [...] They say to get the gold, you have to dig deeper. You have to be fighting to get that gold — not be cliché — but I feel like I am doing that most of the time. I have songs like, new phone who be dis, which is definitely more of a party song. But even in that, I'm kind of also talking about how sometimes you need to let go, in the steps to becoming your better self. Letting go of old friends, and having a new group of people who have the same mindset, you know, that line, "don't call me if it 'ain't about biz" — don't be calling me if it's not about progress. The lyrics "We shine like a compact disk" — you're with people who want to shine. Stuff like that.

Adewolf entered the game with an urge to be palatable — but now, his sound has ripened into something less sweet, but that, he can savour. Music that is so shiny, it can't help but see its reflection on the stage floor — like a Michael Jackson glove.



Growing into the letters that spell Adewolf has also meant anchoring himself in the 3ribe — a world made of trees that drip gold and a peacock-jeweled sound that hums the highlife of his hometown. Sounds enveloped in a persistently pink-toned percussion, with glittering accents. Vocals shine and improvisation is a dagger built of words that could split you open.

You kind of talked about how, when you were growing up, felt like a different time. And right now, we're living in very racially tense and urgent times. How do you think your upcoming projects or the music that you're working on right now have been affected by this atmosphere?

I grew up in Lagos Island. Lagos Island is right by the Atlantic sea, and was one main ports where slave ships used to take Africans to the West — it's the main hub. It's crazy how everything comes full circle. Now I'm doing a bit more research. I'm understanding the systematic oppression, the pain, and there's definitely some responsibility to speak about these things. To be confident in your culture and have a stance. I feel like working on the inside is a big part of this future progress. And I think, maybe, that's what my new project is talking about. What's inside, and how you can use that to build yourself Handle anything that comes. Whether it's like, systematic oppression, whether

it's like actual racism. Yeah, it's definitely important to talk about. How it's going to be reflected in this project is something I'm still trying to figure out.

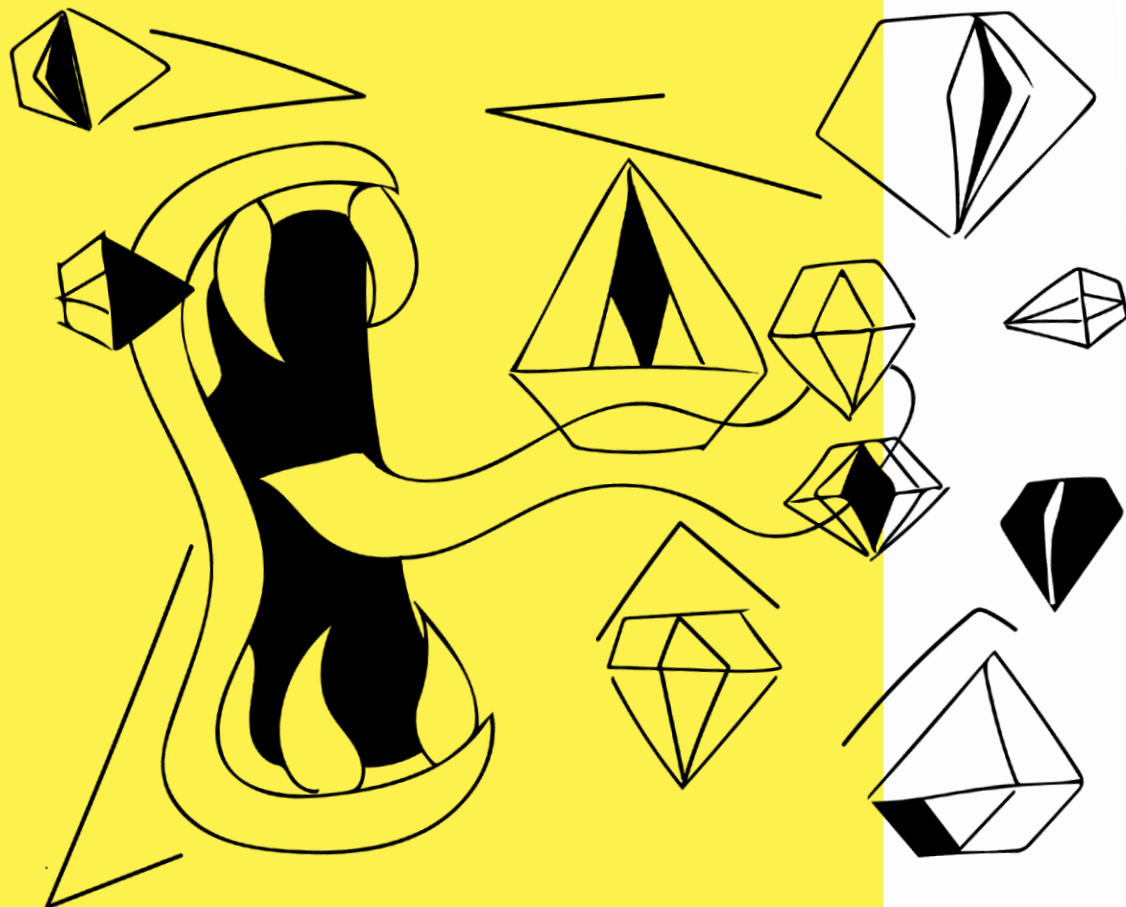
And how about the theme of love? How does that translate itself in music, or for your art? Is it a tone? Is it a rhythm?

I think more so it's an action. Acting. You know, I love making music. I have to do more of the things I love. And I feel like if there was more love in the world, everywhere would just be a better place.

I think for me, first is self-love, to be able to focus on my craft. I think love is also one of the most powerful things when you give it. It might not be tangible — but it's creating something that moves. It moves people in a way that physical things can't. That pretentious things can't. It's the most honest, pure, thing.

You can keep up with Adewolf on all major streaming and social media platforms.

IG: [@adewolfy](https://www.instagram.com/adewolfy)
FB: [facebook.com/adewolfy](https://www.facebook.com/adewolfy)
SC: [soundcloud.com/adewolfj3](https://www.soundcloud.com/adewolfj3)



“ Adewolf & the 3ribe ”

'Elements' Magazine

"THIS IS GONNA SOUND FUCKED UP BUT DO YOU REMEMBER THE GIRL ROLANDO WAS WITH?" "YEAH, TIMIKA?" "THAT'S TIMIKA LAQUÉ? OH MY GOD, IT'S A REAL PERSON..." "THERE'S A STORY THAT GOES ALONG WITH THAT." SITTING ON THE PAVEMENT OUTSIDE BY 868 EAST CORDOVA, WHERE A LARGE MURAL BY THE AA CREW IS HOUSED, JAY SWING, FLIPOUT AND DEDOS HAVE AN IMPORTANT DETAIL OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF *ELEMENTS* MAGAZINE TO FLESH OUT; 25 YEARS AFTER ITS PUBLICATION IN MAY 1995.

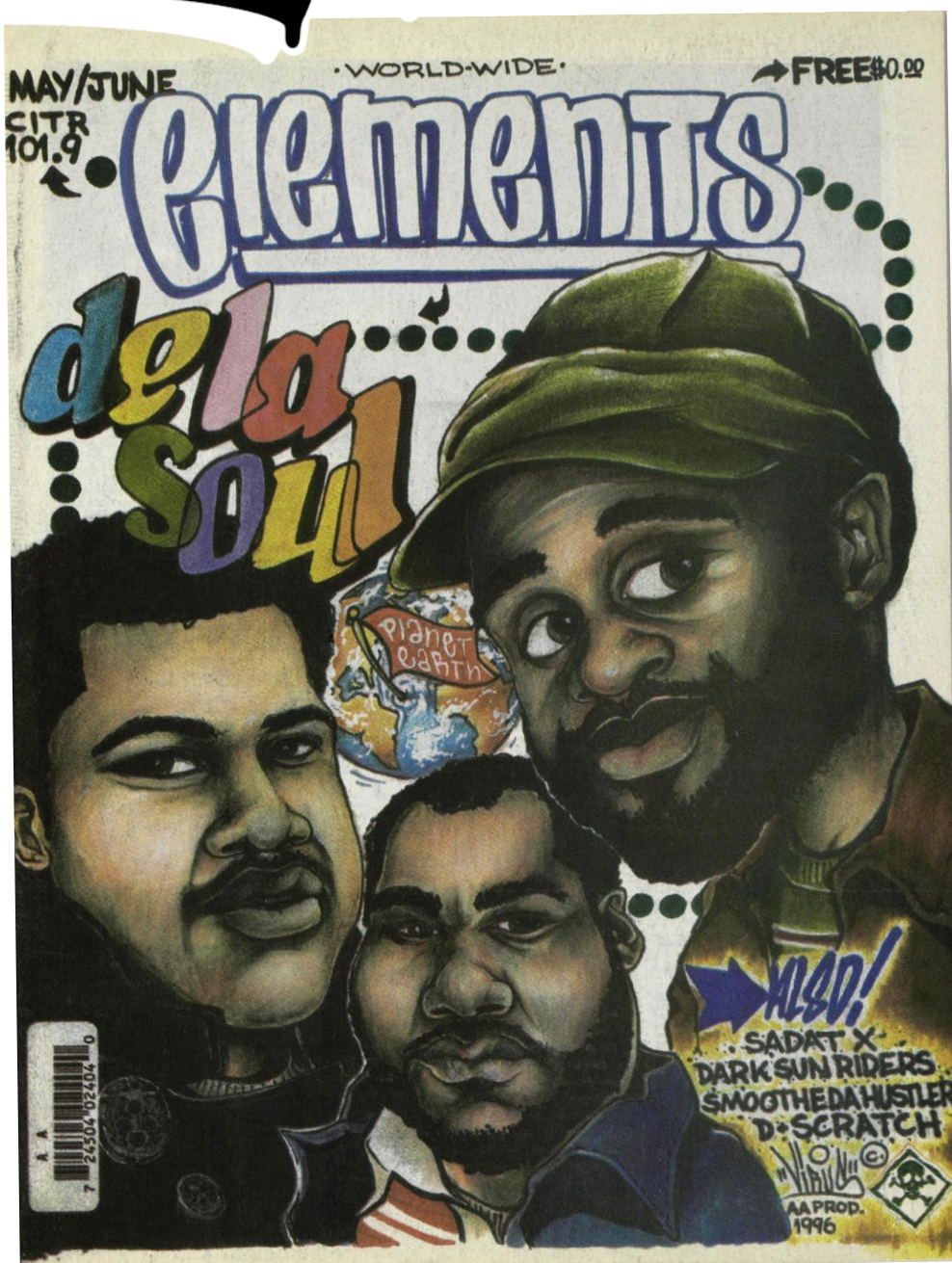
WORDS BY
FATEMEH
GHAYEDI

PHOTO BY
DANIELA
RODRÍGUEZ

ARCHIVAL
IMAGES COURTESY
OF FLIP, JAY,
AND DEDOS

Elements — extending out of the CiTR station — ran until Winter 1996 and focused on encompassing all the elements, so to speak, of Hip Hop culture: MCing, DJing, B-boying and graffiti. DJs Jay Swing and "Flipout" (Phil Cabrita) had already established themselves at the station as hosts of "The Show" with Checkmate at CiTR every Saturday night from 6-8PM, before approaching station manager, Linda Scholten, with their idea for the magazine. The functioning core was made up of Flip and Jay — who handled everything from the editorial duties, the layouting, to the distribution — with AA Crew members, Dedos and Virus, who contributed the lettering and graffiti-style illustrations. Now, those behind Elements come together again to wrap things nicely into a book that collects all the little pieces to the magazine.

The magazine boasts features with some prolific MCs in the industry — like Raekwon, KRS-One, OutKast and Ghostface Killah, and with DJs in their "Vinyl Conflict" columns such as Red Alert and Stretch Armstrong. Each issue contained album reviews, a 'mixtape' of songs, and the "Masterpieces" column



to spotlight worthy graff coordinated by the AA Crew, who were also running their own 'graff-zine' at the time called Xylene. Going through the eight issues the crew produced, you find little pockets that delve into the thoughts and lives of people within that community; in the editor's notes, in Mr. Bill's ruminations in his "Metaphysics" column on the state of the scene, or in Checkmate's assertion of the language he uses in Issue 4 under "Y'knowwhati'msayin'." It's a brief look at this culture scarcely documented in Canada, at a time when content wasn't

as readily accessible and our duties not so streamlined. "We were still fucking printing them out and pasting them on boards at that point," Flipout says of their process "it would take us so fucking long to do this shit, too." In every mention of Elements that I have seen, there has always been reference to their difficulties with meeting publication deadlines. Flipout's editor's notes were often frank about their issues with getting to print on time, and Jay says "we ratted ourselves out. If we'd never said that, I bet people wouldn't have even known

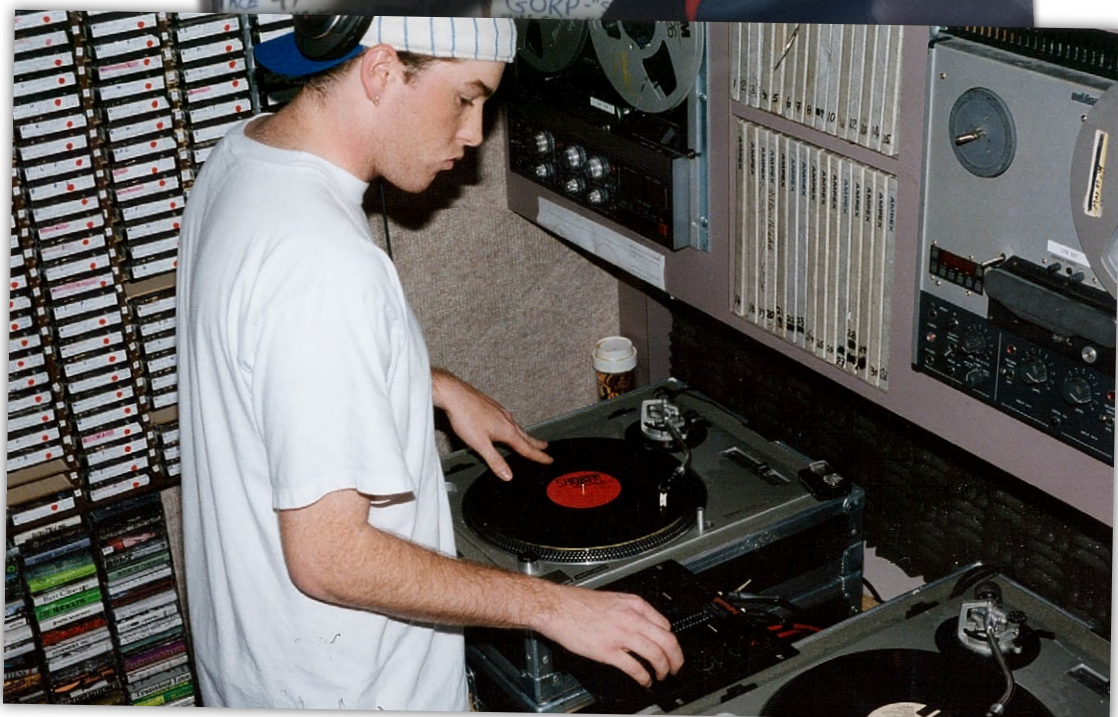


that it was late.” Ultimately, the delay contributed to the end of their run, “The next issue started to get worked on,” Jay explains, speaking of the never published Issue 9, “I kept getting mad because we wouldn’t go out to make another one, [...] too much time went past. We were always late, late, late and finally, it was obvious that it was just way too late.”

Not only were they coordinating every administrative aspect of the magazine, they were also writing a majority of the pieces themselves. Doing all of the work on their own became overwhelming, especially when this was something they were not profiting off of. “We were doing it for fun from the beginning, we kept doing it for fun, and then it became a lot of work for Jay and me.” A lot of the pieces from the first issue are penned by Flip and Jay, so much so that Rolando Espinoza — the editor on the first issue — decided it would be a good idea to list some under aliases. That’s where Timika Laqué comes in; as one of the ‘credited’ writers on that issue. “He chose his girlfriend’s name for one thing that I wrote, but I happened to diss K-OS in that. I said he sounded like that kid who thinks he’s Q-Tip, and then K-OS got pissed.” Jay recounts, “And K-OS is my guy, but back

then him and Ghetto Concept wanted to confront Tamika about the diss. When they found out that Timika Laqué was Jay the White Guy then they were really pissed and confronted me in front of the York Theatre at the *Hip-Hop Explosion* Tour. They were like ‘You fucked up, bro. We are trying to build something here and you just put a crack in the foundation. Why would you do this and why would you change your name?’ I’m like, ‘This sounds like an excuse, but it was the editor before we went to print! It was such a bad look. It was also a real uncomfortable situation.’

The issue of contributors persisted while the magazine was in publication. There was little interest coming in from other Disorder/CiTR volunteers in writing for Elements, and they still couldn’t get themselves paid through this work, no less, pay others who they wanted to write for them. “Rolando did say ‘try to



“Elements Magazine”



get more diverse contributors.’ We tried, but then no one could be paid,” Flipout says, and Jay summarizes the sentiment stating “You couldn’t pay somebody to do the work — and it was a lot of work — so we just did it.” There was an interest in branching off from the station and its non-profit structure, but that proved difficult. Past a certain point, they couldn’t really justify the sleepless weeks that would go into putting out an issue they couldn’t get paid for either. The lack of contributors, the institutional strain and absence of pay, all contributed to the decision to fold — though the same could be said for the urban BIPOC youth whose self-expression breathed life into the scene, and into *Elements* pages.

It was a funny time to be having this conversation with people who ran a magazine through CiTR before I was born — because it’s one we have been circling back to within Discorder — the defining line between work that is solicited, and that which is volunteered. Our position as an outlet which provides opportunities

to volunteer; to learn, and to make, but further, to have work published — and what then, is considered fair under our particular structure. It’s been something I have had to reflect on, in thinking of what my role as an editor has traditionally been defined to consist of, and the ways in which I could (and should) reconceptualize the work I do to better align with what it actually means to be equitable and accountable.

In discussing the distribution of work, I wondered how much of that could have been avoided if others in the station had been more involved. Interestingly, Jay and Flip tell me that it’s hard to tell. Especially now, decades after the fact, how much of that was lack of interest and how much of it was them being unapproachable. “I think a little bit, too, maybe we were not that inclusive. We weren’t that open, you know?” Flip considers, “I went through all of my 20s with this weird chip on my shoulder about anything. I kinda didn’t wanna hang out with people, and was like ‘We’re doing this shit, you’re not a part of this.’ There might have been a little of that from my end.” In a way, I guess it makes sense, looking at it from

the perspective of 20 year olds’ overprotective disposition towards something they’ve initiated, and that they find to be an extension of themselves. “If it was me now, I would be asking everyone ‘yo, do you wanna be a part of this?’, but back then we were like ‘We got this. We know what we’re doing [...] You would’ve fucking hated us. It was peak... white guy in the 90s. I don’t think I was very cool then, at all.” Flipout also admitted that sometimes that sentiment was justified — recalling an old argument, “Fuck I feel so dumb. I was arguing with this girl, she was saying “hip hop is political” and I responded with “no it’s not, it’s just about youth expression”. I got very defensive — but we were actually saying a similar thing, and, like, she was right,” he says laughing.

Parts of Issue 9 will finally get a home nestled among all the other fragments, including an interview Flip did with Jay-Z in ‘96 before his first album came out which he claims to be a “Terrible interview. If you hear the audio, it’s cringe max,” with Jay coming to his support

to say that it “reads a lot better.” Along with that, we can expect a big showcase of Dedos’ unreleased artwork. Speaking to this renewed interest in their work with *Elements*, Jay says “Whenever we’d post stuff, people would be really into it. It really sparked some nostalgia, and more importantly, fuck all that, it would spark something in people. People like you, who weren’t even there, who were like ‘What is this artefact — this time capsule?’” This an opportunity for them to bind those experiences into one substantial thing that cements what truly went down. This is where the magazine’s journey towards existing as its own entity culminates, years after that question of “what now, and how?” was first posed. The book is slated to come out around Christmas, if things go according to plan, but as Jay says, “we have no idea of timelines when it comes to publishing.” So, in true *Elements* fashion: the book will come out whenever it’s time for it to come out.



ALL THIS TIME CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS :

Alex Gibson, Alexandra Box, Amber Pb, Astrid C. Johansen, Avery Hannig, Brenda Wisniowski, Brigitte Patenaude, Daryn Wright, Diana Hanitzsch, Doenja Oogjes, Eric Tkaczyk, Gloria Avgust, Hanshu Ma, Jane Cheng, John Padrino, Joni Cheung, Kai Choufour, Laura Lindsey, Leslie Leong, Liam Johnstone, M.E. Sparks, Madeleine Keen, Marika Vandekraats, Matthew Wong, Matthis Grunksy, Melanie Evelyn, Meichen Waxer, Nellie Stark, Nick Morrison, Nicole Caspillio, Nina Sarnelle, Shyra DeSouza, Simon Bermeo-Ehmann, Stephanie Gagne, Trish Malcomess, Victoria Furuya, Yifan Jiang, Yujin Kim, Quintin Teszeri

WITH TIME IN OUR HANDS

All *This Time* is an ongoing online exhibition curated by Number 3 Gallery; a mobile curatorial project centering emerging contemporary artists and spaces.

As a response to the abrupt cultural changes and new circumstances of this spring, #3 invited participants of any artistic genre to submit work that was not immediately ‘art’ related, but in distinct ways could contribute to discourses around legitimacy, value and productivity in cultural landscapes of capitalist, patriarchal and ableist behavioral norms. Topics which are not only symptomatic of the current moment, but have become even more evident and urgent in light of recent events.

Setting out as an exploration of the ways in which we adapt and respond to moments of crises, the exhibition provides a digital frame for rethinking

embodiment, materiality, and temporality to discover healthier time orientations. After all, “crisis” is nothing new. Health crises, climate crises and economic crises have all long formed part of our lives. What is extraordinary about the current moment then, might be that we no longer will accept the normalcy of emergency.

Presented as a curatorial project in a blog-style format, the exhibition creates new forms of kinship through and beyond online presence. *All This Time* is not only a documentation and archive of our daily resistance to surrendering to “Gore Capitalism,” but an example of our interconnectedness and affective bonds to non-human forces. It is no longer enough to demystify the world. In order to create images of hopeful futures, we have to actively re-enchant the world. In this context, technology becomes not only a last resort, but a tool for social change.

On a digital wallpaper more blue than the sky, both #3 and the artists use this expansive realm to reimagine a vibrant future of human and non-human bodies. In a time where life on-screen often has us feeling more embodied and connected while the real world increasingly distances us from our bodies and sense of reality, *All This Time* subtly reminds the viewer that it’s not only what we make of objects — but what *they make of us*. It’s the ability of inanimate things to have material effects on our lives, pulling us in and out of our own materiality — Like Donna Haraway said; Why should our bodies end at the skin?

Yujin Kim's dumplings, screenshot from *All This Time* online exhibition/blog 2020, courtesy of Number 3 Gallery

ALL THIS TIME AT #3 GALLERY

words by Maria Lima
images courtesy of Number 3 Gallery

yujin kim



During the pandemic I made some homemade dumplings. The process of making them is quite therapeutic and gives me a sense of home; this is especially comforting given that I grew up in Korea, where my family still lives



John Padrino's toilet paper drawings,
featured on *All This Time*
2020, courtesy of Number 3 Gallery



Nelli Stark's
double-sided
shirt, featured
All This Time
2020, courtesy
of Number 3
Gallery

STEPPING OUTSIDE THE WHITE CUBE

3's curatorial approach to online exhibitions centers the need for growing sustainable systems of exchange — recrafting definitions of institutional and human bodies, both online and off. The result is at once a quiet, introspective experience of slowing down and withdrawing, as well as an urgent

institutional critique, calling for action.

Nellie Stark, one of the participating artists, demonstrates in a video piece the functionality of a reversible top she made as a result of finally having time to familiarize herself with a sewing machine. The text included underneath reads: "Turns out I have endless patience for intricate embroidery, but none for using a machine to sew a straight line." As a non-binary person I've always found it difficult to follow straight lines. Maybe it's because the perfectly aligned lines of machines and of capitalist society are out of tune with the movements of our bodies. Is straightness an ideal only because it is unreachable? Perhaps every person has

their own temporal rhythm to follow. One that is as intricate as embroidery on a shirt.

All this time makes space to think outside the white walls of the gallery, effectively destabilizing normalized ideas of (re)production, value, and legitimacy. It seems to ask us; should growth and linear progression still be ideals we live by? And at the expense of whose diminishment or exclusion? Can we embrace slowness as a political act? Practicing institutional slowness requires abandoning the idea of the white cube as a timeless place — free of social or political context. To bring value back into daily life and lived experience, as *All This Time* challenges the assumption of neutrality and timelessness within online and offline institutions. This is a powerful way of restructuring the architecture of the white cube that separates artistic value from the presumed outside political and social sphere.

There is nothing innate about value. It has no essence, and is forged by the ideals of a specific time and place. Some objects acquire more value with time, like archeological artifacts, while others, such as an old TV, quickly lose value and slide into the category of trash. John Padrino's illustrations on toilet paper — a commodity which during the pandemic gained an almost incomparable value — exemplifies this logic. Value seems to be given to whatever is in shortage, whatever is running out. The work forces the viewer to consider their own position in the current landscape of consumer capitalism — buying into the fear of scarcity. Just imagine the gallery of the future in a far distant galaxy wherein the cyborg visitors admiring Padrino's work wonder why on earth human beings panicked at the

threat of a lack of toilet paper, but not at the threat of climate change.

Leslie Leong's work leaves us to reflect on how some human traces change landscapes forever. The video of the melting permafrost becomes evidence of the immediacy of climate change and the precariousness of communities who might not have the privilege of time as temperatures continue to rise and their lands disappear. Leong's works shows us the mechanics of time and how it works as an unequally distributed social currency. It invites us to gain new understandings of the interwovenness of human and non-human forces, and the damaging effects of temporal oppression.

RE - CRAFTING TECH NOLOGY

Gloria Avgust's work; a heron's fountain made from rubber tubes and SPA water bottles placed on a steel ladder brings back memories of 4th grade science projects. The feeling of achievement watching the modest squirt of water somehow not giving in to gravity blurred distinctions between science and magic — the fountain is simple, yet as mesmerizing as childhood itself. As kids we experience the world as enchanted. We didn't feel the need to understand its magic as much as the need of simply experiencing it. What is the difference between science and magic, really? Isn't magic just a word used for technologies we don't understand?



Painting Bootcamp, Doenja Oogjes
2020, courtesy of Number 3 Gallery

Marika Vandekraat's duolingo lesson,
screenshot from *All This Time* online
exhibition/blog
2020, courtesy of Number 3 Gallery

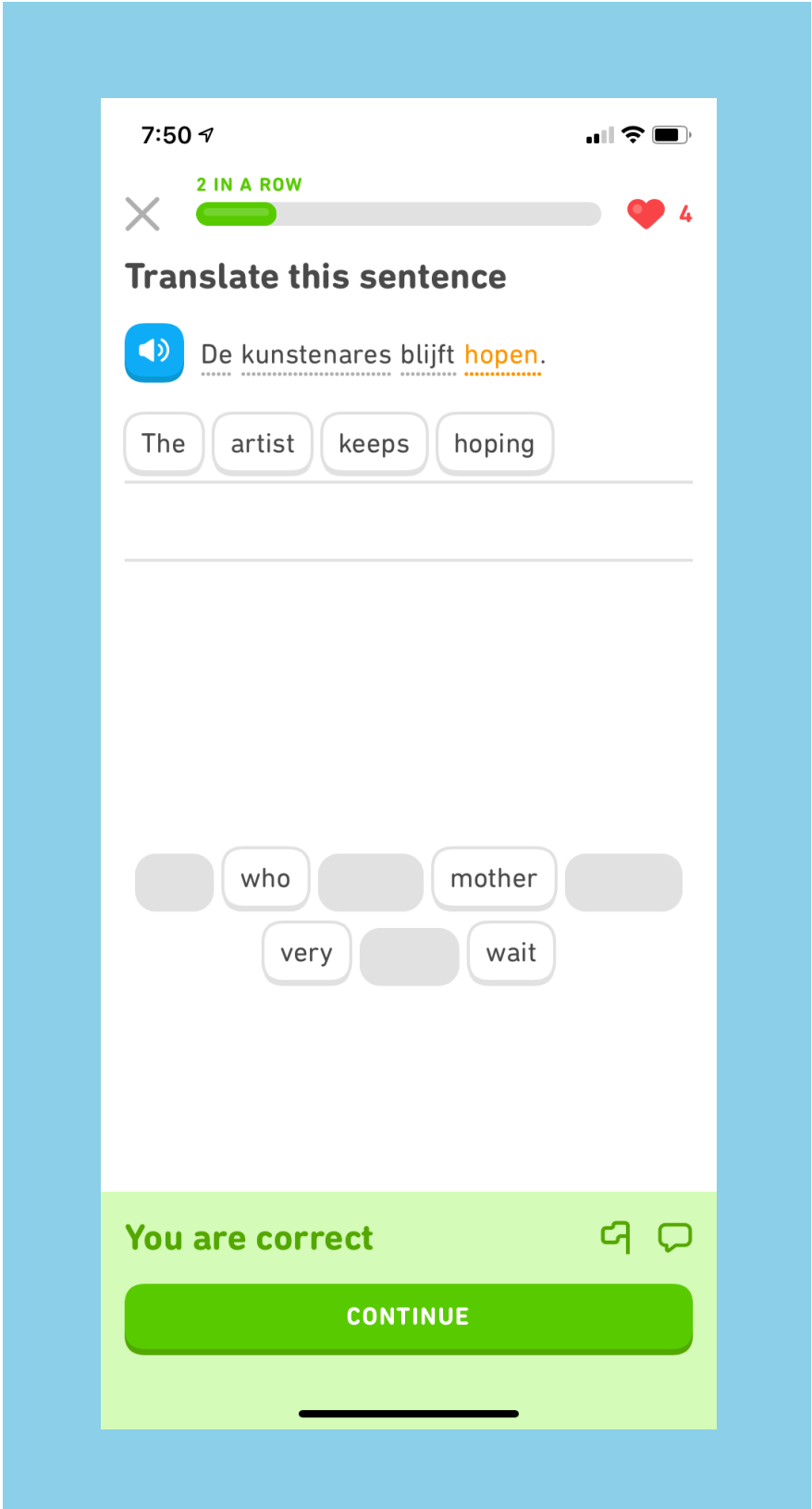
The works in *All This Time* reframe the term ‘technology’. They carefully consider more embodied and intimate forms of technologies, like the technology of sound, language, and time. Technology and the future often appear in the same discourse, as if technology equals futurity. Technology is imagined through the image of computers, artificial intelligence and cyborgs. This imaginary detaches technology from the past and the etymology of the term, leading back to the Ancient Greek word “*tekhnē*” referring to ‘art’ and ‘craft’. The works reinsert art and craft into the meaning of technology suggesting that technology is the everyday magic we make with our two hands.

A fountain is just one kind of technology. Historically, fountains began as purely functional, being important sources of drinking water. However, they later on gained decorative value, becoming urban landmarks that showcased the wealth of cities. The circular flow of a fountain that is unaffected by the lack of an audience or human interference brings time into the visible realm reassuring us that time still moves, even in a global moment characterized by the feeling of loss of time. The flow of water is like the flow of time. Waves are like memories slowly bouncing back in a circular movement, like recurrences of history repeating itself. Why do we feel the need to create, to make and reinvent things, especially in a time of crisis? Perhaps August’s revisiting of ancient fountains is a way of refusing to forget how old crafts have always been embedded in modern technologies, and how the use of these now seemingly obsolete technologies help us move forward as we invent new ones.

WE TOUCH SCREENS AND TECHNOLOGY TOUCHES US BACK

When I take a break from social media I worry about missing out. When I spend all day on social media, I worry about missing out. Sometimes after falling deep into an Instagram wormhole, scrolling until my wrist hurts, I am convinced this object has become an extension of my hand. A prosthesis of its own smooth and glimmering skin. Bodies extend themselves through objects and we adjust to their presence to exist in synthesis.

What happens when technology seems to know more about us than ourselves? Marika Vandekraat’s work of a screenshot Duolingo lesson, juxtaposed with a digital collage of iPhone images, reconfigures the notion of inanimate matter while considering the growing extent of surveillance systems and autonomous machines. The images of everyday objects now rearranged and detached from chronological order suddenly appear foreign. As objects are removed from their ordinary context they acquire life and symbolic value beyond their mere function. Duolingo’s daily reminders become a disciplinary and regulatory force upon the malleable body. These notifications provide a sense of structure and routine by telling us, ‘it’s time for your daily lesson,’ while further





proving that in a time when institutions fail to operate as they were supposed to, we tend to find ways to continue their work that has already become so ingrained in us.

As the translated words on the screen reads: ‘the artist keeps hoping,’ we are reminded of how easily computers read our mind through algorithms detecting and further shaping our behavioral norms. We now touch screens more frequently than we touch skin. Not only as passive spectators, but as users we are forced to acknowledge the affective bonds and connections we make with inanimate things as we tell them secrets that we might never say out loud, but reveal by the subtle movements of our fingers passing over a screen.

TIME ORIENTATIONS OF HEALING: SEEING THE HORIZON

The works in *All This Time* seem to ask; how do we reclaim time, when time was never in our favour to begin with? It is then more a question of (re)encountering healthier time-orientations, abandoning the universal and linear perception of time so deeply embedded in Western culture, than “getting back to

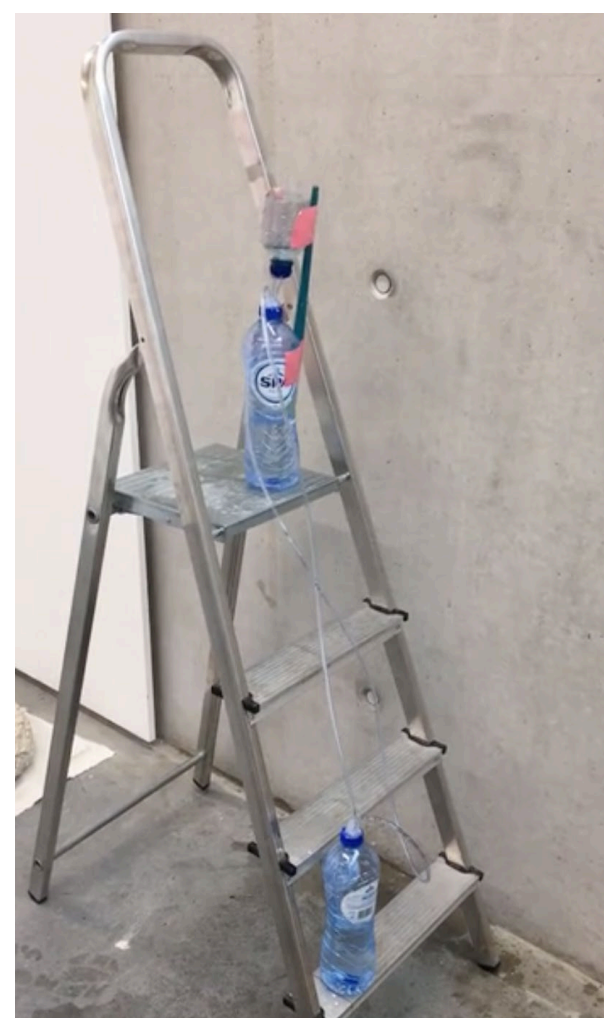
normal.” There is feedback between the past and present and the echoes of the past always find their way into our lives.

Doenja Oogjes, a design researcher working within speculative design, found herself invested in watercolor painting while experiencing the sudden time on her hands. The blue and red patterns mirror the slow repetitive movement of the brush shaping them. Doenja herself explains the calming feeling of repeating the same movement, almost as if experiencing time folding in on itself, layer upon layer, bending and twisting. The soft U-shaped strokes turning into triangular shapes then becoming sharper Z-shaped figures are perhaps a slow countermove to consumer capitalism and its demand of constant progress and efficiency. The work visualises how patterns — in paintings or in society — are never the product of an immediate and singular event. Rather they are shaped by recurring movements. The self-regulating experience of repetitive motion is not about controlling time, but rather to tune into its shape-shifting materiality. Everything exists on its own timeline, a line which is not a line at all, but rather, slow bended strokes or curves. The paintings somehow echo patterns created by weaving and I am reminded that the world’s first computer was, in fact, a loom. Another traditional craft, or technology, if you will.

The folds and bends of Oogjes watercolour paintings are not unlike the curves and folds sealing homemade dumplings. Yujin Kim’s work presents an exploration of heritage and the time traveling technologies that allow us to feel at home. Preparing a home cooked meal requires the same amount of skill and attention to detail used in the making of a sculpture or painting. The work ascribes value to embodied and sensory

Melting Permafrost,
Leslie Leong
2020, courtesy of
Number 3 Gallery

still from *Clumsy*
Heron, Gloria Avgust
2020, courtesy of
Number 3 Gallery

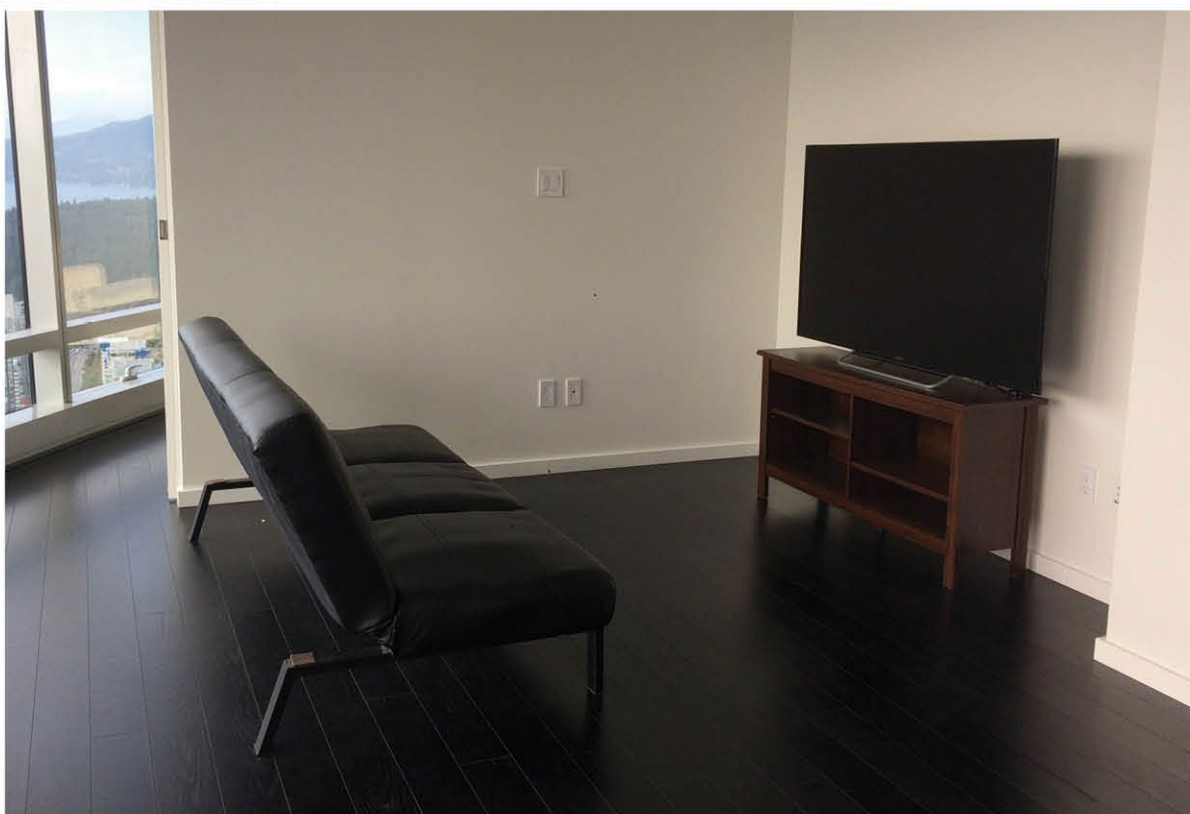
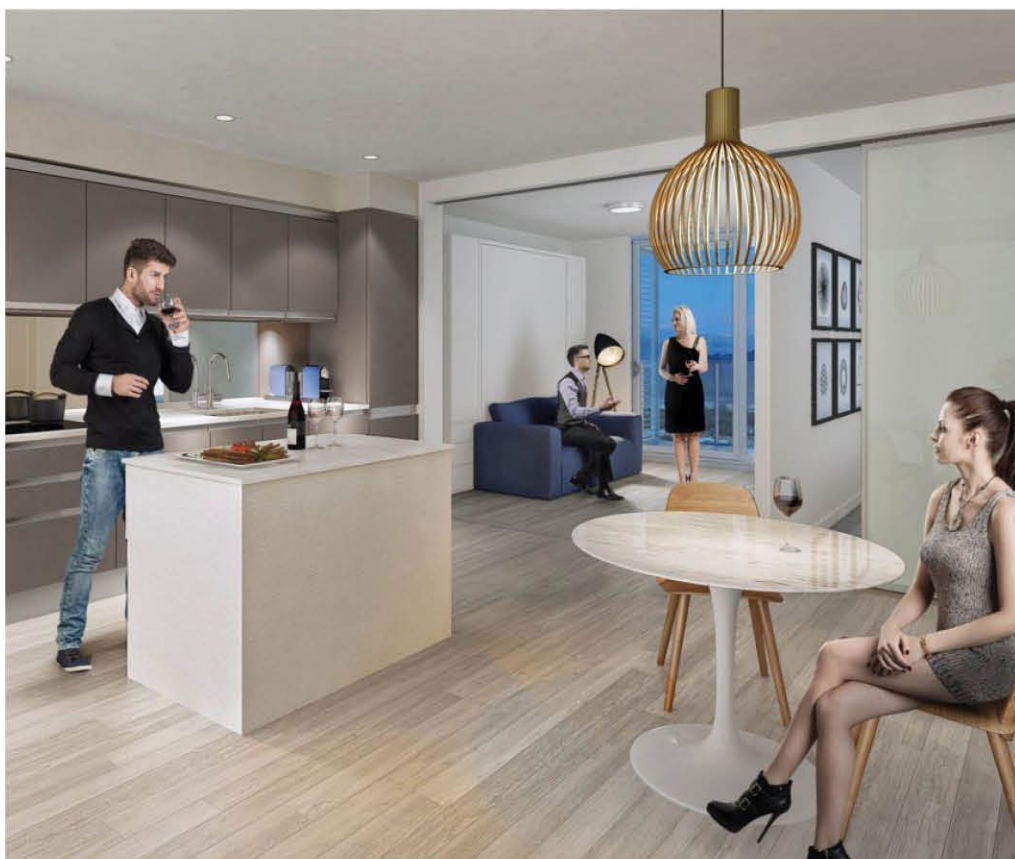


experiences allowing them to become sources of knowledge and storytelling. In a future oriented society, looking back and giving oneself time to repeat gestures of undersung practices is a subversive act.

All This Time allows the visitor to think beyond limits of the presumed lifeless blue-screen, while recognizing the challenges of online existence. Centering works that imagine new spatio-temporalities of being and becoming in a time marked by loss of linearity and coherence, the exhibition provides a glimpse of a future that arrives at, and departs from, the subtle force of everyday lived experience. In an unsustainable environment of constant rush, to slow down and make time for repetition, stillness and ritual might be an act of resilience that counters the imposed linear time.

The artists in *All This Time* use technology as a means, rather than end, allowing new forms of kinship and gathering to be imaged and effectively enter the digital and daily realm. After all, pivotal change has never been a singular event in time. The revolutionary potential of the everyday is in the simple act of taking our time. *All This Time* is a portal inviting us to reconsider the boundaries of our own bodies, acknowledging how human existence exceeds the flesh. Time is a substance as malleable as clay in our hands. With all this time on our hands just imagine what we could build.





Riding the **SKYTRAIN** home, I wondered whether I should stop at the **MARKET**. There's a sandwich I want to make for him, but it takes three kinds of cheese and I can't afford them all. I wondered which one he would be least excited about, maybe I could omit that one. Then I realized I shouldn't bother making a less good version for someone who is already so far out of my league. It's doing things like that put me in my league in the first place. I decided to hold off on buying the **INGREDIENTS** until I was sure whether we were going to break up or not.

S01E03

A REVIEW

words by Sarah Bakke

illustrations by Ruby Izatt



The opening minutes of *s01e03* tell us that we are heading towards an end.

It is the last day of summer and a dear friend will soon be leaving the city. The final hours in an MMORPG — the URL nexus of friendship — are passing quickly. “I was up all night visiting our favourite spots,” one player says to another, as it seems impossible to leave without saying a proper goodbye.

What ensues within the film’s 24-hour narrative is a telling of many interconnected relationships, the centrepiece being a love story between people who have not yet met in person — only online. However, this is not to say that their connection is less than, or that it has yet to fully form.

Kurt Walker and Michelle Yoon, co-creators (among many) of *s01e03*, agree that there are no clear lines between life/love experienced online and off. “The time I spend IRL and URL is part of the same existence... nearly every collaborator in this film is a friend I’ve met online and have communicated with digitally. I know it’s more compartmentalized for some people, but it’s becoming less reasonable to me how anyone can create such a divide,” Yoon says. In Walker’s words, “My experience of the two is interwoven, and as a filmmaker I figure the task is to reflect and embody this instead of clinging to increasingly antiquated forms of classical storytelling and image-making.”



S*01e03*’s approach to image-making is itself intensely collaborative. Not only between artists, but also locations, modes of existence, and cinematic forms. The film’s synthesis of onscreen text, subtle soundscapes (the wind and lapping water in-game SFX, or James Emrick’s charming piano and choral score), and footage of both virtual and material locations feels familiar despite its experimental label because it emulates the way we live now — constantly moving through IRL and URL spaces and selves. “There was no single image that I weighed above another while making this movie, instead I was most invested in the audio-visual and emotional rhythm of its whole,” Walker explains. Similarly, Yoon relays “there really is no hierarchy... despite all the formats and image qualities,” and adds that it is a film about “friendships, collaborative filmmaking and the metaphysical unity of virtual and physical space.” It is a remarkable example of interdisciplinary forms coalescing.

The seeds for *s01e03* were television melodramas and online forums. Yoon describes how their group of collaborators would meet online to watch films and share music via Tinchat, and Walker describes watching *Gilmore Girls* for the first time with his friend, and accidentally starting with a mid-season episode; “we watched in dumb awe thinking the ellipses was intentional... this mistake had me start thinking about the possibilities of figuring a standalone tale to be experienced as a kind of excerpt by way of withholding characterization and plot.”

The decision to mold *s01e03*’s form in the likeness of a single television episode is evident — and is clearly reinforced by the film’s title — but the narrative does possess a finality. Yes, this is an excerpt (what story isn’t?), and yet, we’ve been gently moving towards a convergence of friends, lovers, conversations the whole time, unsure of what the eventual crossing of paths will bring. Complimentary (though seemingly antithetical) to this convergent energy is the parallel movement towards separation. The narrative revolves around not only the arrival of a cherished friend, but the leaving of one too, and we are regularly reminded of the MMORPG’s impending dissolve via a countdown to the server’s closure.

Iespite the film's clear affinity for relationship and connection, there is also a loneliness to it, which comes from the plot's sense of anticipated separation. It's a reminder that our friends too could leave for another city, and the places where we spend treasured time (both in person and online) will eventually close their doors. Vancouver is notorious for both of these phenomena. How many people have we lost to Montréal? I say this only partly in jest. How many venues have we had to wave our goodbyes to? In fact, parts of *s01e03* take place at the former 333 (gone but not forgotten), a DIY space that has since been shuttered.

"The cliffside rendezvous point that the players Gavilan, Shuqiii, and Mypretzel find themselves at towards the film's end is [an] especially resonant place of goodbyes," Walker says. "With our generation facing constant ousting from the places we acclimated to as home, the closure of an entire world and the disappearance of a friend only focused this sense of loss into the melodrama."

It's not all somber, though. The film's very first instance of spoken dialogue comes as a voiceover, a snippet taken from the 1968 film *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and sampled within a Noctilucent's track titled "Spring (For Mick Kelly)". The voice says:

"Since I found music I don't get lonely anymore. Well, I do get lonely... but soon as I listen to the music it just goes right away. You know, sometimes I can even make it go away by just remembering the music in my head."



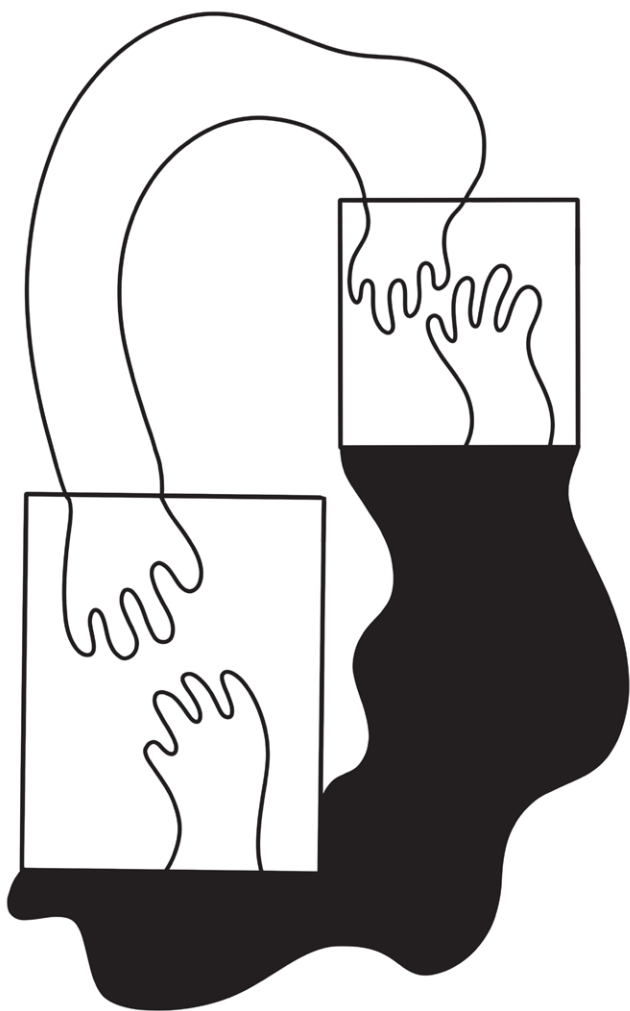
As I watched *s01e03* for the first time, this dialogue was simply another texture amidst the greater collage. But as I rewatched, an understanding began to pull at me; loneliness can be quelled by remembering that we were, at some point, with the people we love. Our discontent can be set aside if we merely think about our friends. Most importantly, it is the internet — at times an endless void, yet still an acute site of meeting — that can facilitate a similar kind of relief. The film fully embraces URL existence and validates the friendships which develop and crystallize online, regardless of whether this version of them exists offline. In fact, the most intelligible relationships in *s01e03* are those which belong to URL spaces only. There are the characters who spend hours with each other in the MMORPG, for example, or the scene wherein close friends discuss the complexities of love over instant message. It is somewhat comforting to do away with typical hierarchies of URL versus IRL, and instead open ourselves up to digital intimacy and our own adaptability on the internet as beings who crave connection.

"I wanted to make a movie that could be healing — a kind of space for respite amidst our generation's many anxieties," Walker writes to me. We spoke over email — a fitting medium. Especially so, considering *s01e03*'s use of text as connective tissue. Reading his reply to my questions, two quotes from the film immediately struck me in response.

The first moment occurs during a conversation between distant friends, and the second appears as an inter-title, right before a scene at 333. They are:

"When I think about love, it's not finite. It grows and shrinks and changes with time. I think it should be boundless."

"The only images worth anything now are the ones that bring people together."





Tip Of Your Tongue

a review by Brendan Reid
illustrations by Chelly Maher



Much is needed to stand out in the world of food writing. Along with security, love and oxygen, food is one of the essential needs of human existence, and as a result, countless authors have mused upon its significance. Recipe writing is a particularly saturated corner of this market. Recipes thrive in the online world, and most are accompanied by paragraphs of personal back-story and pop-up ads, which do all they can to prevent the reader from getting to the information they came for in the first place.

In seeming response to this, *Tip Of Your Tongue* by Amna Elnour does something different with the recipe writing formula. Her exemplary use of observational prose creates an experience that is engaging, instructive, and mouth watering all at the same time. *Tip Of Your Tongue* is a rare form of recipe writing, one that can be read for the knowledge it provides, or for the meditative pleasure of its script.

The project is broken into six chapters. Within these chapters are several sub-sections, each outlining a specific dish, spread, or dessert. Elnour's poetic style mixed with the conviction of the recipes gives *Tip Of Your Tongue* its true charm, and each reading feels like unravelling a riddle you know you are privileged to experience.

Elnour begins *Tip Of Your Tongue* with a

poem, and its intimate prose sets the tone for the rest of the work. The first recipe, mayonnaise, is delivered in a numbered list format, a style that makes repeated appearances in *Tip Of Your Tongue*. While some entries in the list get right down to the business of making, many have a more lyrical feel to them — such as the ninth point, which discusses the process of whisking the mixture: “Keep the ritual from becoming anesthetic, or let it be if you need. Could be casual or just as easily sacred.” Cooking can be a utilitarian chore, or it can be a soothing, fun activity wrapped in ritualistic importance. Food can be made for one, for many, alone or with others, professionally or begrudgingly. *Tip Of Your Tongue* revels in this dichotomy, and through the text you can sense Elnour's empathy and cynicism. There is personality here beyond the simple instructions, and the addition is pure nourishment.

One of the key tenets of Elnour's voice is colloquialism. The recipes often speak to you as if you were in the room with them, and leave many elements open to interpretation. This can be seen when discussing zhoug, a Yemeni style hot sauce: “If you don't have a mortar and pestle, or time, or the ability, use a blender, or chop as finely as possible and use spice grinder in small portions... or put everything in a sealed bag and strategically smash it with a jar.” This type of language cuts the rigidity often found in instructional writing, and encourages any who would doubt her culinary abilities. So much of

food creation relies on interpretation, personal taste and tool set, and Elnour's good humor suggests that anyone can make the dishes she describes.

That being said, Elnour isn't afraid to get serious when the time calls for it. This is someone who clearly knows what they're doing with food. She has a diverse pallet, and outlines recipes from multiple traditions, including Middle Eastern, Greek, European, and North African. The advice she gives clearly comes from a place of wisdom and experience, and after reading *Tip Of Your Tongue*, you'll have a much deeper understanding of oils, dough, spices, and the priceless worth of the common onion.

These segments explore a variety of topics, and all this information is packaged within Elnour's observational prose. Chapter 6, *Performative*, discusses a repairman visiting a kitchen with a broken dishwasher, and the disdain that follows: “The repairman calls me over to point out the cockroaches living in the machinery of the dish sanitizer... I am a little embarrassed that it doesn't phase me... Doesn't he know he's only there fix the machine until the next time one of us slams the \$7000 hunk of metal so hard it breaks, i.e. in 2 weeks?” Working in a poorly run kitchen can be a neglectful, unforgiving experience, and this observation is woven into a recipe for cardamom buttercake. It's an intriguing combination, and reminds us that there are often grim realities beneath sugar-coated

surfaces, especially in the world of food. Other more abstract passages require readers to fill in the blanks: “Everyone learns intimacy somewhere, and then later you find you're expected to re-learn, you're reproducing the image rather than doing... every time it's new, you have to participate in the building of the instant.” Perhaps making food is akin to intimacy, something that exists solely in the moment, no matter your past experiences? There are dozens of similar passages in *Tip Of Your Tongue*. They leave themselves open to interpretation from the reader, and are much more personal and intriguing as a result.

Tip Of Your Tongue is a singular experience. Rarely will you find food writing so informative, entertaining, and esoteric. Elnour makes a name for herself in a realm so often oversaturated and redundant, and her creations will stimulate your mind as much as your salivary glands. Highly recommended for poets and would-be cuisiniers alike.



Under Review

Music

FANTASY GARDENS



Gal Gracen

FANTASY GARDENS

(JAZZ Records)

September 6, 2019

Gal Gracen's *FANTASY GARDENS* utilizes catchy Casio keyboards and delightful drum machines to produce music that is easy on the ears, but heavy on the heart.

Although Patrick Geraghty, the individual behind the Gal Gracen moniker, considers the title quite generic, "Fantasy Gardens" is the name of a '90s Richmond amusement park that is currently being renovated into a condo complex. There is something poetic about naming an album after something that once existed within this reality, but can only be effectively re-lived through an individual's memories and dreams.

The LP opens up with the blissful track "Arcadia," which immediately transports you to a paradise of natural harmony with peaceful percussion and soothing synth leads. One of the catchiest melodies on the EP is found in this opening of the chorus: "Closer than the moon and night, Arcadia is twice as lonely / Oh it's a beautiful life." Geraghty conveys the idea of how some paradises can be not as special as we are led to believe, and that the speaker is living in the present, enjoying whatever they currently have available.

My next highlight track is the eight-minute "She's the Queen" which I would describe as a modern surf-rock synth jam session with a killer bass-line and impressive catalogue of fun keyboard samples. "Today or Tomorrow" is one track I would definitely recommend as it showcases Geraghty's higher vocal range along with additional catchy melodies and beautiful guitar tones. My last standout track would be "Winds of Solace, Pillars of Sand," which uses soft keyboard arpeggios and a warm saxophone tone to establish a peaceful setting for the second half of the LP.

Although Fantasy Gardens may no longer be visitable at the intersection of No. 5 Road and Steveston Highway, Gal Gracen's 2019 release creates an accessible portal into a realm where the listener may reliably confront themes of paradise, euphoria, and bliss. —**Jordan Naterer**



Olivia's World

Olivia's World

(self-released)

October 25, 2019

Before I fell in love with Olivia's World's music, my heart was stolen by the illustration on their cassette tape. There

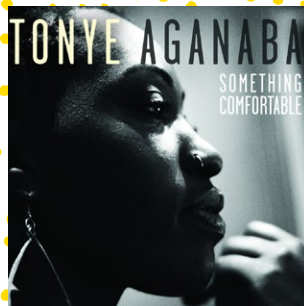
was nothing extravagantly technical or sophisticated about the drawing, with its freely drawn black lines and ordinary subject matter; a sunflower t-shirt, a penguin, a void facial expression. Yet every detail added to its quirkiness. After listening to the album, the bouncy and fun cover art was the best explanation I could imagine of the band and their music. Formed after Rose Melberg was introduced to Lica Rezende through a random drunken conversation, Olivia's World may not be an overly serious or philosophically-minded project, but they are surely a band full of excitement with wonderfully weird subjects like cereal box and blotter.

Their first EP, *Olivia's World*, is a perfect representation of their sweet and punchy music. Bouncy drum sounds and speech-like melodies are

perfectly weighed down by a full-bodied bass sound, which adds richness to the tracks. It reminds me of the '80s rock band, A-ha, whose music never fails to get me dancing.

On top of all that, the melodic bass and perfect vocal harmonies of Lica and Rose make *Olivia's World* extra sugary. My personal favourite from the EP is "SuperValu." Although the lyrics are simple and repetitive — "I don't know why it's hard to try / I don't know why / I don't know how to follow" — I can empathize. It's exactly how I feel whenever I am exhausted from trying to do my best to satisfy myself and others' expectations. The continuous, steady, bass and tambourine sounds create a perfect balance with the lyrics about being lost.

Olivia's World is an album that feels right nearly every moment of the day, touching on heavy and emotional themes, without ever getting too melancholy. With every listen, it brings me a little closer to Olivia's colourful and bouncy world. —**Jasmine Lee**



Tonye Aganaba

Something Comfortable

(Ocean Surf Sounds)

October 26, 2019

Something Comfortable is not your typical LP— maybe because each of its eleven tracks are, by themselves, a portal. Maybe

because this record acts as the score to Tonye's *AfroScience*. Maybe because Tonye is actually a world building, shape-shifting, time travelling creative. Notorious for conjuring and creating intimate experiences, while evoking a vulnerability which leaves our Spirit wanting more.

Produced by Aaron Hamlin and Tonye Aganaba of Ocean Surf Sounds, *Something Comfortable* dropped in March of 2019 and acts as the score alongside Aganaba's work, *AfroScience*. Inspired by their journey with multiple sclerosis, *AfroScience* is an immersive performance and workshop series that fuses live music, visual art, dance, and storytelling as a way to spark dialogue, Especially on the axis of identity, addiction, expression and healing we all may find ourselves on. The eleven images generated for the *AfroScience* project, housed at the Cheeky Proletariat gallery, correspond — albeit ambiguously — to the eleven tracks of the record.

Gifting us with a vast collection of instrumentals from harps and flutes, to horns and congas, she thoughtfully brings together the jazzy, funky stylings of icons such as Dutch Robinson, Alex Maher and Khari Wendall Mclelland. Tonye intentionally crafted a work that is layered, nuanced and entices us to listen over and over again.

Electric guitar solos that act as verses, and dampened ivory arpeggios, have you gently slipping into spaces of ease wherever you may find yourself. Playful, staccato rhythms, and smooth lyrics are paired with percussive vocal free-styling — like in the track, "Got to Know," — take you to a deeper, more delicious place as you drip, slip, ooze into funky self-love tracks like "Sugar," and "We Ain't Friends." '90s throwback bops like "CC," give off serious Lauryn Hill vibes with the mantra "Love is the drug that I'm missing."

"Borrowed Time" is a sincere ballad where Tonye's voice acts as an anchor while melodies oscillate between the infinite and finely tuned harmonies of choral whisperings — reminding you the dream-like state you have settled into is ephemeral. The use of the harp and triangle lead you into raw vocals and honest lyrics like, "Excuse me / While I'm trip-ping / Out again."

"Do it Sweetly" is as haunting as it is warm. Long sax notes hold even longer, as though you are watching the notes leave your body too. The kick drum and high hat provide a soft and reassuring foundation, while Tonye's voice fills the remaining space — fills your body. "[Music] has

been a way for me to work through my mental, emotional and physical trauma, and put it in a place that is safe.”

Like a key inside the right lock, these vibrations fit. On *Something Comfortable*, you are held, seen, at home. —Afrodykie Zoe



Debra-Jean Creelman

Triggers & Mirrors

(self-released)

November 15, 2019

Debra-Jean Creelman, one of the original members of Mother Mother, came out with a solo six-song EP last November, *Triggers & Mirrors*. With her 25 years of experience making music, Creelman delves into experimental electro-pop driven by raw emotion.

The eponymous “Triggers & Mirrors,” features purposeful 2000s-esque autotune that adds to the upbeat, electronic pace of the track. Starting off reminiscent of Owl City’s synth-heavy and playful style of pop, “Triggers & Mirrors” fills the room with curiosity and intrigue. About two thirds of the way through the song, the cheery synth transforms into a rock ballad with haunting harmonies that are truly felt within. Creelman’s hopeful voice soon turns into a confession of her sorrows, both mournful and pleading. The variation and diversity in the title track carries throughout the rest of the album, creating a unique and unforgettable experience.

“How Many Times” is a heartfelt conversation with the listener, accompanied by unsettling synth and a slow beat. Sharing similarities with AURORA’s style, the track also demonstrates Creelman’s abilities to convey a sweetness and delicacy with her voice that does not show up elsewhere on the record. Through intentional repetition, “How Many Times” becomes an atmospheric lullaby that can reach into the depths of any character.

Although *Triggers & Mirrors* features only six songs, its emotional influence and broad range of styles make it exciting to listen to. While it was, at times, not my cup of tea, the uniqueness of Creelman’s EP is ideal for anyone looking to venture outside of their musical comfort zone.

—Tatiana Yakovleva



Kellarissa

We’re Mest

(self-released)

November 19, 2020

Kellarissa’s latest EP *We’re Mest* is far from your stereotypical holiday album. The bells ring tenderly, followed by her heavenly symphonic prose arranged in choir-like vocals which tell a story of the holidays; gathering with family on cold winter nights. The predominant use of the accordion, an instrument associated with folk music, acts as a reference to her Finnish culture, as in the track “My Mother’s Motherland.” Kellarissa speaks of her mother’s immigration, singing “She came here fifty years ago.” The combination of accordion and bells shape the album’s atmosphere, and the soft tranquillity of the jingle bell presents a sound far removed from the well-known, rowdy holiday spirit, in “Jingle Bells.” A gust of wind rings windchimes benevolently as the album takes the listener to each new song.

Unlike Kellarissa’s earlier work, *We’re Mest* steps away from electronic synth-pop while still sustaining the familiar eeriness established in their earlier albums. The track “Oh No! It Might Snow” emits a peaceful serenity onto the listener as you listen to Kellarissa detail the dread that comes with snowflakes gently descending onto pavement. The melancholy voice, amidst the organs and basilica acoustics, could easily be misheard as a hymn for angels. That is, until Kellarissa sings “Never gave you grandkids / It’s a future you can’t predict / This is now our holidays,” a reference to her queerness on “Fill My Glass With Brandy, Fill My Glass With Wine.” Her subsequent references to drinking during the holidays twist the common trope of merriness into something more morose.

Kellarissa’s latest release is a demonstration of the genre-bending capabilities of her artistry, her ghostly vocals mixing immaculately with the ecclesiastic atmosphere of holiday music. She intertwines traditional folk instruments with her style of synth-pop through an honest, first-hand perspective on the holidays. Despite its chill, *We’re Mest* is assured to keep you warm throughout the winter months. —Alexis Zygan



shitlord fuckerman

MUSIC IS OVER!

(self-released)

December 20, 2019

With the sudden onset of show cancellations, venue closures and countless musicians out of work for the foreseeable future, the title of shitlord fuckerman’s latest full length release seems eerily apt: *MUSIC IS OVER!* But shitlord fuckerman, the genre-bending experimental electronic project from multi-disciplinary artist Gil Goletski, couldn’t have predicted the current downtrodden state of music and art communities around the world amidst a global pandemic. Having released *MUSIC IS OVER!* last December, shitlord’s vision of the end of music was an entirely different beast.

MUSIC IS OVER! comes after a long string of singles, holiday EPs, and musical miscellanea, reaching back to shitlord’s early days. While the volume of material, not to mention the years of frequent and truly experiential performances throughout the city, has established them as a staple in Vancouver’s independent music community, *MUSIC IS OVER!* seems to be shitlord fuckerman’s first fleshed-out musical statement. It seems as though the reason they chose to format this release in the guise of a full-length, ten-track album is to dismantle their idea of what music is from within.

As if the flood of the internet’s content sweeps through the album, shitlord fuckerman slowly washes away the traditional notions of what should be included on an artist’s “debut” album, leaving only the wreckage and shards of music to grapple with.

The record begins with “PATRICK COWLEY (IN AGONY),” an upbeat, deep-house-tinged dance track that is undeniably dance-able. The next four tracks continue in a similar vein, all featuring hard-hitting beats and bit-crushed sonic palettes. The arpeggiated synths, put to incredible use in shitlord’s live shows, on “BIG EDEN” and “RANCHO BAWANG” propel the album forward with an almost overwhelming energy. On these tracks, however, shitlord’s voice gains prominence in the mix, with lyrics slowly peering through the digital onslaught, to reveal vaguely apocalyptic-sounding remarks: “Air tight refrigerator / Leave me in there to die,” “Nothing better than a knife in the gut,” “I can’t remember the time I said I love you.”

“VACATION OF THE MIND (GREEN BLUE GREEN),” marks a change on the record. The driving rhythms and aggressive samples of the first five tracks are replaced by gentle, atmospheric soundscapes. While still almost entirely digital sounding, “VACATION OF THE MIND (GREEN BLUE GREEN)” feels like a walk through the forest, a respite from the onslaught that came before. The next track, “baby’s on fire” is an almost entirely true-to-the-original cover of a 1973 Brian Eno track. The following two instrumental covers are markedly less energetic than the beginning of the record, as if shitlord was losing the will to create the bombastic, and truly unique, electronic music for which they’ve become known.

The final track, “bus on parade,” acts as shitlord’s attempt to create a new musical language, in the wake of the crumbling musical landscape they’ve outlined throughout the album. A wholly ridiculous, yet somehow incredibly fitting mashup of Rage Against the Machine’s “Bulls on Parade” and Vengaboys’ “We like to Party! (The Vengabus),” “bus on parade” isn’t so much a jab at the state of music in the internet-age, or an ironic quip at the idea of the musician as the creator of original and meaningful art. Instead, it’s an embrace of what music could become, now that it’s finally over. —Frances Shroff



Loving

If I Am Only My Thoughts

(Last Gang Records)

January 30, 2020

Loving might be a band that could easily be reduced to a Spotify “Chill Indie” playlist, but on *If I Am Only My Thoughts*, the trio of David Parry, Jesse Henderson, and his brother Lucas Henderson, offer something more in their alluring psychedelic folk. Like a Haruki Murakami novel, the Victoria band captures a sense of existential dread in their

lyrics — they meander about life, not knowing where to go, reaching empty conclusions that circle back to pontificating through their music. Many of us at one point in our lives must face mortality no matter how far we are from death, not knowing exactly how close we are to it. Loving attempts to appease that feeling by making music that eases those fears.

On their self-titled EP *Loving*, demos only scratched the surface in what they could do. While permeated with a wave of melancholia, the EP had a sun-kissed sensation that's been carried over onto *If I Am* with tracks like "Forgot Again" that felt like daydreaming on a hammock by the beach. On "Visions," that sunny disposition is apparent as *Loving's* signature slinky guitars delight and charm. On the self-titled track, Henderson sounds like lighter Paul McCartney without range. He sings, "Adrift like light along a riverbed / I'm going somewhere I imagine / At least in my head" as if the daydreams are vivid as ever. On "Lately in Another Time," the dreams get overshadowed by futility. "All of this time I spend just getting by / sometimes forget to wonder why" sings Henderson. The track's final instrumental suspends time as piano twinkles and the guitar lead drifts off as if also getting lost down an endless path.

It's when "Nihilist Kite Flyer" begins, that *Loving* settle into this dread. It was always present, but acceptance is achieved — "And though I've always wanted an answer / Now I know better," sings Henderson. The swaying guitars carry a pace that evokes one meandering down a path of misdirection, but its melody is so reassuring that it's easy to settle. With a fuller sound, more instruments, more kaleidoscopic effects and a little more polish in the production, *If I Am Only My Thoughts* offers harmony in our anxieties through calming contemplation. —Anton Astudillo



lié

You Want It Real
(Mint Records)

Feb 28, 2020

If you reside in Vancouver and consider yourself an expert in the local music scene, then you are bound to have heard of lié.

The band has been a staple in the scene since their emergence in 2013, including opening for the likes of Cloud Nothings. To better grasp lié, imagine The Distillers and The Cure giving birth to a trio of women who effortlessly uphold the garnishment of post-punk music.

lié revitalizes the darkest cult of the '80s, with an underlying essence of female truculence in their latest album *You Want It Real*. The eight songs are diverse in composition, ranging from dynamic dance rhythms, to intrinsic fast-paced punk riffs. The album's experimental nature allows for an authentic cold punk arrangement that is bound to attract alternative rock lovers across the board.

You Want It Real opens with playful bass strums that introduces the first track "Digging in the Desert." Minimal synth bleeds in, followed by a drum break by Kati J that sets the conceptual tone for the album. The energy reaches its maximum in the third track, "Bugs." Guitarist Ashlee Luk doesn't miss a beat as she shreds her way across the entire two minutes. Even as Kati J slows it down, Luk maintains her fast, high frequency electrical shreds that dazzle the ears and invigorate the body. It becomes apparent that the drums and guitar are constantly flirting, each testing new boundaries of their relationship. The undeniable chemistry of this partnership does not cease to succumb to the modes of experimentation. This becomes more obvious when you listen to the album's second single, "Drowning In Piss." The quick-paced guitar riffs indicative of traditional punk have found a romantic balance with synthesized accompaniment in the drums and varying crescendos from the disjointed, lyrical rasps of Brittany West.

Despite the first six tracks providing head banging sensations, it is "Fantasy of Destructive Force" that reinforces the album's decompression. lié abandons another potential dance number for a more stripped-down confrontation of raw strumming.

"Why so hostile? / Why don't you leave me alone? / Why so hostile? / Why don't you need me anymore? / Why so hostile? / Can't you give me a smile?" West delivers different renditions of the song's lyrics with a nonchalant elicitation of acceptance whilst exuding criticism. Even as the tempo picks up during the chorus, West maintains the tone allowing for consistency in the track's experimentation.

The transitions between tracks are not disconnected despite the variance in sound, as there is the continual conspicuous display of

female demagogues, honouring lié's preceding reputation. If there is one element to focus on, it would be digesting *You Want It Real* in the context of their environment as women; not only as women established in the punk scene, but navigating a patriarchal society at large as self-identifying women who are intentionally resisting social hierarchies. The lyrics exude confidence in womanhood as they call out and command respect, forcing acknowledgement and accountability. But what makes them different from the likes of other women in punk goes beyond the powerful, anarchic presence; it's their deliberate connection to embodying the laws of art making with the intent of preserving their values through experimentation, and taking up space. —Krystal Paraboo



Jamie Lee Trio

Introspective
(self-released)

February 29, 2020

Jamie Lee Trio's *Introspective* uses diverse soundscapes and eclectic influences to show how pumped and punchy a jazz trio can be. All recent graduates of Capilano University's jazz program, drummer Jamie Lee teamed up with bassist Marcus Abramzik and pianist James Dekker for their debut release, *Introspective*. Rather than the exacting style of classic jazz trios like Bill Evans Trio, or the groovy hip-hop influences of BADBADNOTGOOD's early work, Jamie Lee uses odd time signatures and a unique range of instrument expression to create a sound space where at one moment you have lost yourself, and the next you find yourself dancing.

The LP bursts open with the restless track "Overclock," immediately hitting you with its odd 7/8 time signature transitions, precise drum rhythms, and savvy bass and piano hooks. The fast pace and jittery electric piano solos nicely tie in with the title of the track. "Butterfly Effect" is a track that I quite easily got lost in, due to its hard-to-follow rhythm and compositional spontaneity. In the video of their live performance of this track, recorded by the West Coast Art Collective, the energy of the room is just amazing. The impulsiveness and impromptu nature of the main melody illustrates how small ideas can have surprising and unexpected effects. The last song I have to praise is the closing track "Beginning," which brings in a choral ensemble to perform a cathartic ballad over Jamie's marching beat, Marcus' blissful bowing, and James' impactful piano performance.

Unfortunately science has not yet reached the stage where we can effectively peer into people's minds and understand their truest motivations and intentions. Luckily, the aptly titled *Introspective*, gives us the opportunity to gaze into the mind of three of Vancouver's up-and-coming jazz performers, while also offering some tracks that are quite catchy and impressively show off the artists' performance chops.

—Jordan Naterer



Babe Corner

Killer EP
(self-released)

March 2, 2020

Released at the beginning of March, Babe Corner couldn't have predicted how their debut release could come to encapsulate the hopeless tone of tired 20-somethings before they and the rest of the world had to deal with the chaotic month that would hit.

From the first song, "Alone at the Party," the vocal harmonies and woozy guitar riffs set the tone for a string of songs that are unpredictable in their composition but keep you hooked, wondering where the voices and rhythms will take you next. The beginning of the record relays the emotional turns of relationships, break-ups and the trials of self-identification, all issued between airy pop hooks and distinguished, gritty guitar solos. But as the EP nears its end, the last two songs mark a change in mood, from previous wallowing and dreaminess to outright defiance.

The confessional atmosphere Babe Corner evoke makes *Killer EP* feel like your best friend sitting with you on your bed, indulging you with their irrelevant, yet entirely pertinent problems like only wanting a

cigarette outside, in “Cigarette.”

One of the standout tracks, “Baptize,” is well placed in the middle of the EP. The melodies reach a seemingly joyful high, amidst the broody and somewhat defiant tones of the rest of the record. Yet lyrically, “Baptize” is amongst Babe Corner’s saddest songs. This third track comes to terms with a confusing and unstable break-up, yet satisfyingly juxtaposes the lyrical malaise with the light and delicate tones of vocalist Lindsay Sjöberg.

Overall, Babe Corner has established themselves within their own genre, with *Killer*, blurring the lines between bedroom and power pop with indie-rock. This debuting Vancouver band warmly invites you to their circle of four to ponder on the parts of life and relationships we love to address but often fail to successfully articulate, let alone have the capacity to musically emulate. —Lauren Mossman



Wares

Survival

(Mint Records)

April 24, 2020

With dripping synths like spider thread dewdrops after a storm, and guitars humming and pattering as if chasing

a sunset, *Survival*, the latest release by Cassia Hardy’s Edmonton-based project Wares, stuns with its emotional vulnerability and nuance. Opener “Hands, Skin,” a nostalgic and melancholy yet hopeful little vignette of pop punk, sees an undulating drone build into an explosion of punky guitar riffing. The sweet grit of the track provides the perfect basis for Hardy’s harrowing delivery of what seems like an elegy to a past self: “I left my body behind / Taking only what I could afford / It doesn’t haunt me now like it did before / Sometimes in visions I’ll go and visit the room / And find him sleeping alone.”

The following track, “Tall Girl,” is a dreamy piece of indie pop with a chime reminiscent of The Velvet Underground’s “Sunday Morning.” Hardy recalls a “tall girl” who seems to have served as an inspiration for her, as she sings “I can’t imagine how hard you fought just to survive / I regret not getting to know you better.”

Survival is, in many respects, a narrative concept album, as “Living Proof” (a dream pop tune worthy of the *Drive* soundtrack) and “Tether” further explore the struggle to move on from a past-self into a happier, brighter future. The record sees its first climax at “Surrender Into Waiting Arms,” an anthem of self-acceptance, emotional openness, and the unabashed pursuit of happiness, in which Hardy explains “With each decision / In our power to change / We can give ourselves away.”

Here, the record sees a sort of rebirth, as “Jenny Says,” the first track with overt acoustic elements, provides the basis for a story about meeting a woman on an overpass. Through the lyrics, we learn her life story just before elements of magical realism kick in with the line “Her hair turned grey to match her eyes” and the song leads into a psychedelic break much like the one found in The Beatles’ “A Day in a Life.” From here, the instruments drop as Hardy, in the voice of Jenny, delivers a subtly reverbed cry “Does it hurt so much to get out of bed sometimes / Why do people scare me so much I can never go outside.”

Thrumming with ‘80s style gated reverb drums (think “In the Air Tonight”) “Violence” contains one of the sweetest opening passages on the record, as Hardy delivers a sort of coming-of-age story, detailing the pressures to perform a masculine image in the sports in which she participated as a child. The ripe wordplay of lines like “The boys all watch each other changing / And pretend they’re not in love / Some love to say the word / Some hope it never comes up” simultaneously invokes the pressure for emotional suppression among male peers, as the struggle with (and case against) male puberty is illuminated through a glimpse into the locker room.

Ending on the eponymous “Survival,” the record merges its prior more personal focus with a greater concern for the survival of all of us, as Hardy prompts “Burn with all your might/ Against a pipeline’s civil rights” and urges us to “fight like a dying species” against the structures that promote social and environmental injustice. Ultimately *Survival*’s great success is in merging the emotionality of our successes over personal dysphorias and struggles with a drive to empower ourselves in fight against the dystopias that loom in the darkness against the setting sun. —Tate Kaufman

Podcasts

BlackChat the Podcast

January 2020 - present



There’s something to be said about the conversations that come up in your living room — about the mind-bending and theoretical shape shifting that occurs when ideas are tossed around, political theories

dissected, notions discussed; about the complex and nuanced views of ourselves and the world around us that become entirely reshaped.

The electric pulses that bounce off one another as we share, argue, lament and bolster one another in our attempts to bridge gaps in our own (mis)understandings are exhilarating. Figuring out where and how each of us connects to the other is a dance, as we weave thoughts from brain waves using tongues and teeth to mash rationale into our feelings to present them to our kin. Like building blocks or puzzles, we use conversations to find our place within the world and within our communities. We make a noble attempt to build ourselves up, even while the world tries to tear us down.

I’ve just described to you the generous offering that Morgan and Kona have bestowed upon the world via their newly born project, *BlackChat the Podcast*. These two radical, queer Black artists invite you into their living room to sip some tea, get comfy, and listen in as they endeavour to seek answers to the complex, the magical and the downright ridiculous.

BlackChat the Podcast is their most recent labour of love under the BlackChat banner. Starting inside of the home of these two intergenerational gems in the summer of 2016, the duo opened their home to Black folks as a way to build community and have difficult discussions in a safe, welcoming environment, all while throwing a low-key, high vibrational kickback. Thus *BlackChat: The Gathering* was born.

Coming from a need for more spaces for the lower mainland’s Afro/Caribbean diaspora to gather and find ways to heal together, as well as Black folks visiting from other cities, this almost-monthly gathering picked up momentum. It became clear to both Morgan and !Kona that it was time to bring the energy that was generated in their living room out into the world. Thus prompting *BlackAttack*.

In this iteration, and through generous community partnerships, BlackChat members attend art, film and cultural events together as a way to connect. And, most importantly, *BlackAttack* serves as a way to show the city of Vancouver that despite the history and blatant erasure of Black folks on these uncaded lands, there still is and continues to be a thriving community.

While there are only four episodes (and counting) of the podcast to date, Morgan and !Kona are not afraid to go beyond the surface and dig deep. Asking questions like, “How do we go about creating the conditions that would allow people to invest in each others’ survival?” and “What does intergenerational work look like to you and how does it show up in your life?” They’ve had guests like local Black artist Jillian Christmas, who touched on the importance of self care and provided a more broad understanding of the sacredness of Locs. There is also an episode on what it looks like to support our Indigenous kin during the already complex time of Black Futures Month under colonial occupation on Turtle Island.

Through all of this, there is joy, magic and love in *BlackChat the Podcast*. You can really hear the care and tenderness between !Kona and Morgan, even when they disagree or don’t seem to hold the same value to shared experiences. Morgan’s inquisitive nature really shines through during interviews and !Kona’s deep belly laughs and soothing voice have you leaning in for more. Listening to them will have you feeling as if you’ve been pulled into the fold, wrapped up in their fuzzy, weighted blankets and given a delicious brown drink to sip. One that goes down easy, and warms every recess of your soul. —Afrodykie Zoe



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Under Review

ONE! MORE! SONG!



Outback

Outback

(self-released)

January 24, 2020

Writing about Outback's self-titled EP is a nightmare. To aptly articulate his attention to detail, intricacy of sound and creative elements is near impossible when you don't have the intensive musical knowledge to describe it (music making is a mystery to me). Despite not having the sonic vocabulary or record-mixing vernacular that would help in explaining his newly released EP, I can confidently say it is exceptional.

Outback is a symbiotic, cohabitation of music and moments. Aiming to preserve those moments of life in a subjective way, Jasper Miller's field recordings, often taken simply from an iPhone's voice memos, lend depth, layers, flow and significance to every track. Speaking of depth, there is a lot to be said regarding the gear and equipment that goes into making the tracks on this record and I'll just say, to my own mind at least, it's extensive and a bit confusing! This guy does not skimp on the fine elements of each song, there are bright tones lying in the dancey beats of some tracks as well as trance-like synth cords in the darker songs. *Outback* has a clear range of emotions amidst its five tracks that makes listening a truly submerged experience.

Musical influences just might come to Miller rather easily considering the other wonderful artists that he's worked with and has been surrounded by in the Victoria music community. Diamond Cafe, Petal Supply and Cartoon Lizard are a couple artists to which he has lent his talent and they may even impact the sound of his own personal projects as well. Certainly Petal Supply has, as they feature on the record's fourth song "Be My."

The first track, "Russian Udu and a 909" has a spacey feel and darkness to it that hits you when you listen. If I could use one word to describe the synth sound, I'd say "Sega Dreamcast," and I mean that in the best, most nostalgia-inducing way. The next song, "Heated Blanket," transitions into a similar trance-inducing tone as the previous song. This one is definitely more heady though, with a sample dropped in the middle that says "You can make all the money in the world and it's not going to change one thing except for the circumstances under which you still feel bad."

My favorite track is, (what I like to call Outback cubed) is "Outback" by Outback on *Outback*. This is the song that reminds me why Outback is a dance project. The beat is undeniable and infectious. As I write this during a global pandemic, my inevitably unfulfilled urge to dance at live shows is now through the roof thanks to this song. On a positive note, if you want to dance out the stresses of quarantine life, this song is a banger ideal for that. Simply a dope dance track, much more and no less.

This release is one of those projects that doesn't get old. Despite being less than half an hour long, these five tracks seem to have me returning to them constantly. *Outback* by Outback is an infectious creative expression. I swear, listening to this album will make you hungry to create for yourself and the world too. —Maya Preshyon



Holy Hum

If There Is Transcendence Let It Be Now

(Heavy Lark)

March 20, 2020

Holy Hum's latest release is a live recording. It begins with an audience clapping, which begins the recording on a slightly

disorienting note — a listener at home may wonder if maybe they've missed something, or if the best part has come and gone already. Slowly, small pieces of the audience noise are absorbed into a growing hiss, reminiscent of tones from Brian Eno & David Byrne's early experiments with sample based looping. A spacious fuzz fills the air, an ever changing oscillation giving the otherwise calm atmosphere an anxious edge.

Eight minutes in, the sharp wake up call of an arpeggiator emerges from the initial haze. "OK, OK, OK, alright alright" shouts a sampled voice, over and over again. It could be a positive affirmation, or it could be a plea for a cease fire, like crying "uncle" in a play-fight. Andrew Lee's piece leaves room for different contexts & emotions, not forcing itself on the listener but rather accompanying them on whatever emotional journey they might be on.

The twenty-eight minute performance was recorded in Toronto, as part of the 2019 Avant Festival. The recordings and samples of which the piece itself is composed were captured in and around Lee's New York home. When heard on headphones in rural BC, as I experienced it, it feels like something else entirely. Perhaps you could say the same thing about any recording, but this work feels especially like something that plays with — and even interrogates — time and place. The work has existed, and was constructed, in multiple realms, and presents all these places to the listener at once.

Perhaps because of this, it feels like an especially fitting recording to listen to while in self-isolation. Recorded in October 2019, Lee's work consists of samples "captured" from the outside world before they are then processed, re-processed and performed at a later date. This circular motion, this processing and re-processing of past events or more exciting memories, might be familiar to many at home. In some ways, this work makes the case that our recollections of moments inherently distort these moments — the memories themselves are separate, new things, distinct from the original lived experience.

All of this culminates in a deeply emotional recording, a piece of work with a distinct "rending" effect. For this writer, the recording functions as a reminder that although sample based, ambient recordings have been around for a while now, there is still so much life and beauty in this construction of music. As was the case with his 2017 album *All Of My Bodies*, Lee has a way of using synthesized strings and voices to achieve a deeply organic, human tone.

In 2018, producer and guitar virtuoso Blake Mills released an ambient album entitled *Look*, which immediately engulfs you with a rich, overwhelming sonic texture, as if to demonstrate all the powerful sound Mills can create. Holy Hum offers an alternative to this mode, a slow build where new layers curl outwards over time, as if they were floating to the top of the mix. In an era when music — even ambient instrumental music — is under immense pressure to grab us and thrill us immediately, Holy Hum takes their time, and the effect is, well, transcendent. —Sam Tudor



Pale Red

Into The Pink EP

(self-released)

March 21, 2020

Pale Red further cement themselves as a must listen with their newest EP *Into the Pink*. Comprised of Portia Boehm, Myles

Black, and Charlotte Coleman, this local trio perfectly, albeit unintentionally, mesh their melancholic and anxious lyricism with what has proven to be an emotional summer. *Into the Pink* is made up of six songs that feel like listening in on someone's thoughts as they process and accept the end of a relationship; with each passing song, new feelings are explored.

The EP opens with, and continually explores, themes of uncertainty and upset. I found the lyricism to be easily the strongest facet of *Into the Pink*, and the opening track is a shining example. “Body of Water” immerses itself into emotions of uncertainty with hard hitting lines: “What if the thing I’m most afraid of is the thing that would be the best for you / Should I do it anyway?”

I found the final song on *Into the Pink*, “Enough,” to be the perfect complementary track to the opener. It wraps up all the emotions of the preceding songs by offering resolution to all the previously explored feelings. Pale Red loudly exclaims “I’ve been giving myself a break / I’ve been looking for love in all the right places!” There is an extraordinary amount of personal investment in the lyrics, and the closing track concludes *Into the Pink* ecstatically.

Reminiscent of the feeling of putting your head against the bus window with your headphones on to process your thoughts and feelings, *Into the Pink* is a definite recommended listen for anyone. The emotionally expressive lyricism and moody sound create a perfect addition to your tunes for this emotional summer. —**Olivia Cox**



willolux

Armour

(self-released)

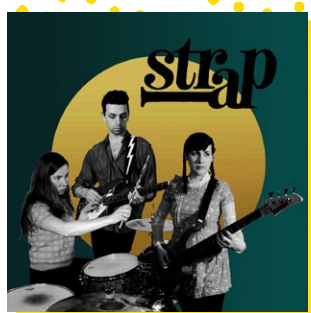
March 21, 2020

Willolux’s *Armour* is singer / songwriter Kristina Emmott’s sophomore album is a transition away from folk and Americana towards a more intimate brand of dream pop. While her debut album, *Thread & Tape*, pulled from influences such as Laura Marling and Brandi Carlile, this new group of tracks harnesses catchy melodies of Regina Spektor and Andy Shauf. With a new producer, Daniel Klenner, Kristina utilizes a new, more ornate musical language throughout the record — orchestral strings and sparkling synths glisten throughout — that pushes *Armour* further towards a dreamy brand of art-pop than ever before.

The opening track, “The Gift,” sets the lyrical framework for the album, repeatedly hinting at the confession of emotions towards a romantic partner. The lyrics also continuously allude to floating, drifting and gazing, which are fitting verbs to open up a dream pop album. The spooky track “X O Skeleton,” has incredibly tense and chilling piano melodies, and includes themes of monsters abusing those who are in a position of weakness. “My Heart Is Like A Shell” is a badass divergence from the adjacent songs, which uses a hollow body electric to drive the melody forward. “Safe Spaces” has the catchiest melodies of the album and is backed with Beatles-esque progressions and anxiously adorable lyrics to help set up a summer pop tune.

The last two tracks are quite stylistically different from one another but work quite well together. “The Perfect Name” is a sad acoustic ballad returning to themes of a lost lover with acoustic fingerpicking that is quiet as a mouse. Finally, “The Only Way Out Is Through” concludes the EP with incredibly vulnerable lyrics that are supported with an orchestra of strings and overdubs to emphasize the magnificence of the finale.

This BC high school teacher’s stylistic progression creates a melancholic yet beautiful environment for the listener, where it is okay to open up and be vulnerable to the ones you truly care about. —**Jordan Naterer**



Strap

Strap

(self-released)

April 11, 2020

Just in time for listeners desperate for new tracks to conquer their boredom, Strap — a rebranded or reconfigured version of long-standing Vancouver act Ace Martens — delivers a fresh batch of songs, guaranteed to get you off the couch and grooving with the thump of the mellow drums and lively guitar. Released during the peak of Vancouver’s quarantine, the theme of demotivation and self-acceptance as a protest against the expectations of society that runs throughout the record feels especially timely.

Strap’s self-titled is a catchy glam indie-rock album that grapples with the stage of life as you grow into yourself. The lyrics explore the

complicated process of adulting, from heartbreak to restless desires and anxiety-driven decisions, all while seeking acceptance from oneself but from others too. When you question where you fit within the predefined boxes society has imposed, or when you become inundated by the list of tasks left to accomplish, but you can barely get off the couch and make a meal — Strap seems to be going through it all. On “Not a Lot,” Ace and Sarah sing in unison, “Motivation is so strange / And on this day, I don’t have a lot.” While the track “Stuck” shares the tornado of mixed emotions that come with gazing into the eyes of someone for whom you are falling head over heels.

This debut record emits a jazzy flare, embezzled with sultry melodies that will evoke familiar feelings of nostalgia for listeners in their thirties, who reminisce about the simple problems of their early twenties and the fearlessness that somehow dismantles itself with age. “Remember when we were young / Felt like we could do anything.” —**Alexis Zygan**



Be Afraid

Remember Fun

(Hidden Bay Records)

May 8, 2020

After undergoing several line-up changes since their inception, Be Afraid has landed on solid footing with the release of their second album, *Remember Fun*. One can’t help but smile listening to their laid-back yet strong vocal style and driving power-pop riffs. In a musical landscape dominated (understandably) by emotional themes of anger and nihilism, *Remember Fun* provides a refreshing change of pace.

The band had me hooked from the get-go with their explosive opener “Birdbrain.” Being the longest track, at just under four minutes long, “Birdbrain” weaves a tender tale of juvenile antics and unrequited teenage love through the disarming sincerity of their songwriting: “Could’ve said what’s on my mind / That’s if I had a spine.” The song takes a slightly darker turn into the chorus, shedding light on the fears felt by members of the millennial generation who face unprecedented economic and environmental devastation: “Let me find a place to hide from the gloom, the collapsing machine / Let the shrapnel hurt you in the tomb of dwindling dreams.” The album continues to shine with the short-yet-sweet “You Lose Continue,” with its great guitar solo and then with the somber yet catchy “My Boy.”

Although a disappointingly short ride, at just under 15 minutes, it’s a consistent effort all the way through and a perfect addition to anyone’s summer playlist. —**Peter Quelch**



Oblomov

Steady Drip of a Broken Spout

(self-released)

April 25, 2020

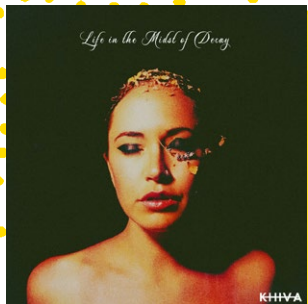
After my first listen of *Steady Drip of a Broken Spout*, I realized that it was not the album that I expected it to be — and I mean that in the best way possible. It’s an album that showcases incredible growth, both within individual songs and throughout the project as a whole. On this debut album, Vancouver emo-punk trio Oblomov start with standard emo rock and slowly introduce unexpected musical ideas like spoken word, tempo changes and dissonance to create an accomplished and impactful first record.

The album opens with “Feel Alive,” which, along with “Could Have If I Wanted To,” demonstrates the band’s emo roots. While both are great songs and are very accessible, they are notably simple compared to some of the later tracks. However, “Could Have If I Wanted To” does contain a welcome and unexpectedly heavy and dissonant bridge, which teases the more experimental tracks that are to come. “Brick” calls attention to the band’s songwriting abilities; by building up tension, having a cathartic release and ending with a subdued conclusion, the song is able to take the listener through a journey. Many bands can only create a feeling like this through complicated ten-plus minute songs — Oblomov does it in less than three.

“Airplane” is a turning point on the album, and one of its standout tracks. It’s almost completely instrumental, although it contains the album’s first instance of spoken word, something that will be featured

in almost every track to come. While the album's first half leaned more towards the emo side of emo-punk, "Airplane" and the tracks after it lean more towards the latter. With blazing fast guitar licks and some surprisingly melodic drumming the track demonstrates the band members' skills with their respective instruments.

The album's last track is also its best. "This Is Serious" combines all of the album's strengths to create an exceptionally strong conclusion to an already great album. *Steady Drip of a Broken Spout* is loud and introspective, experimental and accessible, sludgy and polished, and is an overall fantastic debut album. —**Fabio Schneider**



Khiva

Life in the Midst of Decay

(Deep Dark & Dangerous)

July 10, 2020

Khiva's *Life in the Midst of Decay*, demonstrates how DJ / artist Jessie le Couteur has found her voice within the realm of dark electronic and bass-infused hip-hop on her latest EP. While her previous releases have focused on creating dark soundscapes with reverb-heavy vocals and unique bass-driven rhythms, her confident vocal melodies are now pushed further towards the front of each new mix. The complex and haunting bass sounds have also strictly improved, showing Khiva's development as an electronic artist and producer.

For instance, within the track "Path of Night," we are constantly bombarded with evolving, low-frequency rhythms and wubs, clearly influenced by dubstep artists she grew up listening to. The wide and expansive vocal melodies along with the aquatic and glassy keys are produced to create this epic dark pop ballad. While this song discusses surviving the shitty times in which we currently live, Khiva forms similarly terrifying stories within the other tracks. The track "Fairytale," describes a past relationship similar to a horror movie with instances of monsters waiting outside and being terrified like Chicken Little. This track shows off more of Khiva's talent as a hip-hop vocalist, as she is able to rap with multiple rhyming schemes over her staticky and springy synths.

My favorite track is easily "Up To Bat," for the insanely catchy yet evil melodies and haunting lyrics she delivers. She alternates between clean and pitch-shifted vocals to enhance the punchlines of the stories she tells. It feels like her experience as a DJ and live performing artist has taught Khiva how to deliver such catchy and charging vocal lines, along with the reinforcement of haunting low-frequencies that you could still dance to.

Khiva's confident vocals and stylistically unique low-frequency melodies can take on many dark incarnations, whether it be epic pop ballads or thrilling hip-hop inspired bars. She has taken another step towards defining her style as an artist, and is proof of the potential of dubstep and bass-infused electronic moving past 2020. —**Jordan Naterer**

DOXA 2020

Shorts Program: "Peculiar Sites"

June 18-26

by Lucas Lund

Six feet apart. Give distance. Stay home. Avoid unnecessary travel. These words, plastered across just about everything since mid-March, have been impossible to ignore; and the ways in which we are forced to confront the physical space we occupy in the world amidst a global pandemic, has seemed to rise to the forefront of the public consciousness. The spatial realm has become a talking point en masse, with governments, public health authorities, private businesses, and everyday folk advocating for a greater awareness and caution in designating who has the right to public space, and how those with access to private space should utilize it. With literal life-or-death stakes hinged upon how we conceptualize and take up space, it seems that a much

needed focus on the space around us has sharpening as we have sat in our homes for the last few months.

Part of the reason these five short documentaries, presented through DOXA's 2020 online documentary film festival, are so compelling is that they allow the viewer to settle into a new space for a while. These films, grouped together under the theme "Peculiar Sites," each set their focus narrowly on a specific place or space, allowing viewers to interrogate, in detail, the subtleties of the world outside their social isolation chambers.

Redbird and other birds

Julieta Maria, Canada, 2019, 13 mins

While this film, by Toronto-based filmmaker and media artist Julieta Maria, was one of only eight films nominated for the 2020 DOXA Short Documentary Award, it seemed the most opaque and least coherent of all the "Peculiar Sites" selection.

Focusing on the outdoor space of Buttonville airport and surrounding conservation parks in Markham, Ontario, *Redbird and other birds* delves into the tangential lives and passions of two people within the areas: one hobbyist pilot, and one bird listener. In the words of the filmmaker, "these connections open a path through the opacity of these spaces, which I enter in fragmentary ways." And while this does aptly describe the way the film opted to investigate the genuinely fascinating environment of constructed 'natural' spaces surrounding the airport, the "fragmentary ways" in which the film jumps from disparate voices, topics and techniques (the most jarring being superimposed diagrams of planes and birds appearing and disappearing seemingly at random throughout the film) closed the very paths Maria was attempting to open.

However, the soundscape throughout, an interweaving of "birdsong and aircraft radio transmissions," was captivating, and juxtaposition of the airborne, both the birds and the desire of the pilot to become just that, did make for a handful of compelling moments. Unfortunately, those moments weren't pieced together in a way to make the film as a whole feel like a complete work.

Ghost Lands

Félix Lamarche, Canada, 2019, 19 mins

Similar, in a way, to Julieta Maria's *Redbird and other birds*, Félix Lamarche's experimental short film, *Ghost Lands*, utilizes fragmentary sounds and film snippets to compose this exploration of place, this time focusing on the Gaspésie area in Quebec. However, where Lamarche succeeds is the way in which these fragments come together not to reveal a coherent understanding of its setting, but instead evoke a distant memory or nostalgia for the places that used to exist.

Bringing together archival photography and footage, heavily processed and partially destroyed analog film, and narration from the people who were forced to leave the long-since abandoned towns of Gaspésie, *Ghost Lands* doesn't attempt to educate or inform its audience about that historical displacement. Instead, the film focuses on the spaces those towns used to occupy and the voices of those who used to live there — evoking a memory of a place for those who never knew it. Space, in *Ghost Lands*, is hinged on temporality, and because of our temporal distance to those towns now overgrown and skeletal, a complete sense of them is impossible. Félix Lamarche's presentation of this partial understanding of place, through oral histories and degrading images, are the closest one can get to those ghostly lands.

The Reversal

Jennifer Boles, US, 2020, 11 mins

As with *Ghost Lands*, Jennifer Boles' short documentary *The Reversal* reaches into the history of a space, through archival documents. Instead of letting the years wash away the hard details of a history, as Lamarche did with his film, Boles instead elucidates an oft forgotten history of human intervention and effort in transforming urban spaces into what they are today.

The Reversal tells the story of the Chicago River and the almost unthinkable feat of engineering that went into reversing its flow during the late 1800s. Made up of thousands of historical photographs flashing

by, *The Reversal* begins with images of flooded farmlands and unsanitary troughs that made up Chicago's sewage system. As the photos flicker past, at times almost forming stop-motion vignettes before shifting settings and perspectives, the film showcases the intense strain and practical engineering that went into the reversal of the waterway, around which Chicago still sits.

As the film ends, a brief title card appears over images of the modern Chicago River that explains the chronology of the project. These modern shots evoke almost no semblance to the monumental piles of excavated earth, to the thousands of tonnes of stone and concrete, to the literal human lives that went into physically transforming the natural waterways that has enabled the urban population of Chicago to live for the last century. However fascinating and educational the archival material from which Boles drew, the most visceral impact of watching *The Reversal* is that the spaces around us, especially the urban spaces, however mundane or uninteresting on their surface, were designed, constructed, and engineered to be so innocuous — that there are layers upon layers of stories and meaning for every space we don't think about very often.

Stampede

Allison Hrabluik, Canada, 2019, 13 mins

Just because the histories, however close to being forgotten, can supply new understandings of spaces doesn't mean the present state of a place is not worth showcasing. And in Allison Hrabluik's short doc, *Stampede*, the incredible wealth of enthralling and surreal imagery that surface out of the Calgary Stampede make for a truly invigorating film.

Over the course of a single day amidst the fairgrounds of the 2019 Calgary Stampede, Hrabluik's camera settles not on its attractions — the carnival rides, country music concerts, rodeo events — but the people in attendance — the visitors floating through the chaos of the food vendors, the horse groomers prepping their animals, the employees selling raffle tickets. With all the activity and excitement of the fair, *Stampede*'s pace is markedly slow, watching situations unfold in the same manner one watches people pass by from a park bench, and its tone is observational to its core.

Watching young carnival workers dressed in cowboy boots and stetson hats overseeing games of whack-a-mole, or sunburnt onlookers eating whole turkey legs in the shade of a ferris wheel, *Stampede* feels like an anthropological study on how humans came to participate in something so outside their everyday realm. Especially since the mythology surrounding the Calgary Stampede is so entrenched in the colonial westward expansion of Canada, and the subsequent erasure and displacement of Indigenous peoples that come with it (the festival takes

place on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations and the Métis Nation (Region 3)), the lingering gaze of the film on these caricatured depictions of the 'Wild West' is disarming. The way in which the camera holds on people and situations forces the viewer to pay closer attention to the underlying history and violence that shapes the modern, almost cartoonish *Stampede*.

Public showers, Oberkampf street, Paris

Julie Conte, France, 2019, 27 mins

The longest of all five of the Peculiar Sites films is also the best. Julie Conte's *Public showers, Oberkampf street, Paris*, is an absolutely enthralling look into a public shower building in Paris and all the people who are forced to use it.

Just like Allison Hrabluik's *Stampede*, Conte's film is observational and understated. Settling into the building, a large portion of the film watches the space as a whole, as staff routinely maintain the state and sanctity of the space and visitors wash, chat and linger. Shots are long and often unbroken, as laundry schedules are maintained, as families gather around sinks to wash, as people sit and wait in the entrance hall for their phone to charge. The pace of the film enables all those unfamiliar with the rules and customs (however unwritten they are) to become intimately acquainted with this specific quotidian culture.

Yet the film never seems to step into the realm of gawking at the people it depicts. Instead, Conte marries these observational stretches with interviews, letting each of the people observed explain the hows and whys they use the public showers, and how they public showers fit into their lives outside the tiled walls. Often, the characters reveal their history with homelessness, addiction or poverty that force them into the Oberkampf St. showers. But those histories are often married with the agency and invigoration that come with the showers — the free and accessible means to sanitation that are too often withheld from people pushed to the margins of society enable them to develop routine and dignity that they can't find elsewhere.

Conte's film is as empathetic as it is entertaining, allowing space for necessary but difficult discussions about racism within European immigration to the cyclical nature of poverty, to exist next to endearing real-life moments that can only come with spending time in observation. *Public showers* is a captivating and honest glimpse into a space where a multitude of lives collide, and brilliantly captures what documentary filmmaking does best.

REAL LIVE SCREEN!

Elf Pity / Dew / Spesh Pep / Myyk

FEBRUARY 5 / RED GATE

It was the kind of birthday party that had an air of being all-too-aware of its irony; aware that time is a human construct and age, by extension, a weaponized form of numeric representation, wielded by institutional powers to both honour and shame our socially-constituted bodies.

"Fuck it," the night-gatherers at Red Gate seemed to be saying. "Any excuse to blow up some balloons, spread some love, and shred some guitar in celebration of life in this perennially whack world

is one that ought to be seized."

And seize they did.

The evening began with the members of Myyk setting up under a haze of neon pink lights, adorned from head-to-toe in black and silver, reverberating effortless femme-punk energy. They looked like the people I was totally intimidated by in high school — the type of kids who sketched in the margins of every homework assignment and were referred to as "moody" by their teachers at parent-teacher conferences.

The wall of noise that slammed into me from the bass and guitar somehow smacked me across the face and subdued me at the same time. It was almost too felicitous that the only lyrics I was able to

distinguish from behind it were the words "society" and "anxiety." Moments of hypnotic trumpet-solos produced the feeling of suddenly floating through an abyss, without stripping songs of their edge. I seriously needed their mixtape when I was 17.

Spesh Pep stepped up next and announced the name of their first song, "Sketchy Dude" — effectively setting the tone for the set-to-follow that was as fierce as it was groovy. The three band members jammed wildly, producing some powerfully satirical new wave psych rock. Halfway through the set, the barefoot drummer dedicated a song to expedia.ca, the guitarist wailed on the whammy bar like they were trying to break their high score on Guitar Hero, and members of the crowd went

flying around the floor as if their limbs were freeing themselves from the confinement of their bodies.

Those closest to the stage plopped down on the floor and stared up, cross-legged, at the band to follow, Elf Pity. They swayed along to some fairly low-key post-punk alternative tunes, featuring some pretty crazy drumming, and traded head-scratches for slobbery kisses with Stanley, the partially-deaf cavalier King Charles spaniel (the real star of the night if I'm being totally honest).

"My name's Jess. It's my fucking birthday," proclaimed the frontperson of the closing band, Dew, with the same intonation one might proclaim their excitement for a Monday. As soon as they began to sing, that same voice projected so beautifully I felt, for a heartbeat, blissfully paralyzed. They were joined on stage by the groovy guitarist of Spesh Pep, a dazzling drummer, and a spicy saxophonist — and I walked away dreaming wistfully about the day I'd have enough musically-gifted pals to gather on the eve of my own birthday.

—Amanda Thacker

The Sunday Service Present: In Your Home!

MARCH 15 / FOX CABARET

There are not many things in life that can be counted upon quite as steadfastly as The Sunday Service. Week after week, through very occasional venue and lineup changes, and regardless of extreme weather phenomena and political upheaval, Vancouver's beloved improv troupe have been able to put on an improv show every Sunday for close to fifteen years.

It only seems reasonable that a global pandemic, the likes of which haven't been seen since the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918, that has sent stocks plummeting, toilet paper to mysteriously vanish from shelves worldwide and governments across the globe to declare states of emergency, lockdowns and quarantine zones, along with an ever-growing population of people infected by the vaccine-less virus known as COVID-19, would have caused this improv troupe to take a week off.

But on March 15, after widespread calls for social isolation, and "non-essential" businesses to close their doors indefinitely, Taz VanRassel, Ryan Beil, Caitlin Howden, Kevin Lee, Emmet Hall and Mark Chavez did it anyway — Aaron Read featured in an instagram live pre-show broadcast from his own home. Instead of performing to their usual packed room at the Fox, the Sunday Service had only a camera operator and sound person in the room with them. But with close to 400 audience members tuning in from their own home, the improv troupe had plenty of virtual support.

With Chavez taking on hosting duties, the set got off to a somewhat shaky start, as the typical audience warm-up / introduction segment was met with applause and responses coming from their fellow improvisers. For example, Emmett Hall's question for the crowd, "What do you think my dad's cousin Francesca is doing in Rome right now?" only elicited a "She's fine," from Chavez and VanRassel.

While it was easy to forget about the pandemic that caused this strange Sunday Service situation, little instances of the global health crisis did slip endearingly onto the stage, including a quick hand sanitizer break near the beginning of the show, as well as the awkwardness of not being able to touch each other during the "freeze" game. The energy usually associated with the

Sunday Service shows was sufficiently lacking, yet the six comedians managed to gain some momentum through the short-form improv games. Since all the suggestions, usually coming from the audience, came from themselves, introspection and self-analysis of their own scenes and characters did, at times, run rampant. The game "Question Period" was especially guilty, as Howden and Mark almost immediately started feuding by questioning each other's questions, diverging from the barely established vampire-based scene.

But as the show went on, the six improvisers managed to dispel any of their earlier apprehensions with performing to an empty room, by doing what they do best and committing themselves to an ever-evolving and labyrinthine story line. Each performer played multiple roles, in the complex narrative built around a couples' games night hosted by two seductive losers, an ensemble of linguistically advanced lobsters and an embarrassed son named Puzzle. With some exceptional accents from Beil and VanRassel, as well as Lee's truly understated quips coming throughout the entire show, the Sunday Service pulled off a quintessential show, as if the world outside of their always ridiculous scenes wasn't crumbling around them.

—Lucas Lund

Some Thoughts on Live-Streaming Music

MARCH 31 / MY HOUSE

As COVID-19 and the public health guidelines in response are sweeping through nearly every aspect of society, people (privileged enough to have the means to do so) have been forced to shutter themselves away in their homes and are largely relying on art to get them through the day. Watching films, reading books, listening to podcasts and music, it seems that now, more than ever, artists should be given the recognition they deserve. That by providing a brief escape from reality, or a new way to view or understand that reality, artists are providing an essential service to those who consume it — they are enabling those people to continue in these troubled times.

So it seems strange that the vast majority of artists, even those who were well established in their fields prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, are left without the support they need to exist. One representative facet of this phenomenon is in the live music sector. Now that public gatherings have been essentially outlawed, venues that rely on crowds of people are unable to make rent and musicians who rely on those venues are unable to make a living. The federal government's CERB (Canada Emergency Response Benefit) may be able to help some individuals weather this storm financially, but for much of the independent music scene, the future seems both uncertain and treacherous.

As a result, artists and venues have gotten creative in their attempts to fill the void that social isolation and quarantines have created. Live-streaming performances has become the new concert, and releasing a back-log of miscellaneous material has made everyday seem a little more special for everyone keeping up.

And while I commend those artists and venues for their nearly seamless adaptation to a new, online mode of creating, I can't help but feel as though these live-streams are falling short. Financially, relying on a crowd-sourced donation system to compensate artists and the organizations that run

these live-streams is unsustainable — generosity can go a long way, but it cannot keep an entire industry afloat. Aside from money, I question the actual form of live-streaming as a viable alternative to live music. What really is the appeal of a live stream when there is an endless stream of content in the next tab over? Is the experience of watching someone perform through a screen any different if that performance is happening real-time versus two days ago? While I admit there is certainly a novelty to viewing a live-stream performance, and feeling connected to a performer somewhere out there, as well as whoever else is watching along with you, from wherever else they may be. But that novelty seems small in comparison to the vast quantity of not-so-live performances that are available to view. Live or not, we are still sitting at home, watching a performance mediated through a screen.

All of this is not to say that these live-streams are unworthy of their place in our socially-distant lives. They are providing musicians with some much-needed extra funds during these financially unstable times; they are allowing venues to fundraise for their ongoing rent, bills and wages for their laid off workers; they are giving people, whose lives are suddenly devoid of live music, a means to experience at least a fragment of what a concert is from their homes. People are making the most of a bad situation, in the best ways they can — and I'm sure as the weeks wear on, there will be innovations in how to better organize, facilitate and transmit live musical performances to everyone wanting to experience them. But as they are today, these live-streams simply aren't an adequate replacement to live music for anyone involved. For now, we are all just making do.—Jasper Wrinch



To have a live show considered for review in *Discorder Magazine* and online, please email event details 4-6 weeks in advance to:

Jasper D. Wrinch, Section Editor
rla.discorder@citr.ca.

RLA also includes comedy and theatre, among other live experiences. Feel free to submit those event details to the e-mail above.



Illustration by Abi Taylor

My mom called me to meet her at the **GALLERY** downtown. She said she thinks I'm emotionally shut down because I dated a guy all summer who I knew I didn't like that much. My friend said he was like a warm sweater except he was cotton and making me colder. I spent most mornings laying in his bedroom until noon. This is when I would worry about the fact that I hadn't been to any **BEACHES** all summer. I justified it because of the light and breeze that came in the **EAST-FACING WINDOW**. I felt like I could do whatever I wanted but not in a good way.



Discorder is your local mag for culture, storytelling and discovery through tangential conversations. Our approach to media coverage is to create a platform for new artists and writers to enter the world of publication, gain experience, and get published in an inclusive, open, and accessible environment. We prioritize stories by, and for, marginalized communities and individuals.

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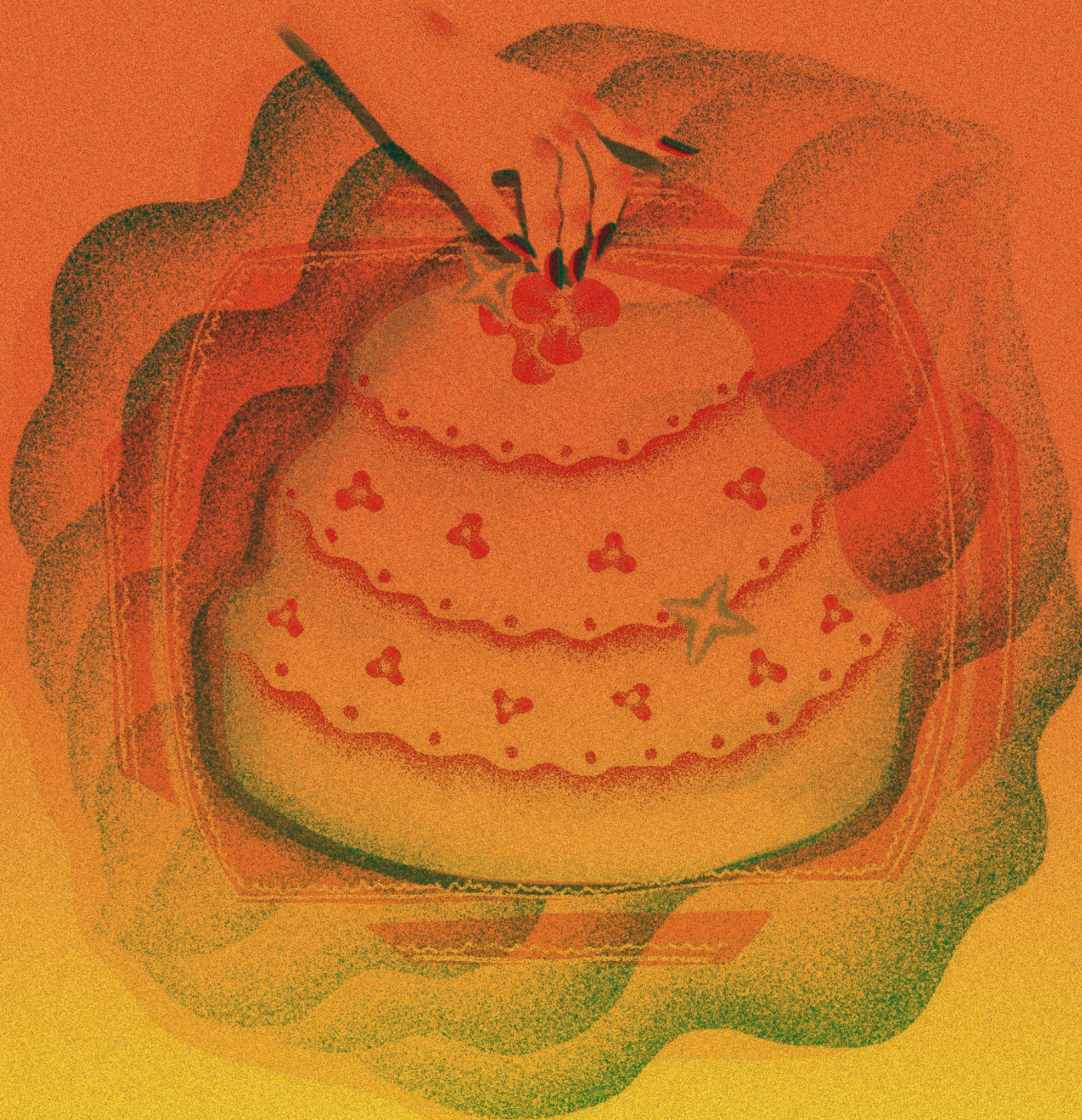


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