

WHAT
WE
LIKE

ISSUE /

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Thanks to
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About Us:

A digital art magazine
providing decentralised global
art intelligence from galleries
in all five continents.

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Welcome to the first issue of What We Like, a global collaborative art journal born in the age of a global pandemic. The first issue contains on the ground art intelligence from Tabula Rasa Gallery, Beijing, Stevenson of Cape Town and Johannesburg, Instituto de Visión, Bogotá and Dastan's Basement, Tehran. Naturally we are available in Chinese, English, Spanish and Farsi. In Part I, we tell you all about how art selling is turning into an all-out streaming contest in China, then we crunch a bunch of embarrassing data on Iranian contemporary art, after a tour of some oddly prescient South African artists whose works seem to foretell the global pandemic, we finally sit down with some indigenous artists from Colombia and calm the f*** down. In Part II, four inspiring artists from around the globe are waiting for your inquisitive eyes and mind. Remember you can click on hyperlinks where indicated and explore to your heart's content.

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Sammi Liu

When the inability to visit physical space becomes the new norm, can live streaming save the art market?

For the past few months, not being able to go back to Beijing and talk to my colleagues and peers in person made me in deep trouble with FOMO, flicking through art news three hours a day, trying to find a cure for my gallery which had been closed for four months and just reopened in May. I am not even sure we can go back to normal before the next spring comes.

Early in March, China was already in lockdown for over a month. I was in London and in my heart, I was celebrating not being in China a little. But the tragic news and rumors at home was difficult to ignore. My iPhone screen time regularly exceeded 7 hours a day. Coronavirus thoughts crowded out any crisis planning for business. Many artists, galleries, collectors donated artworks to raise money fighting Covid. Nobody felt right to voice publicly their worry about

business difficulties amidst a patriotic war on Covid.

It wasn't until two weeks before the launch of Art Basel Hong Kong Online Viewing Room when an urgency hit me. We needed to get on with work or we would miss Basel's OVR submission deadline. A deadline seemed to do good. Soon after, the UK government declared its own Covid lockdown. All non-essential businesses were closed from March 23. Within a week, I saw how swiftly and comprehensively galleries in the UK reacted: a thousand online viewing rooms, Instagram lives, Zoom events, videos, games, podcasts, newsletters were launched towards your screens.

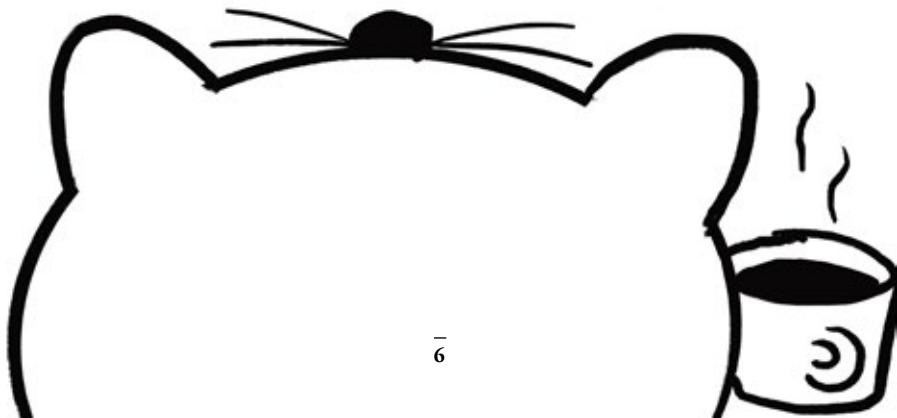
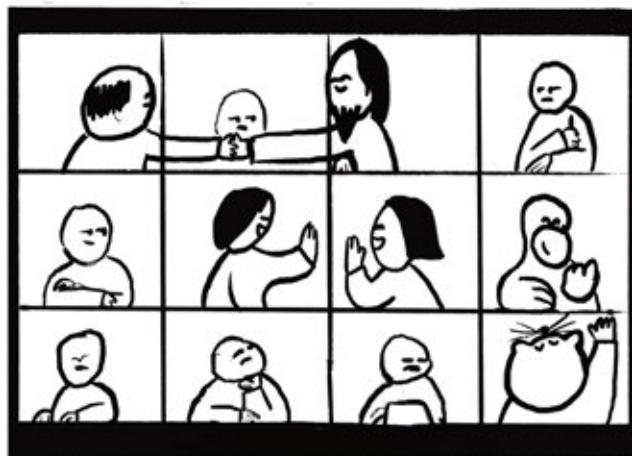
In contrast, I feel a little ashamed to admit that no Chinese galleries did much in our first week or month "working from home". But thankfully around Basel

HK OVR time, the Chinese art world finally came alive and everyone raced to promote, exhibit and sell online.

Live streaming is not new to the contemporary art scene in China. Around 2015/2016, there was a deluge of venture capital backed live streaming startups in China and a number of them operated in the contemporary art space. In almost every gallery opening, you could find these octopus-like tripods holding multiple iPhones, each live streaming to a different app. The content was mostly curator and artist guided tours. I took part a couple of times introducing our shows although I never dared watching replays. The logic to take part seemed solid: It was

free marketing to an audience size beyond the dreams of any artists. Published viewing count for a session could reach six figures although I had never met anyone who said ‘Oh, I know your gallery from that live streaming’. Most streaming apps probably faked their data to get more finance and naive galleries simply wasted their time. This waste did not last long though. By 2017, almost all live streaming apps vanished.

Covid forced Chinese galleries to revisit live streaming. This time, guided tours, artist talks and panels took place on Zoom, Tiktok, bilibili and a few other art-themed apps such as Zai Yi and Yi Dian.



My FOMO drove me to watch over twenty live streaming events run by Chinese galleries. Most of them last between one and two hours. However the longest time I ever stayed with one event is about 20 mins. People read out written script. Conversations presumed lots of prior knowledge. It was like walking into a wrong lecture. There was no interaction with the audience, much less Easter eggs and giveaways that are common practice for content creators in other fields. In one Zoom meeting that I attended, I recognised half of the participants. (Colleagues in the art industry.) So who is the target audience? Are we live streaming to ourselves? What for?



During the lockdown, social media influencers proved to be a powerful sales channel where followers are happy to buy whatever they recommend. Gallerists have not traditionally held influencers in high opinion. Understandably, they want to keep a low-key profile and project a professional image. They want to associate with wealthy clients or potential clients who they assume are not on social media. So all of a sudden, galleries find themselves churning out content without an audience, they desperately want to become the very thing they pretended did not matter to them before the crisis.

I see many gallerists who have never accepted interviews before are now live streaming, give out art education in a professorial tone. [The style is what makes them most comfortable: artspeak, peppered with name drops of artists, collections and awards. However, do audience buy their credential? Can they build influence live streaming to a mass awards?]

And there is a C word. To the Chinese government, contemporary art symbolizes rebellion. Nudity, violence, and politics are the big taboo. Discussions on the tightening grip of control were also banned. If anyone tries to follow the 'content guidelines' published by live

streaming platforms, they soon find out it is nearly impossible to make any content. Live streaming involves uncut, raw conversation and in the art world, it is impossible to do so without mentioning social incidents, news or history. When a live streaming channel gains popularity, it will attract heavier surveillance and may consequently be banned. Recently, Nintendo's popular online game Animal Crossing has been banned because activists in Hong Kong are using it as a platform to speak and their cyber protests are streamed on live streaming platforms. Artists who are also using Animal Crossing to host non-political virtual exhibitions also became collateral damage.

I wonder if this live streaming mania infecting the art world is coming from Taobao Streaming, the live streaming rooms on China's largest online shopping platform. Taobao entered the streaming market late in 2016 bringing the TV shopping experience to the mobile age. Streaming sales in 2019 is reported to be 28 billion US dollars. On Taobao Streaming, which is developed for mobile shopping, presenters use a host of strategies such as cash-back, in-session lottery, coupons and so on to encourage viewers to place orders during a live show (and Taobao can provide credit too). The sales presenters do not shy away

from hyperboles like 'if you don't click buy now, you will regret it for rest of your life'. This kind of sale strategy was completely alien to the gallery world, me included. We consider selling art to be like an elegant dinner party. If not for the Covid pandemic, I probably would not be interested in Taobao Streaming. But once I have seen it, I have to admit, it opened up my understanding of what live streaming could do. Many live streaming hosts have loyal fans who watch them on a daily basis. What's their magic potion? Think about the streamers with the most loyal fan base such as video gamers, sports commentators, or even adult models, getting their audience addicted seems to be a common characteristic of them all.

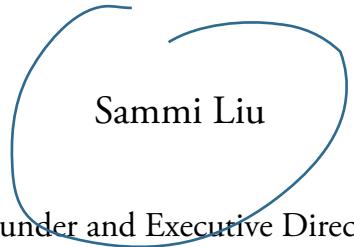


The biggest influencer on Taobao is called Viya. She has 17.5 million followers and growing. Her streaming sessions attract to five plus million views even Kim Kardashian appeared in her show to sell perfume. Viya's fans bought 6000 bottles of KKW perfume within 30 seconds. I watched the recap of many Viya's live streaming sessions, she could sell anything: from lipstick, food, wine and even books. She can talk very fast without stop, switching between demonstrating her products and replying to viewers' questions. Every couple of minutes, her streaming room will drop a surprise where viewers can enter a lottery of a free gift, and sometimes, a game you can click on to win a coupon. Viya's team will find a way to keep viewers' spirit high. In addition, Taobao has implemented this click to buy function in all live streaming to stimulate sales, when presenter mentioned a product, the buy link will pop up on your screen, just like the amazon one-click buy, the purchase can happen in a second. Viya's sale strategy also involves telling you how unique this live streaming is, whatever products you see in the live streaming are selected and tested from hundreds of similar products, and Viya's fans can get an exclusive deal that no other presenter on earth can provide. I have tried to purchase during one of the live streamings, the experience

is exciting, even self-affirming because I saved 30% by using the coupon I earned from playing a pop-up game.

I am convinced that if galleries want to step into the live streaming business and build influence, Taobao Streaming and Viya can provide a valuable lesson. I know many would say art is far different from other commodities, but if I can be hooked up by those sales strategy on Taobao streaming, is it a sign to drop certain prejudice?

P.S. British Museum launched their first Taboo live-streaming event on June 30th, after this article is written.



Sammi Liu

Founder and Executive Director
of Tabula Rasa Gallery in
Beijing, a contemporary art
gallery promotes emerging
Chinese artists; Founder of
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Illustrations by anusman

/SELL THE BACON, SERVE THE COUNTRY? A RHETORICAL EXERCISE/

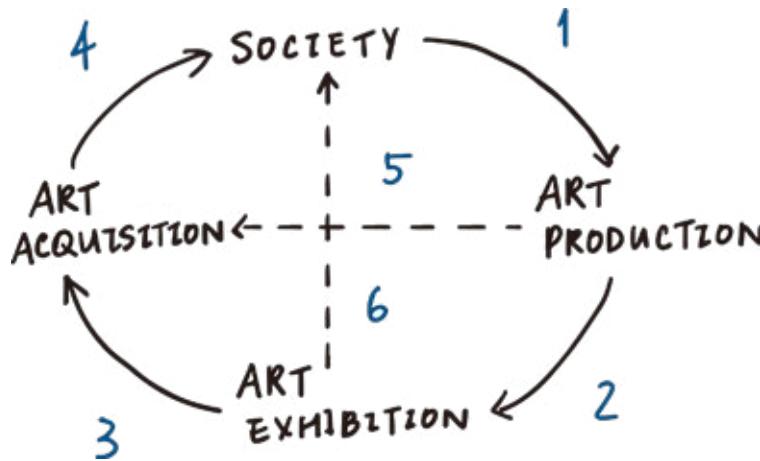
Hormoz Hematian



Bacon Francis. (1968). *Two Figures Lying on a Bed with Attendant*. Page 138-39 from Book [Sami-Azar A.R. Smith E.L. Aghdashloo A. (2005). *The International Collection of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art*. Published by Institute for Promotion of Visual Arts. Tehran.] photo by Alireza Fatehi | Dastan Gallery.

The Iranian visual art ecosystem is much like that of the rest of the world with one important distinction, which is that the Iranian art scene is heavily secluded from the international community due to sanctions on transactions and import and export laws.

Link 1



- 36 universities dedicated to visual art
 - Over 4600 annual entries for BFA
 - 4000 annual entries for MFA
 - Over 80 annual entries for PhD
 - Over 250 independent Ateliers dedicated to teaching
 - 22 out of 869 UNESCO world heritage cultural sites
 - Over 90 museums dedicated to Islamic, classical, as well as modern and contemporary visual arts. This includes TMoCA with major holdings of Rothko, Bacon, Pollock, Warhol, Twombly, and Giacometti

Link 2

- Over 500 Galleries with 250 in Tehran alone
- Over 10 annual and biennial art contests and festivals
- 36 Art centers in Tehran alone

Link 3

- Over 6 million USD in sales in 2019 at the Tehran Auction
- Dealers and Private sales are estimated at 10 million USD
- Totaling in over 15 million USD per annum
- Teer Art Fair estimates the sales at 500,000 USD



Opening of the 12th Fajr Visual Arts Festival.
Photo by ISNA

Link 4

- Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (Public collection - Non-collecting Institution)
- DD Museum of contemporary art (Private collection - collecting institution)
- Malek Foundation (Private Collection - collecting institution)
- Pejman Foundation (Private collection - non-collecting institution)
- Lajevardi Foundation (Private collection - non-collecting institution)
- Emam Ali Museum (Public collection - non-collecting institution)
- Afkhami Collection (Private exhibiting collection)
- Laal Collection (Private exhibiting collection)
- Over 15 collectors as board members of important international public collections, but hardly collecting Iranian art

A MAJOR DISRUPTION EXISTS WITHIN THE ECOSYSTEM:

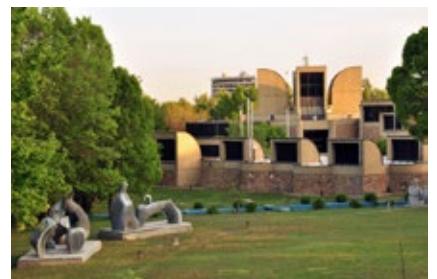
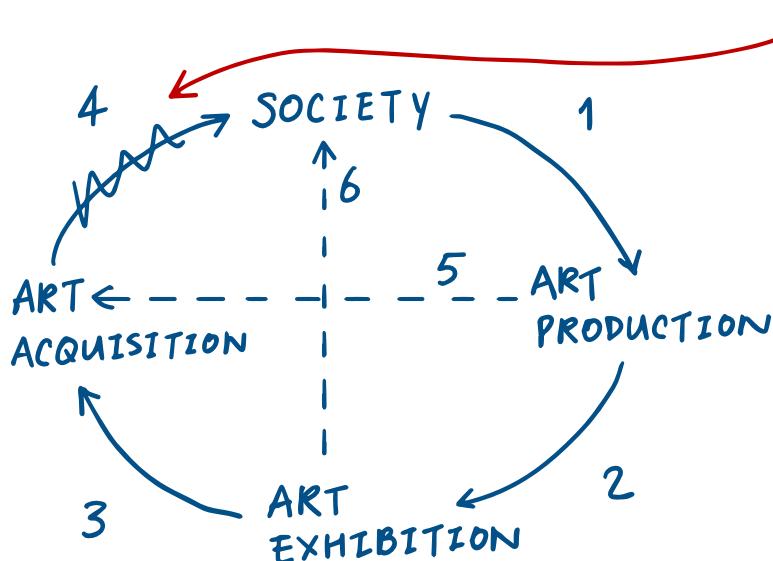
Iranian public institution and museums are *rarely collecting new works, exhibiting curatorial projects, and accepting donations.

*One such rarity was Tony Cragg who following his 2017 retrospective at TMoCA, donated one of his works to the museum.

Shortage in funds is the official response to why these collections are no longer collecting or making room to display their collection and host rotating exhibitions.

When the museum was not under renovation, it would display parts of their western art collection once a year only.

The above created a major disruption in the art ecosystem below:



Moore Henry. (1968-69). *Three - Pieces Reclining Figure.* & (1969-1970). *Two-Pieces Reclining Figure: Arched leg.* Garden of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

As a result of disruption of link 4, the cycle thus can be better represented as the following linear diagram:



The most immediate effect of weakening of link 4 is to the part closest to Society on the diagram's flow meaning:

Art Acquisition

Without the possibility of exhibiting or donating their collection the collector will have few choices:

- To make their own museum
- To stop their collecting due to shortage of space
- To resell their works

Extremely difficult, expensive, and time consuming

Leads to purchase of easily storable artworks, e.g. Non-immersive, small scale...

Collecting resellable works,
e.g. Artist that have an
established market at auction.

Art Exhibition

A) With the small possibility of placing artworks in institutions, galleries end up having to do mostly the following:

- Match the taste of their collectors
- Serve their commercial aspirations
- Bring larger crowds for marketing reasons

B) And the artworks are either piled up in storage space or displayed at private venues targeting a specific audience.



Ahmadi Shahriar. (2013).
Tree of Wise Men



Tanavoli Parviz. (2010).
Heech



Derakshani Reza. (n.d.). *Hunting Series*

Art Production

With institution level collecting out of the equation, the only remaining measures of success for artworks remains being shown at a good gallery or being acquired

Therefore artworks that are being produced are often accordance with commercial success or having the following attributes

- Easy to live with
- Manageable in size
- Being created within conventional mediums such as works on canvas or bronze sculptures

Society

A) As a result of the above the society is worse off in several ways:

- Less cultural wealth being accumulated
- The existing wealth of culture as well as research material become dated and specific to a particular era and not representative of a continuum eg. TMoCA being a collection only belonging to the 70's and not later times

B) Not being able to see, connect, and feed on the arts, society could eventually cease to be productive.

What is to be done ?

Iranian art needs to be seen both in the country and abroad, we need several museums immediately!



Bacon Francis. (1968). *Two Figures Lying on a Bed with Attendant*. Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. Photo by The Guardian



Bacon Francis. (1968). *Two Figures Lying on a Bed with Attendant*. Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art

This is how the TMoCA currently displays the triptych by Francis Bacon due to Islamic Laws forbidding the display of this section. One part remains to be "unseen".

The above work is likely to fetch over 100 million USD Selling this could significantly improve the ailing infrastructure of visual arts of a country whose annual turnover is below 20 million USD per annum. Perhaps,

- > It would be better for the world if this work is out of the storage and displayed permanently at a museum for all to see.
- > Selling the above as well as other undisplayable artworks of the collection would save the country's art production.

This work would be considered a major work in any collection. Selling it is most probably the worst decision one could ever make. Is this the price we have to pay to save the country's art scene ?

Obviously this article ignores the complexity and almost impossibility of taking up such a radical measure and has been written with the intention of pointing out a serious problem and calling for an immediate solution.

Hormoz Hematian

Founding Director of Dastan's Basement, a Tehran-based art gallery focusing on contemporary emerging Iranian art.

/NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT?/

Sinazo Chiya

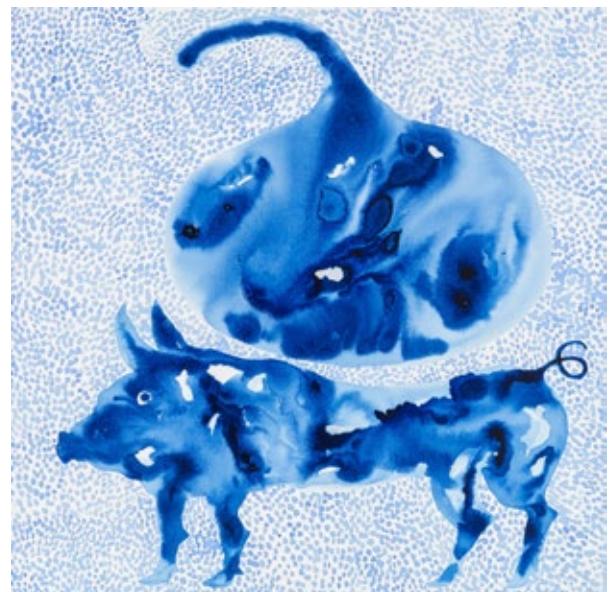
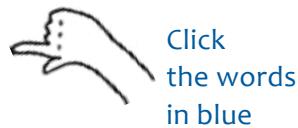
In quips first made at our socially distanced offices, and then later, over ZOOM, we say that the incarnation repeated in light of 2019's Venice Biennale has come true in 2020. The times are certainly interesting, and strange and uncertain.

Frieze Magazine alone has published articles titled '[You Can't Do This By Yourself: Can US Museums and Artists Survive Covid-19?](#)'; '[A Whole Generation of Artists Might Be Wiped Out](#)': Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev on Museums, Care and the Covid-19 Crisis', and later, a more resigned, '[What to See and Do in Digital Paris](#)'. [It would appear the conventional elastic diplomacy of our trade journals has become something more specifically practical and fretful. The tone of the global, interconnected community we call the Art World is more deliberately speculative—it is introspective in public.]

Closer to home and not too long ago, over a small gallery dinner at Thali, an Indian restaurant currently 'closed until further

notice', painter Deborah Poynton relayed an anecdote wherein a colleague said 'trust that something good will happen'. In turn she replied, 'I don't trust that something good, or bad will happen, only that something will happen'. And indeed it is.

[Bilongue](#) by Barthélémy Toguo, the exhibition held from January to March at our Cape Town gallery paid homage



Bilongue: Blue Universe II
2020, 100 × 100cm, Ink on canvas

to the people of the Cameroonian town from which the exhibition got its name. The artist said, ‘They came to settle down in a very challenging area. And they live there and survive there daily, not through violence but through solidarity’. During a research trip taken in December 2019, while traveling between the capital of Douala and the artist’s studio in Bandjoun, our companions in traffic were small bikes and large SUVs that moved together with the precise intelligence of shoals, not needing the scattered traffic lights. Most commuters sat through car exhaust fumes in boredom, the conscientious among them wore masks that appeared wilted by long term use. In the catalogue for our current Johannesburg exhibition, *Gymnasium* by Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi,

Mwenya Kwabe writes, [‘What stokes the anxiety of the moment besides the probability of contracting coronavirus is a deep knowing of the sociologies of disaster in this part of the world... when we are talking about infectious diseases we are talking about the biological expression of social equality’.]

A decade prior to all this, photographer Pieter Hugo spent time seeing things happen in Agbogbloshie, Ghana. The series that resulted was named *Permanent Error*. In his images we’re presented with a version of the earth more startling than empty streets, promenades without visitors and locked museums. The various pictured crowds mill around pyres, holding sticks as if to turn the gyre of fluorocarbons

Gymnasium, 2020, Installation View





Untitled, Agbogbloshie Market, Accra, Ghana, 2010

while computer parts are pressed into the ground like archaeological sites in reverse. More recently he has spent time in [Beijing](#) and [Mexico](#) photographing domestic nudes with a visceral intent akin to the disrobing of primordial terror. In these images alone there is a reminder that there is variety in our catalogue of horrors.

Of course we have the right to be anxious about the now, but through art we're challenged to remember that myth of equilibrium is a myth. We are where we have always been. What has altered is that risk and precarity do not belong to the nameless factions living below the breadline but everyone with eyes and a mouth. The numbers swelling on the media's ticker-tape reflect a truly

indiscriminate vector. The virus is novel but affliction is not, and invention endures. This moment is unique only in how it has made collective thinking a mandate and not a choice. [‘We’re all in



Al Hasan, Agbogbloshie Market, Accra, 2009



The Li Family, Beijing, 2015-16

this together' is a new mantra repeated across galleries, real estate agencies and the manufactures of childcare products — but artists have been saying this for years in myriad ways.] The artists that — to great controversy - elected to share the 2019 turner prize did so in the name of 'commonality, multiplicity and solidarity — in art as in society'. This moment asks us to learn from others still.

In the words of Kemang Wa Lehulere, it is in the nature of history to break our hearts, but on the other side of that utterance lies the hope that in the present there is always an opportunity for intervention. The horizon is stamped by new forms of loss yet through the moments of divination afforded by the creative spirit we are afforded new

blueprints for resilience. However we choose to describe it, we are in the midst of a happening. Yet since ours is a business dependant on the ubiquity of magical thinking, with one of our most collectively cherished texts championing plurality in our ways of seeing, perhaps we can remember to pause before the panic.

Sinazo Chiya

Among the partners at Stevenson, a gallery with spaces in Cape Town, Johannesburg and an office in Amsterdam, representing artists from the region and elsewhere.

/WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM AN INDIGENOUS ARTIST DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC/

*I am very calm with everything,
I never worry, I don't rush.
I don't feel defeated by life or anything.
I wait, I wait for times to pass.
Time will come,
When it comes, I get up.*

Omayra Alvarado-Jensen

Mogaje Giju who is now known by his Western name—Abel Rodríguez, is a simple man, a namer of plants, a sage of the Nonuya people. He became famous in the botanical field because every serious researcher that traveled to the Colombian Amazon Rainforest would seek him for guidance. His deep knowledge of the rainforest impressed every scientist that would walk the jungle with him. He knows the trees, bushes and shrubs to detail. The Amazon Rainforest is the world's richest and most varied biological reservoir, containing several million species of plants, so to know this vast jungle with such accuracy seems like an impossible deed. But don Abel—as he is called out of respect, has internalized the forest, through years of training, dedication and devotion.

Contrary to what the Western world would think about communities living in the middle of a dense jungle, knowledge is extremely important for the Amazon tribes and there is a high degree of specialization within the community. They have developed an incredible skill to connect and recognize the natural world, based on mythologies of origin, local taxonomies and their own systems of classification. Nature is not separate from them, it is not a product; they grow around it, they care and respect it. They have identified the relationships between every organism in the forest and their importance, so the learning experience changes, is not only a task of the mind, but one that is connected to the soul.

Since a very early age Abel started

Abel Rodríguez Montaña de centro, 2020 Ink on paper 50 x 70 cm
Photo Sandra Vargas



studying the jungle, he was known as a namer of plants. This title is only granted to those who know and manage plant species, which implies the domain of hundreds of tropical rainforest flora, their anatomical characteristics, architecture, the type and distribution of branches and leaves, as well as their conditions for the ecological relationships with the different species of animals. But with all this knowledge he is not a conceited man.

*Maybe since birth I was like that,
simple.
Want it or not, in whatever way
I don't present myself as number one,
I don't have to be the first.*

*I have also learned that everyone has their own name,
When you are called, get up, go and receive.*

[Don Abel had to abandon his hometown of La Chorrera in the late 90's — because of the armed conflict in Colombia, that put at risks most of the indigenous communities in the country.] He has been in the city for many many years now, but he lives on a different rhythm, he still moves with the pace of the jungle. He doesn't heed the 9 to 5 Western scheme, and understands that gold and silver rule that world, and it is an utterly destructive tradition.



Abel Rodriguez, photo Sandra Vargas

While we toss and turn at home, concerned about our near future, we wonder when the economy will get back on track, when the museums and galleries will reopen, while we worry, Abel just sits down at home to draw. He started drawing the jungle as a way to preserve his vast botanical knowledge.

In the indigenous communities the most common way to learn a trade is by receiving it from your elders, your father, grandfather or even your uncles, like Abel did after his father passed away. Once in the city, Abel couldn't find the right path to transmit his knowledge. Being a *namer of plants* implies years of connection to the plants, a very special diet and rites of transmission that are just impossible to do outside the jungle. Recording his "stories" felt like an empty task, there is no real connection to nature if you're sitting in a

living room or office. Indigenous people don't write and for them writing is not the proper way to collect and transmit their knowledge, and that is how Abel arrived to drawing. He started working on illustrations of trees and the cycles of the rainforest for a book that would help as a learning tool not only for indigenous schools but for the scientific community as well.

Natives say "The jungle hides the trees" that means that you need more than your eyes to see what the natural world has to offer. But through his drawings Abel allows us to see the trees, and all the complex network of ecological and spiritual connections around them. His practice expanded the concept of the transmission of knowledge, giving us—the non-natives, the younger siblings—the opportunity to learn.

Abel's work evolved with time and even though he doesn't consider himself an artist, the way he constructs the images, the care for the accuracy of the colors, the architecture of the jungle and the powerful meaning behind his work has taken him to show from local museums in Colombia to Documenta Kassel, passing through the Milan Triennial, the Toronto Biennial, Site Santa Fe, Baltic Center for Contemporary Arts and Hayworth Gallery amongst others.



Abel Rodríguez Árbol de la vida y la abundancia, 2020
Ink on paper 150 x 150 cm Photo Sandra Vargas

[His depictions of the rain forest contemplate the deep connection between what the Western world would consider scientific knowledge and the spiritual world.] His work could be classified in three groups: botanical drawings, indigenous way of living, and native myths, but all of these categories are intertwined and one feeds from the other as in life. In the botanical drawings, he depicts sacred plants like Coca, Tabaco and Achiote, where he details not only the anatomy of the plant, but the animals they interact with, their smell and movements made when they bloom. These drawings although are made in a smaller format are extremely powerful, they subvert the colonialist model of representation— it is no longer what man understands from the natural world, it is what nature wants to tell us. *I have to talk*

to them and see if they want to be drawn.

The relationship between the fauna and flora of the rainforest, the maloca and the chagras¹ are fundamental part of the lifestyle of the Amazon communities, and they make up for most of the scenes portrayed in Rodríguez body of work. The accuracy in the colors, the use of layers and the perspective play a fundamental role to showcase the different seasons of the jungle and the thin interaction between forests, fauna, chagra and community.

The representation of myths is an extremely important element within don Abel's work. These myths depict the cosmovision of his people, that is a fundamental aspect of their lives. They shape the way they interact with nature

and with each other, the structure of their society and their learning systems. Perhaps one of the most relevant pieces of these body of work is *The Tree of Life and Abundance* that is based on a foundational myth common in almost every indigenous community in the Amazon. This tree symbolizes the creation of the natural world, the rainforest, the water and the relationship between humans and nature. The force of this traditional knowledge gives another dimension to Rodríguez works and elevates his practice within a contemporary dialogue in the art world.

As the effects of Covid-19 are felt by the indigenous communities in the Amazon—especially by the elders—ancient knowledge is on the verge of going extinct, and this would be a tragedy. We need to stay vigilant, open our minds and learn. We have the possibility to build a new and better society in this post-pandemic world, where the access to knowledge will be a fundamental tool for this construction. Practices that show us different learning structures, that question our priorities and relationships with our surroundings, will be more relevant than ever. Works like Abel's are paramount to help construct a narrative of the world that is more inclusive, more transcendental.

"I learned about the forest the hard way: I had to be awake for long hours at night, I had to lend my ears to the elders and make special diets. Our learning was a spiritual process; that is why we consider knowledge as very valuable. I understood that external researchers had a different way of learning and they valued things differently. Instead of getting upset, as many locals, I explained it in a way I thought they would understand. [...] I had never drawn before, I barely knew how to write, but I had a whole world in my mind asking me to picture the plants."

1. Although the chagra is a space settled by the indigenous communities to cultivate, its value is not restricted to that function. The relationship with the cultivated plants is comparable to the relationship with human beings linked by blood or affinity.

Omayra Alvarado-Jensen

Executive Director of Instituto de Visión, a Bogotá-based gallery aiming to expand the landscape of Latin American art.

/CONTENT/

PART II

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From Karlsruhe

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02 /MOHAMMAD

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FIERRO/

From Bogotá

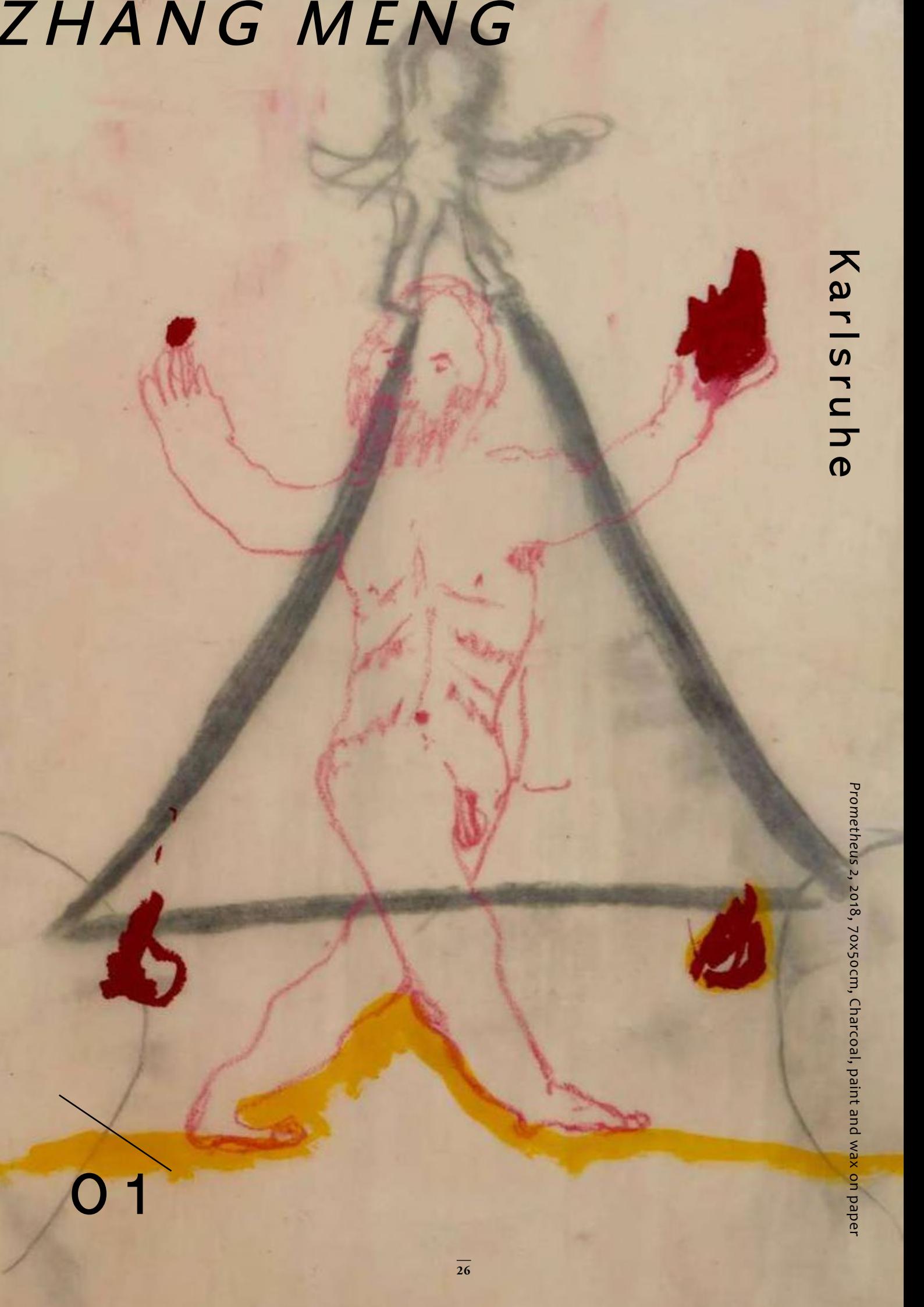


39-42

ZHANG MENG

Karlsruhe

Prometheus 2, 2018, 70x50cm, Charcoal, paint and wax on paper



01

Zhang Meng (b. 1983, Tianjin, China) lives and works in Karlsruhe, Germany. She engages dream, faith, memory and transcendent experience through drawings and installations. Inspired by surreal animations by Jan Svankmajer and Greek mythologies, doll and mythological figure have been the reoccurring motifs in her works since 2011. She visualizes personal experience and most recently, centers on the fragility of life, the fragmentation of everyday life and the ambiguity of human beings' destiny, looking for the reflection on lives of the contemporaries through hidden memories and emotions. In the second half of 2020, she will have a solo exhibition at Tabula Rasa Gallery in Beijing.





Pythia 1, 2018, 59.5x42cm, Charcoal, pastel on paper



Zeus, 2018, 61x45.5cm, Charcoal, pastel on paper

Pythia, 2018, 70x50cm, Charcoal, pastel on paper



MOHAMMAD PIRYAE

Tehran

Untitled, 2019, 130x30x30cm, Ceramic and wood

02



In this new series of work, Mohammad Piryaee (1984) first shaped the domes, temples and minarets, then fired them and burned them. After burning he removed the ash and uncovered them like an archaeologist. He then struck this semi-burnt edifice, which resembles an ancient unearthed temple, with a hatchet to distort its surface. Finally, he turned the temple upside down. The minarets, which have stairways inside, have been gathered and turned into a bigger stairway. Herein, home features as a silent, incomplete, and unstable witness to loss as an unsettled space of impossible inhabitation, as “a mansion of sorrow” (Lauzon, 2017, p4).

Untitled, 2019, 110x120x120cm, Ceramic and wood



Untitled, 2019, 60x60x65cm, Ceramic



Untitled, 2019, 45x60x30cm, Ceramic





Untitled, 2019, 50x30x65cm, Ceramic

SIMPHIWE NDZUBE

“I've been making studies in light of the emotions clouded by Covid-19, and the uncertainty of the world. The works portray feelings of despair, hope, helplessness, as well the precariousness of trust for the next person and fears of the unknown. In the US, folks are incredibly anxious; guns and toilet paper are stocked up for if and when there is desperation. People seem to either react or protect themselves from the poor and desperate.”

Untitled Portrait II, 2020, 88.9x76.2cm,
Acrylic, graphite pencil and oil pastels on paper



03

Cape Town Los Angeles



Untitled Portrait III, 2020, 35x36cm,
Acrylic, collage, graphite pencil and oil pastels on paper



Untitled Portrait (Omo), 2020, 78.74x91.44cm,
Acrylic, graphite, pencil and oil pastels on paper

Portrait of Bhonco, 2020, 78.74x91.44cm,
Acrylic, spray paint, graphite pencil and oil pastels on paper



SEBASTIAN FIERRO

Bogotá

04

Náufrago bajo estrella azul, 2017, 200x160cm, Oil on canvas

Sebastián Fierro's most recent work is a reflection on memories of his first painting. He was around ten years old, when he painted a solar system on a small canvas. He wishes he had kept it, as it encapsulated a large amount of what he is currently investigating in his work: painting as a containment exercise, and as such, a tool that allows us to interiorize the world. By depicting a solar system on a finite flat surface, it becomes possible to introduce something remote and unobtainable on a small frame. What was exclusively the container is now the content.

The paintings also meditate on Astronomy. The science of Astronomy has enabled man to set an exact position on earth in relationship to a point in the sky. Fierro finds deeply poetic that we need the Moon or the stars to know where we are on Earth. Thus, we locate a here only in relation to the existence of there, and not the other way around. If we had not gazed up, we would not have found our place down here on earth. We define and recognize ourselves only by looking at where we are not. Only through distant seeing can we take consciousness of our existence. We need the far and unfamiliar to locate a here. To think and to paint is to locate our place in the world.

Retorno con flores, 2019, Variable dimensions, Plaster, oil



Artist
Website

Eternal Return, 2017, 240x160cm, Oil on canvas



Flores Amarillas, 2017, 225x152x3cm, Oil stick and grime on fabric

