

Q D Y R K P A T T B S O L N
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D S J L U O D Z R J N T S L
Y T Y F V I L K L Q G K M G
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Z E I H K D L S I N S L V S

Statements of Practice from RCA Visual Communication Students 2020

Agnieszka Jarek
Jose Garcia Oliva
Dansiyu Zhu
Clem Rousset
Ravista Mehra
Zhiqiang Li
Yijia Tang

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Lexiao Gau
Peiyao Liu

Lyuqitiao Wang
Aakriti Khuran
Cheong A Kang
Ruiqi Wang
Shengni Zhang
Ewa Poniatowska
Max Kohler

Roland Ross
Bakhtawer Haider
& Betty Brunfaut
Siddhi Gupta
Yue Yu
Katherine McGrath

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Central to the vision of the School of Communication is a question that grounds our practice, methods, values and priorities: what does it mean to be human? Never has that question been more pertinent, poignant, painful, expressive and celebratory. And never has the work of communication practitioners and researchers been more relevant in the context of pervasive inequalities, false news and systemic injustices.

Every year, around this time of year, in our ordinary pre-Covid lives at the Royal College of Art, our students put up a graduate exhibition in our South Kensington and Battersea campuses in London. The exhibition is a mark of progress; a celebration of their journeys, degrees and of the next steps to come.

Oftentimes, visitors to the exhibition misunderstand and think of it as an ending. But we know that it never is – it is a beginning. Just as we centre questions at the core of our learning, our students leave with their own questions. The pursuit of this question in their practices and careers – as we have learnt from our graduates over decades – leads to significant and exceptional contributions to our practice, discipline and the world beyond.

This work, therefore, cannot be seen in isolation. On the one hand, it is a small snapshot, an ephemeral expression on a screen at the culmination of a degree. On the other, it is a collective testament to the importance of creative practice. It is a note to self: nothing can stop creativity. Not even a pandemic. If we are making, then we are hopeful – it says we believe in a future.

What You See Is Not What You Get. This is something that is completely and utterly extra-ordinary.

Dr Rathna Ramanathan
Dean of School of Communication

Foreword

Face Masks... Distancing... Isolation... Resistance... These four chapters form new 'visualizations' of practice, through the lens of writing: placing words at the centre, not the periphery of the work. Our students start their Visual Communication journey at the RCA by presenting their critical position in the form of a Pecha Kucha. Two years later they leave with a new language of explanation, a fresh way of understanding their work, and a different means of inhabiting the journey they've been on: one which is nuanced, rigorous and unique to each 'voice'. In the texts contained here, language is the work, not simply the explanation. These RCA students have each articulated their individual and collective journeys through a personal approach to language, inviting the reader to take writing as the central focus and entry point to their ideas.

Distance... Connection... These words have come back into sharp focus as a result of the pandemic, and appear in these texts as symptoms of our time. There is a strong sense of 'connected distance' running through these words: the paradox of both connection and distance at the same time, of being apart, together. This set of writings can help us synchronize these two conditions... allow us to come to terms with things as they are and look to what they might be. In the struggle to understand, through words and work, something starts to make sense. These students understand that things cannot stay the same, will not be the same, but that the future work for this cohort is to turn that inevitability into something more powerful.

The writings presented here by our Visual Communication 2020 graduates act as both individual responses, and a collective 'snapshot' of this time.

Tracey Waller
Head of Programme
Visual Communication

Introduction

No one heard them coming – no one saw them leave. In retrospect, it would be foolish to see what happened in any other way. This is the year when students first learned to create work in empty studios, to graduate from an empty School, each in their own world. For most of the Spring and for all of the Summer Term, the physical spaces that would traditionally have made up their education were devoid of voices and sounds, gestures and faces. A global pandemic meant that they had to go elsewhere. Students worked from home, wore masks, explored their own personal spaces, spoke with tutors and colleagues via laptop screens. They became so accustomed to how things had become that it takes an effort even to recall that there was once a time when things were different. This, however, is also a sign of how strong and resourceful the students represented in this publication are.

‘Explain Yourself’ is a regular series of writing workshops run during the Spring Term in which Year 2 Visual Communication students are encouraged to compose a 250- word statement that defines some key aspect of their individual practice. This could be anything from a specific design strategy or manifesto to a personal experience or ideological position. Covid 20/20 is not only the outcome of these workshops but also a sharply etched record of an extraordinary time. Social distancing and isolation offer unique vantage points from which to study both the world and our places within it. That much is clear from the contributions to this collection. Such a sharp shift in perspective often leads to new understandings and calls for change – which comes as no surprise to the students whose voices are heard here. They already know.

The Editors

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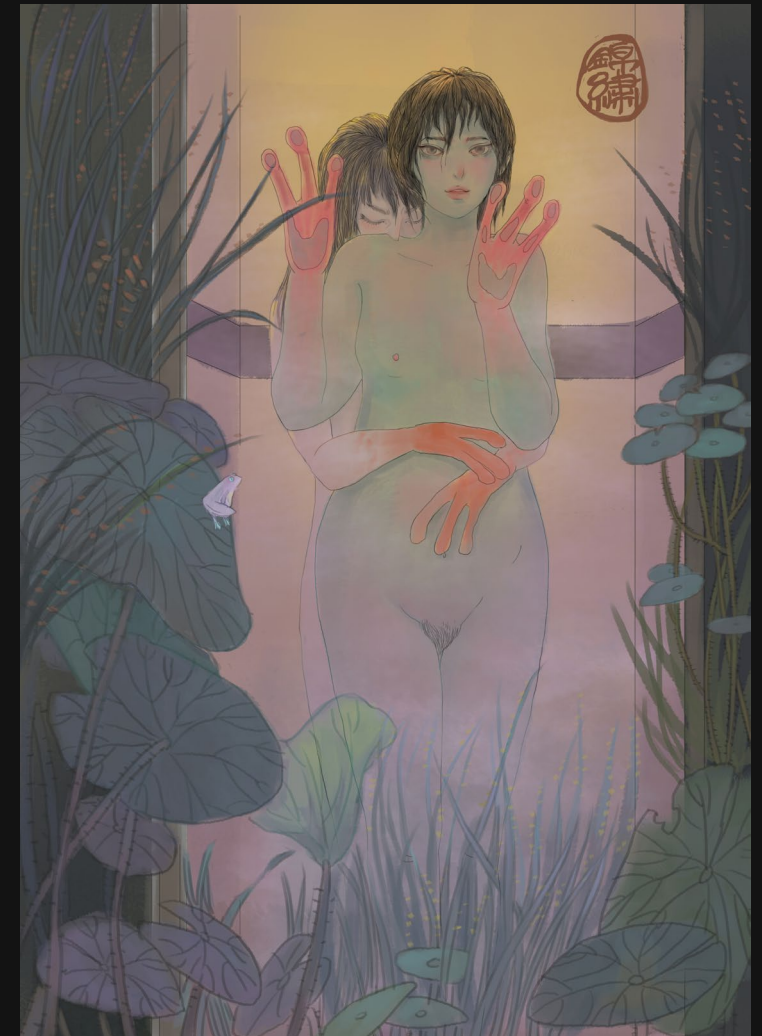
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 Jose Garcia Oliva
 Dansiyu Zhu
 Clem Rousset
 Ravista Mehra
 Zhiqiang Li
 Yijia Tang

01

What happens when the mask slips? What was it covering? Is it possible to have an identity without a mask? How did we mistake these coverings for who we actually are? Will it ever be possible for us to lose ourselves in our roles once again? Where in the end is our individual sense of self located? People also wear masks at parties and celebrations.

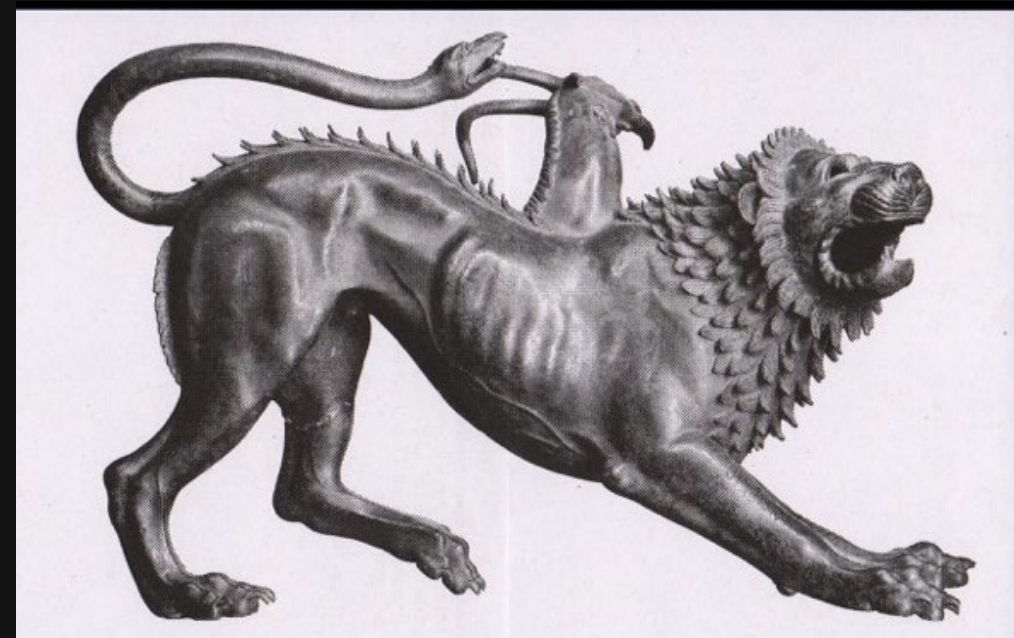


#1
Agnieszka Jarek



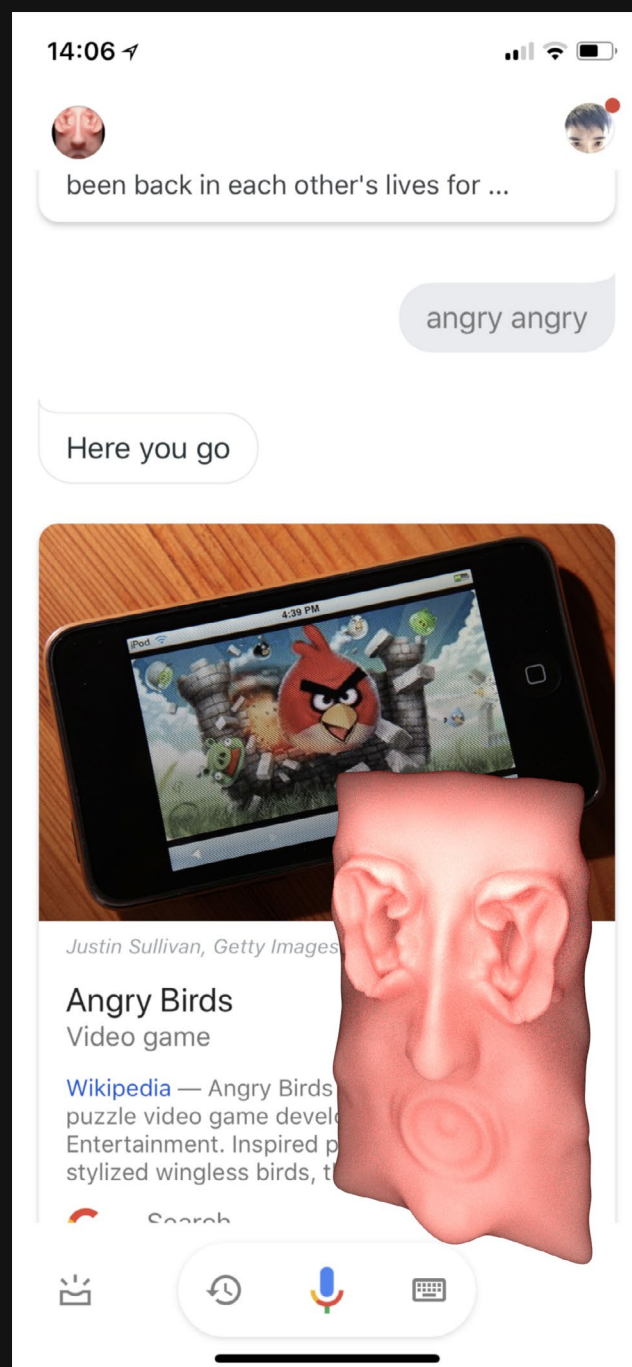
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Dansiyu Zhu

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Jose Garcia Oliva

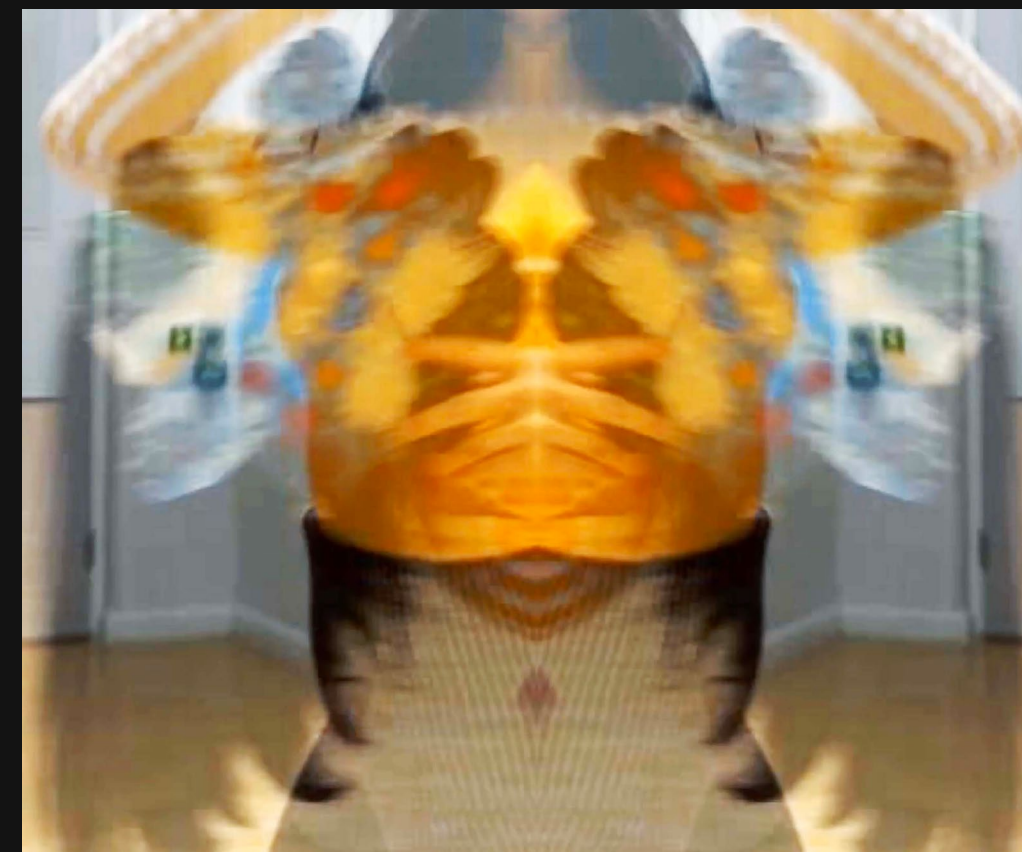


#4
Clem Rousset

The Great India apologises for having colonised Britain



#6
Zhiqiang Li



#7
Yijia Tang

Agnieszka Jarek

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I spent a day working in Harry Potter World, helping kids make their dream video, where they are flying on a broom in front of a green screen. As I don't know much about Harry Potter I found the best way of avoiding any specific questions was to say: 'I am terribly sorry but I am not a wizard.'

I have done so many odd jobs that I lost track; and all the experiences are important in creating my practice.

In my aesthetic I take inspiration from anything that is commonly considered as cheap and unsophisticated, like punk culture and old low-budget films. When everyone goes right, I will go left, just to check it out.

I am screaming about subjects that are important. I want my work to be an open conversation. And I truly believe that people should be who they want to be as long as they are not hurting others.

If you don't like what I am doing, I am terribly sorry but I am not a wizard.

#1

Jose Garcia Oliva

#2

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Bio-1

Venezuelan-Spanish artist based in London whose practice navigates the collision of identity and places. This interrelationship is explored through the lens of migration in its socioeconomic and political context: the ashes of post-colonialism – especially from South America – and its echoes in Europe. His practice is research-led and situated, taking the form of participatory performance, installation and drawing.

Bio-2

I am not an artist; I am a window cleaner.

This cleaning is a social utility that allows the light to get in, enabling people to both look inward and outward. My practice involves social interaction, site-specific participatory performance and interventions. The dirt on the window will indicate which cleaning tool the project may need: never the other way around. My aim is transparency.

Being both a female and a citizen prompts me to explore inwardly, to reveal the native identity of my background, my cross-cultural education and my ideology concerning gender. My current practice relates to female protest and anti-gaze, responding to the injustice faced by women today, as well as their specific difficulties in the marriage system. In my work, my identity is no longer simply a person who has fallen in love but also a citizen who is concerned about my status in my own country.

Currently the law does not permit homosexual marriage in my motherland. In recent years it has strictly prohibited publications from alternative voices, including queer content, and has tried to marginalize these voices., so it is my current consideration to communicate clearly my views on feminism and to make them available to wider audiences. I don't want us to be domesticated by silence. Even more terrifyingly, I worry that we are being forced to be silent by our fear of silence and eventually to become a part of that silence.

The survival dilemmas of women and queers are my subject. I have been censoring and modifying my position to sympathize with marginalized people and minority groups with humanitarian care and compassion. At the same time I am pursuing the questions of how I want to be seen, how I want to be exposed to my audience, and how I want to present myself in the face of censorship.

Let's talk about grey.

I write about, think about and look for grey things because they are small gateways out of the binary, and out of labels. Grey things are little prisms that can project non-binary fragments, if you shine a light at them. They can become an invitation to whoever is interested to take a look at labels and categories, at how they are made, at what is crammed into them and at what falls through the cracks in between. Inviting is important, because it is not about being right. It is about generosity. It also implies that the invitation can be turned down.

I like grey things, and most greys, but I do have a favourite grey: the grey of my favourite shirt.

Shopping for a shirt won't make you feel better. It's probably true. And I don't really care.

I wasn't planning on buying that shirt. I was out on a Saturday to buy a shirt, but a white one. Actually, I was out to buy anything. I walked into a shop and found where the white shirts were pretty fast. But next to them was a pile of very grey shirts.

I bought it – my shirt – and I put it in my bag. Then I stepped out of the shop and into a glossy puddle.

If you consider 'designer' to mean storyteller, then that is what I am. I am a bilingual storyteller & visual communicator from New Delhi, India.

Design for me is a necessity. It's a translucent structure in place to help communication between people who may or may not have anything in common with each other. Design is a method of questioning, dismantling & relearning our non-neutral & non-universal reality. Currently I am focused on looking at design through the lens of decolonization, which in its essence means giving voice & visibility to minorities from around the world. I started a design collective called Active & Concerned Citizen last year, whose focus is to help clear misconceptions of Indians living in India to the Western World. It is a collaborative effort with other Indian artists & designers. Our work can be seen on Instagram @active.concerned.citizen

We, as under and misrepresented minorities, deserve a better way of our stories being told rather than just equating the colour of our skin to attracting pity or charity. There is an urgent need for people to be allowed to tell their own stories, and that is what I hope to be able to facilitate. We as designers can use our tools and knowledge, in partnership with the people whose story it is, to help tell it. However, we alone cannot and should not tell their stories. At the centre of humanity, in my opinion, is the human narrative. To start to decolonize the world we live in, we need to understand and appreciate each others' stories more.

As a visual communicator, I have always been interested in using digital technologies to explore projections of possible futures. With the development of information technologies, humans have moved from two-dimensional into multi-dimensional perceptions of time, space and reality.

Artificial intelligence promotes this continuous development of technological self-awareness – navigating between biological and non-biological modes. This directly impacts the evolution of information/data-oriented communication. It is my speculation that these forms of communication will gradually acquire biological characteristics. The relationship between information and humans will be transformed into the relationship between two living creatures.

Mistakes and errors within these new communication relationships will be an important feature of new forms of digital consciousness. Through speculation and visual interrogation – it is my intention to continue to explore these relationships and the possible singularities of visual/information communication practices.

My language for communication focuses on embodied knowledge through dance, performance and drawing. I look at how our senses, tactility, gaze and the animal nature of human beings interact with daily objects, people and architecture through virtual and physical space. My works are usually presented collectively in open space with various audiences.

I aim to visualize intangible realities: the inability of communication, the attempt of dialogue and the imbalance between language and body movements. By connecting the division between the realm of memory and the field of experience, I reflect on the closely related subjects of the body as both archive and physical memories, and how they transform through movement.

I consider movement as a bridge for a continuous loss. It represents a transformation of human connection as well as awkwardness – a humour that echoes our vulnerabilities.

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Harvey Steele

Bo-Yu Chen

Ping Mu

Margherita Sabbioneda

Andrea Popyordanova

Lexiao Gau

Peiyao Liu

02

Is distancing just about getting too close? Or is it an entire social landscape? Is distance built into our architecture? Or have we suddenly started to notice it more? When did staying at home become 'work'? Or going outside become 'travel'? Can landscapes exist without us? Or do they become something else? Going back over time is another form of distancing.



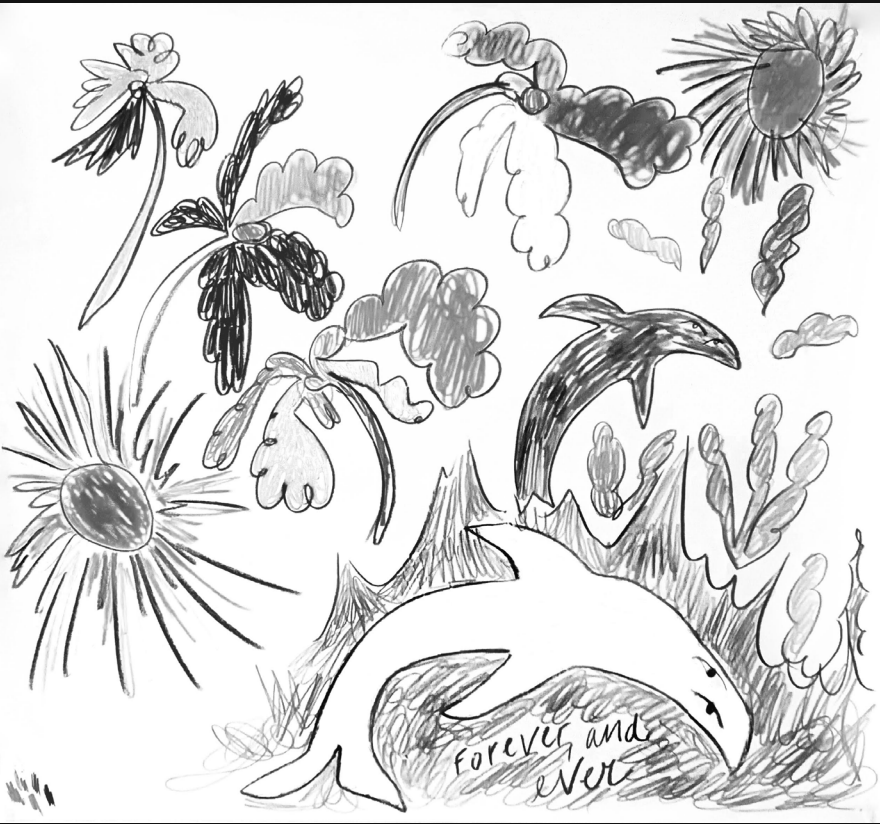
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Harvey Steele



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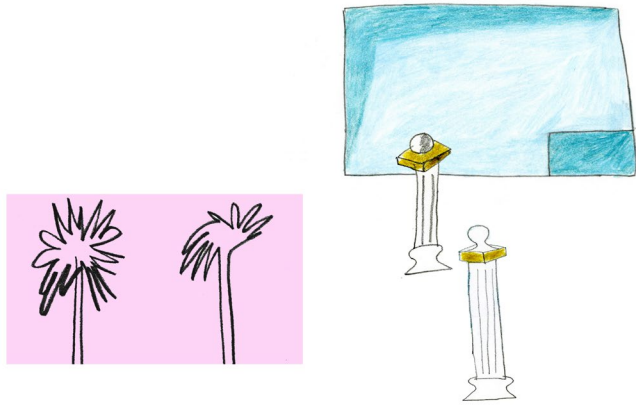


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Bo-Yu Chen

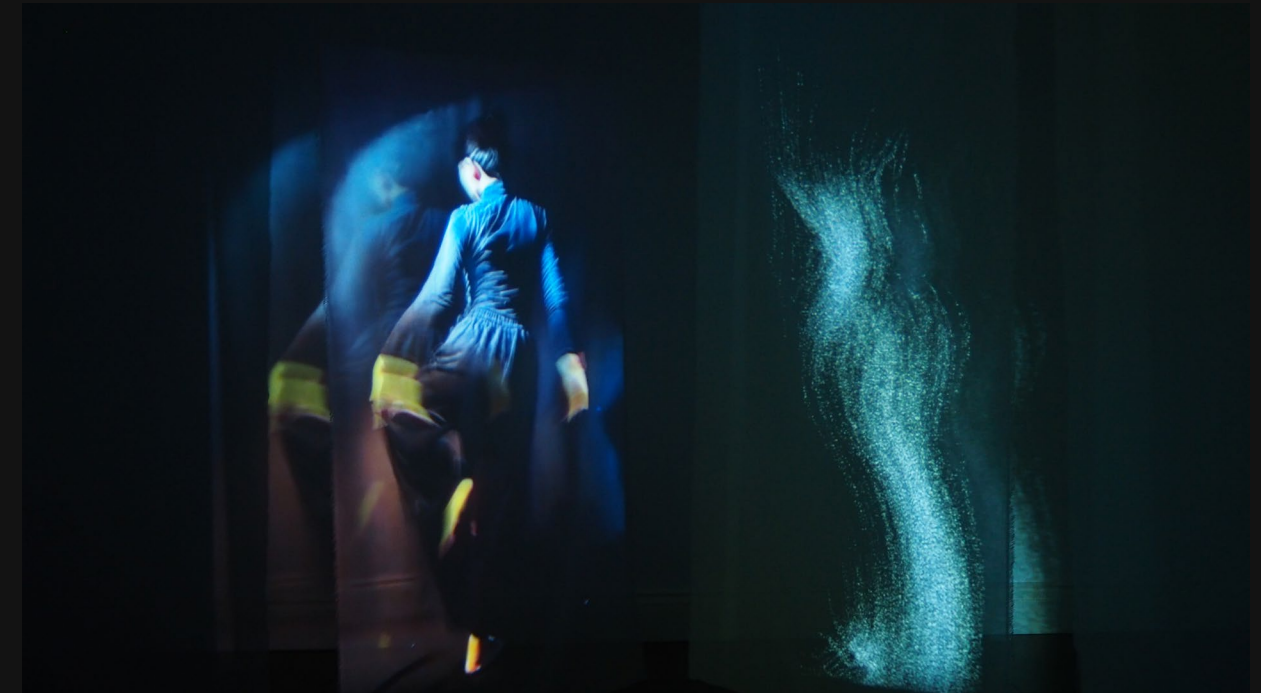


#11
Margherita Sabbioneda

#12
Andrea Popyordanova



#13
Lexioao Gau



#14
Peiyao Liu

Harvey Steele

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Architecture is an agent of power and control. It can be used to channel our movements and influence the way we interact with one another. Architecture can be used as an aspirational dream, a symbol of power and success. It is a tool to persuade us of that power. Architecture is a window into understanding the past and predicting the future; architecture is our home. Take a walk around Robin Hood Gardens and you will understand.

Rhythm is a material that joins poetics and politics. It is a tool to decipher patterns and inconsistencies. Rhythm can convey systems that are beyond our conscious perception.

Montage is an inherent universal language existing in our everyday life. Collisions of images, sounds, phrases and objects contain the power to communicate. It is a vehicle of expression that is accessible to all.

The streets can be used as a platform to intervene, to engage and to alter perceptions. A platform to create new meanings, to question our experiences and understanding of society.

#8

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My practice ranges from photography to branding and typography in both Latin alphabet and Chinese character typefaces. I am interested in Language and Community. I use my Graphic Design practice to illuminate issues impacting underrepresented communities. My recent work has focused on the effects language barriers have on migrant student experiences. I'm interested in how digital spaces can playfully lead a viewer through an interactive experience, and facilitate empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by others.

#9

Ping Mu

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I am Ping Mu, a new media artist and graphic designer, currently working and living in Shanghai. My art practice is broadly connected to the information era and the online space I live within.

My recent animation work *C.301 Cyberspace Odyssey* is based on my experiences in the current global pandemic. It explores the psychological space and the tensions that exist between an atomized society and tribal social instincts. The pandemic can be regarded as a metaphor for accelerating modernity, and a feedback of the natural defence mechanism caused by anthropocentrism. Isolation at home has magnified our desire for nature and our animality. It provides us with a new perspective to look back at our primitive body, desires, subconscious and physiological mechanisms.

I try to achieve a certain degree of cognitive alienation through the virtual reconstruction of modern people's living state. Our modern apartments with glowing screens, LED lights, electromagnetic noise and constant flow of information have replaced nature. I 3D scanned my apartment and rebuilt a virtual version of my habitat. I used two-dimensional lines to describe this second nature, stripping all weight, texture, colour and perception to show how our life and emotions are engulfed by these two-dimensional simulacra. I then projected my behaviour onto an ape. She wanders in a mixed space of reality, dreams and cyberspace. She is sometimes anxious, sometimes lonely, sometimes angry, like a trapped animal under house arrest in a modern prison.

#10

Margherita Sabbioneda

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I really like dolphins, especially when they jump.

#11

Andrea Popyordanova

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Sometimes I take the same photos over and over again, or draw the same place. There's a part of a coast I've photographed and redrawn a lot. Lately I realized why – I've been attracted to the appearances and the form of things as clues to their story.

When drawn, images become clues: a language of signs to be observed and read. They become a collection of proofs for an event that happened.

Drawing elements as cross-sections of a situation.

Collecting drawn elements as piles of evidence.

Listing clues as a way of adding more detail and picturing the story more fully.

An object that evokes associations with other objects or images in a different way than an image does.

Is a non-functioning object able to convey real information and communicate it truthfully?

How can drawn and unrealistic images carry and show real information, and are they able to truthfully tell stories?

In a way, collecting appearances and making connections between them to construct a story is what I do when I look around me, or when I remember things. I try to reimagine what was going on while I was there looking. The coast that keeps appearing in my photos and drawings is made up of a stretch of sand; it used to be quite empty; surrounded on both sides by cliffs; on one side there were caravans; on the other side there used to be a forest; there weren't many buildings and many people at all.

#12

Lexiao Gau

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Travel is the journey of communication.
Communication is about understanding.
Understanding with true compassion.
The power of compassion dissolves boundaries.
The resonance blurs frontiers.
So that one can travel.

#13

The Four Elements	
1	<p>My skin, my muscles, my nerves, my bones... The dust from a thousand years ago came alive in my body. As the dust in another me, a thousand years ago. When I come, bless me with earth. When I go, bury me with earth.</p> <p>Listen to the sound of water streaming. All my cells are floating on an endless river. The red river, lead me to all the passion with love, with hate, with compromise, with betrayal. The blue river, when I see the moon, its drops spill over from my eyes.</p> <p>Do you remember the first time you breathed? The magic of life power flew into my mouth, my trachea, my lungs. Then I can move my body. I feel alive from my fingertips. I can touch the air, and every moment, the air can touch me. I live in the ocean of air.</p> <p>It is the warmth. It is the light. It's mother's womb. It's a lover's smile. It's the strength to pursue. It's the courage to stop. It's the gift from god. It's the punishment for sin.</p>
2	<p>Now it is time to explore the body, in a view that I've never seen before. It is not only about the flesh or bones. It is the streaming present, the reality of my existence. Instead, I am on the journey of exploring a part of nature.</p>

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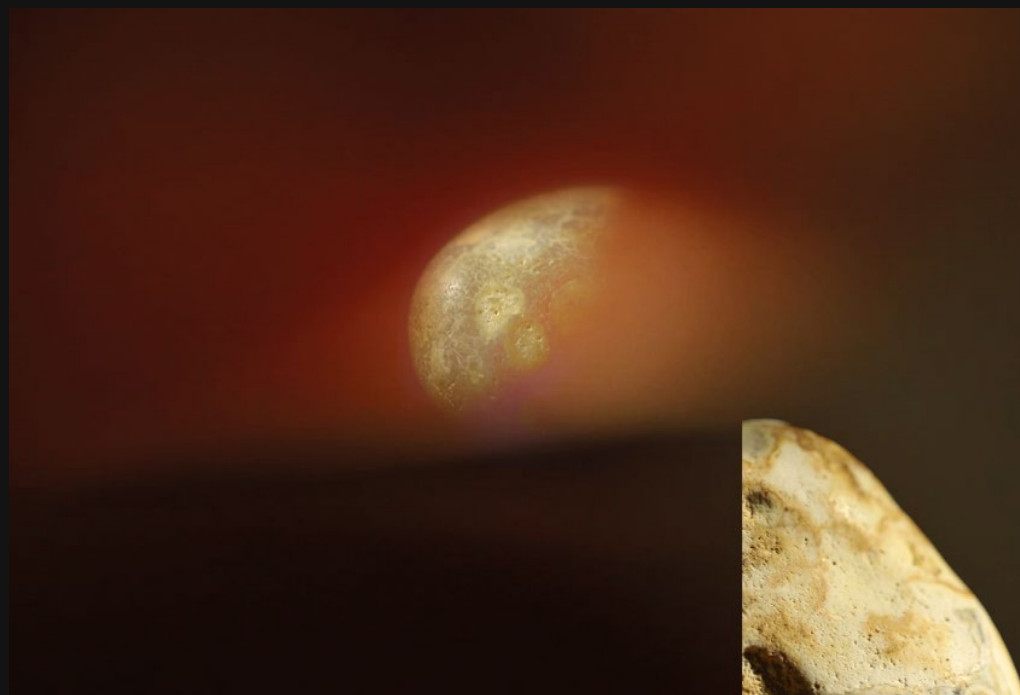
Lyuqitiao Wang
Aakriti Khurana
Cheong A Kang
Ruiqi Wang
Shengni Zhang
Ewa Poniatowska

03

How do we map inner change? What really happens when we think? Can ideas happen to more than one person at a time? Do we have to be alone to be truly ourselves? And do you have to be alone with the world to make sense of it? Where do our inner selves go when we're distracted by the presence of others? People will always be everywhere you're not.

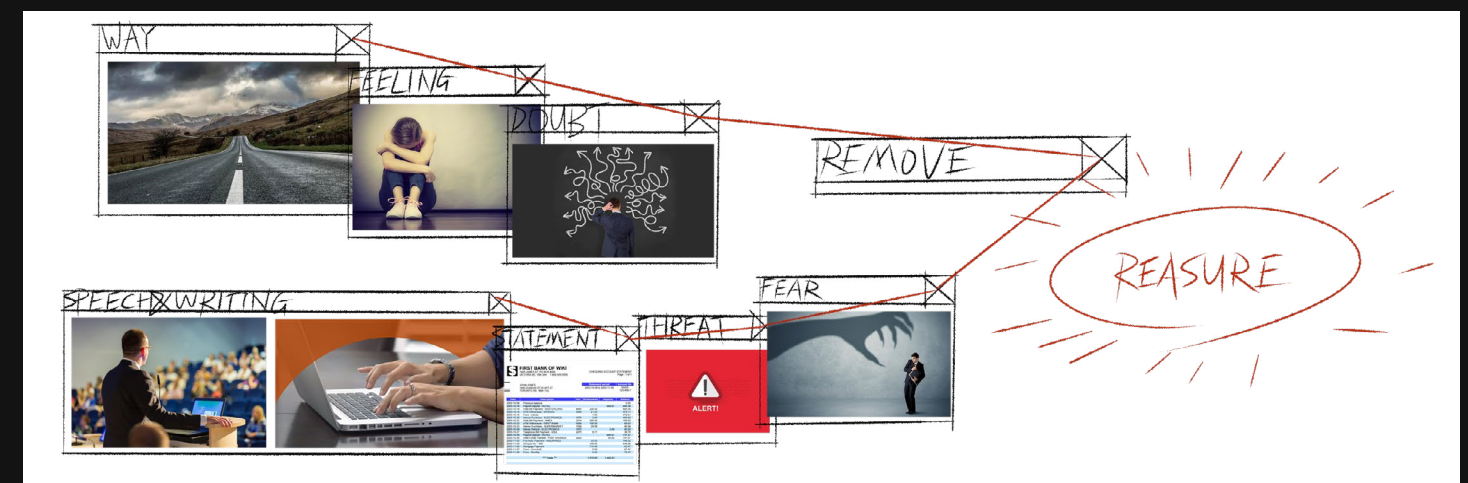


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Lyuqitiao Wang

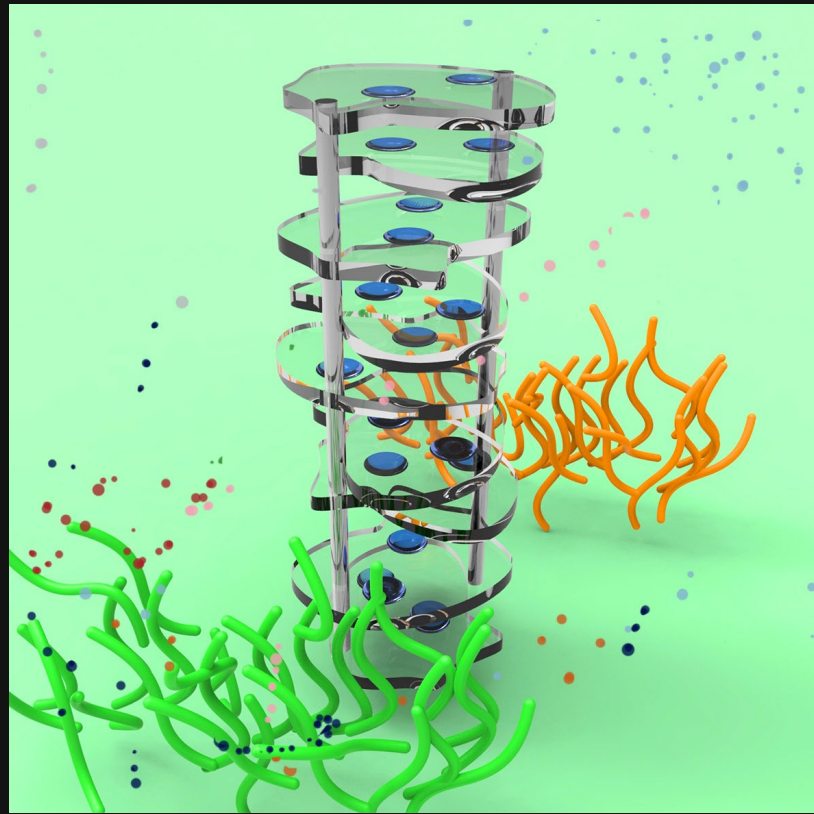


#16
Aakriti Khurana

#17
Cheong A Kang



#18
Ruiqi Wang



#19
Shengni Zhang

#20
Ewa Poniatowska



I like the word 'fragment'. It sounds fragile, also poetic. Something once came and existed; by the time we see, it's gone, but leaves a hint of its existence. Such as a poem half-written, a sentence half-spoken, a dream-half remembered; a dropped stone creates ripples on the pond, continually spreading out to disappearance, as if nothing ever happened; a cube of ice gradually losing its hardness, the fluid seeping into paper.

My project, *Language of Melting*, a series of Corona-like paintings made by melting ice, focuses mainly on the experience of the pandemic, in responding to the sudden change of time and lifestyle during the lockdown. The materials used are daily drinks such as tea, coffee and red wine, individually or mixed-up and frozen into small ice cubes that slowly melt and seep into a highly absorbent paper.

I began staying at home before the actual lockdown, while friends, classmates and school were still in their normal circumstances, and I was no longer synchronizing with them in a particular timetable, removed from the efficiency of clock time. Time suddenly emerged differently; the natural phenomenon of plant growth inspired me to see the expression of another sense of time: change itself. The virus spread in human society and caused a series of chain reactions that took away social productivity and placed everyone in an isolated state. Then death, loss, panic, chaos...it all became a massive grey cloud over everyone's head.

One day, before the pandemic broke out in the UK, I was walking toward Liverpool Street station. Spotify automatically played Ryuichi Sakamoto's music *Full Moon*, a monologue from Paul Bowles:

'Because we don't know when we will die, we get to think of life as an inexhaustible well. Yet everything happens a certain number of times, and a very small number, really... How many more times will you watch the full moon rise? Perhaps twenty. And yet it all seems limitless.'

Subconsciously I raised my head, a vast luminous full moon right in the middle of the sky. The day was January 10th, the first full moon of 2020. It's hard to describe the exact feeling at that moment, but tears came out while I was still in the middle of a busy road, and sincerely I knew I was touched.

Thoughts form words, words permutate into ideas. Words are formed by letters, and every letter is a visual masterpiece.

Your perspective is responsible for how they compose their world. And everyone's world is a unique coincidence in the middle of a Venn diagram of obscure combinations. Visuals, cultures, histories merge from such shared perspectives that ink themselves into permanence. But permanence does not mean it is true. How do you make sense of anything?

Meaning exists in almost everything. However, the value of meaning is subjective. I need to be a bridge between different values, to bring in equilibrium or to cause a shift in perspective. Exploration, iteration, meticulous documentation. Looking at the magnified movements of beings that exist in entropy, detailed inferences that lie in flashes of communication. Making the most of overthinking into a design practice that oscillates between symbolic representation and chaotic expression. Critical. Did you swim too deep into my analysis? Take a break then look again. Then maybe you'll see/know better.

I define myself as a lonely person all the time.

But because the moment when each person feels lonely is subjective, I used to ask myself what personal events made me feel so lonely.

Until now, the answer to the question, I think, is related to the experience of not being recognized by others as an independent entity. Especially in my school days, under controlled group life, I experienced my individuality being ignored, and it had a great influence on what formed me today.

How can one's individuality be distinguished? Although it may not be grasped in depth, I think that individuality is somewhat in line with an individual's appearance. Maybe letting some groups unify their costumes and even their hairstyles erases their individuality.

Those personal experiences lead me to specific thinking, when often the notion of an individual's existence is considered a part of a group, especially within a group-oriented society. The group's participants are controlled to act only within a certain range and sometimes even their appearance and thoughts are controlled.

As a person who thinks individuality should be respected, I intend the audience to feel the fear of these controlled acts, especially those that control appearance. I felt this fear when I encountered images such as the collective military procession of communist regime states, mass gymnastics and so on, involving a large number of people who seemed to have been reproduced, largely repeated.

Through this work, room or microcosm, I would like to convey my thoughts to the audience.

How to explain yourself: Hi, I'm a visual worker concerned with conflicts in the social environment. I make illustrations and art installations because artworks can freely express the mind from an individual perspective. I've been in London for two years and experienced lockdown for COVID-19, and I feel my language skills are disappearing over the time. Now I'm finding a way to rebuild it.

This is the method I use:

1. Pick out a text that exists now, especially one that appeals to you strongly.

2. Pick out the words in the main sentences that appeal to you and say them.

It's an efficient method in advertising, but it has been used too much. What you pick up is all about your selection, your unconsciousness and what you really care about.

3. Think about the images that are the real items in the world. The houses surrounding, the view of the trees, how people are coming and how they look. If the view is hard to describe by one word or one sentence, think about what makes it like that. If it's okay to express it, try to tell the reason.

Don't say anything about emotional feeling, beautiful or ugly. If you don't explain it, nobody knows that. If you explain it, that's another thing. If the reasons are going to be endless, please stop before you start to add adjectives. Now we have a new text.

4. Make the text into an image. The words from texts all have an explanation in dictionaries. Keep nouns in the sentence, re-search each noun on Google Image, save it as a file, rename it as 'original – keyword'.

The meanings will be different from your culture. Don't use your personal imagination.

5. Save them in an archive with the text from step 1.

You can use Photoshop, photography or anything. I like to save files because I enjoy keeping them on a database.

My work attempts to visualize abstract concepts such as those connected to scientific research and philosophy. I am interested in how a visual language may communicate these ideas to audiences. I work across different media, but I am particularly interested in new areas of making such as virtual reality (VR), AI-generated art and working with data and programming languages.

My Dream, My Heterotopia uses my own dreams to generate images that bring my audiences to abnormal spaces that exist in reality but can only be reached through imagination. Heterotopia is a concept elaborated by the philosopher Michel Foucault to describe certain cultural, institutional and discursive spaces that are somehow 'other' – 'neither here nor there.' My dreams are my heterotopia. I am interested in the relationship between three-dimensional and two-dimensional spaces and the illusionistic qualities of light, material and shapes that can be created in 3D imaging software. Visual motifs such as grass always appear in my images, similar to Yayoi Kusama's dots or Magritte's green apple. While I am influenced by their ideas of surrealism I am also drawing upon analytical imagery that could be found in science or engineering.

One is drawn into the emotion of drama, directly, no narrative necessary. To resist the delirium of interpretation. To grasp a consciousness that ultimately has the status of an object.

If something were unforgettable, we could never think of anything else. Essentially, *memory* – electronic or other – is a fixation. This fixation sometimes becomes neurotic or pathological.

It is fitting that the lost one is a synonym for the dead one. A house in which a ghost appears becomes a ruin not gradually, but immediately – even if its occupants remain in it, maintaining it. That's nostalgia.

What you might have to realize on the way is that there's no need for you to remember. No need to hold fast to yesterday, to store it up as capital in your head. Your memory? Your body expresses yesterday in what it wants today. If you think: yesterday I was, tomorrow I shall be, you are thinking: I have died a little.

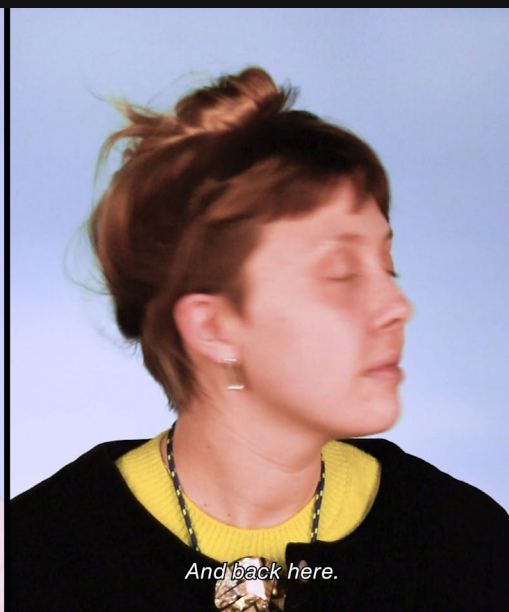
History ultimately is somatic, a choreographic series of gestures arranged to be read in a certain order. Sometimes we need one muscle to relax, so the others follow.

Q D Y R K P A T T B S O L N
B Z Z N E X P L A I N E P F
O D Y I R I C O S O F P I V
S I Q P S D V L A K K C X G
D S J L U O D Z R J N T S L
Y T Y F V I L K L Q G K M G
Q A O V Y V Y A P T S Q V S
W N U R E S I S T A N C E Z
H C R E M R O L M I M H F Q
E I S L C O V I D G O H M W
G N E X V Z Z O I Z S N N T
U G L P X E H 2 0 / 2 0 P E
I X F A C E M C J J O X H I
Z E I H K D L S I N S L V S

Max Kohler
Roland Ross
Bakhtawer Haider
& Betty Brunfaut
Siddhi Gupta
Yue Yu
Katherine McGrath

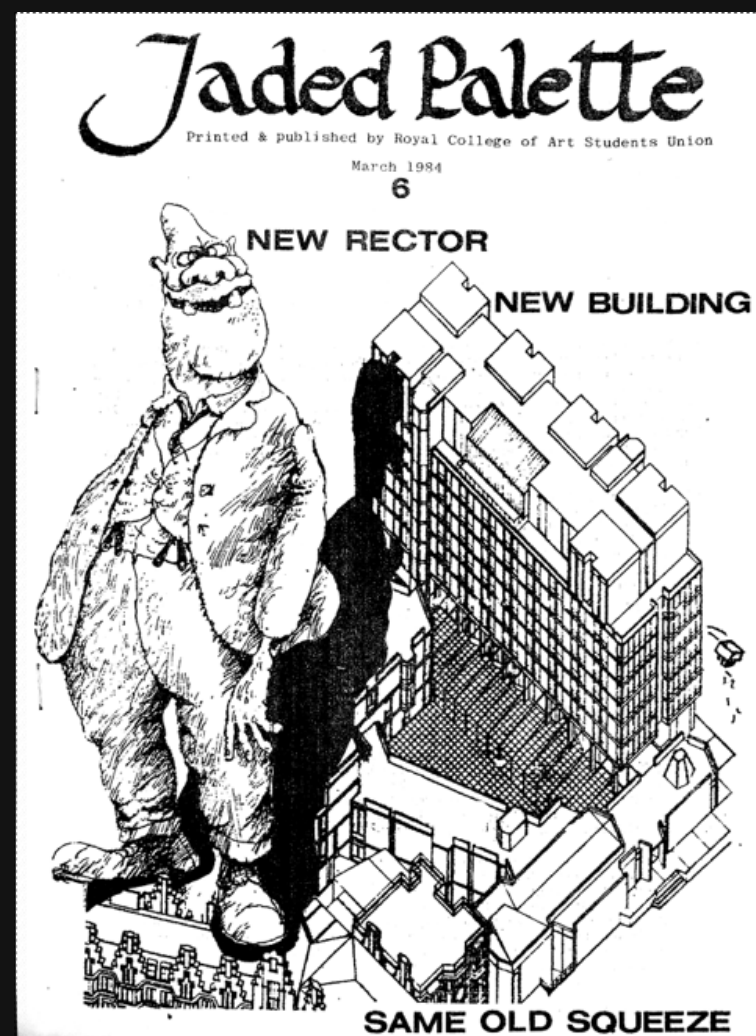
04

How can we possibly stop here? Do we really want things to go back they were? What do we know now that we didn't know before? Have the old routines and institutions been broken forever? Can we build new communities out of what we've learned? And are we going to take this chance to make things better for each other? It's impossible to leave things as they are.



#21
Max Kohler

#22
Roland Ross



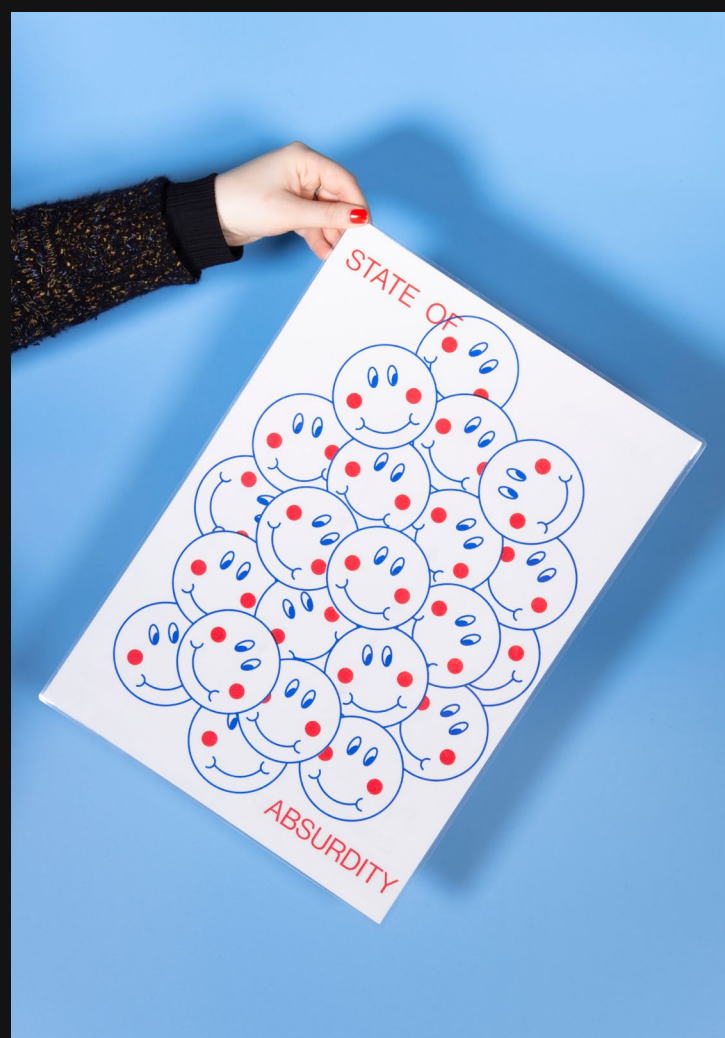
#23
Bakhtawer Haider
& Betty Brunfaut

#24
Siddhi Gupta





#25
Yue Yu



#26
Katherine McGrath

Here's what happened: I was happily programming marketing emails for a startup until it was killed one day by Squarespace. Then I went to Camberwell College (mostly to get away from home) and made image-making software. Got into graph paper for a while. Later, at the Royal College, I got into machine learning (a cool place to be at the time). I trained different models to make predictions about lichen, chunks of ice and old YouTube clips.

Eventually I decided to build a facial recognition model, so I went looking for a dataset. I quickly found hundreds of thousands of images of prisoners, students, celebrities and random passers-by in zip files on university servers, carefully named and arranged into folders, with helpful metadata supplied in machine-readable formats.

This is when I finally stopped writing code all day and started to *read theory* as they say. Code isn't neutral, it isn't the same as progress, it doesn't exist separately from 'the real world'. Datasets are produced by, and deployed against, real people all the time. Facial recognition models like the one I was trying to build were invented by the cops.

Now I think about systems in a broader way. Algorithmic systems, but also systems of classification, knowledge and power. My work and my writing investigate how these systems are expressed in movements, organizations and the built environment.

The work I make uses archival matter, constructed situations and observation to develop spatial narratives which subtly critique the environments in which we study and work. These narratives play out in a variety of online and offline settings such as exams, exhibitions, workshops, presentations and writings. I use these different platforms as containers to speculate on how participation, interdisciplinary education and collaboration might be used collectively as a method of designing spaces which are more inclusive and reflective of different bodyminds.

Bakhtawer Haider & Betty Brunfaut

#23

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We are plan B, yours and truly. A possible plan, the B-side of the disc, another option, another choice to make, one amongst many, or is it? Collaboration is at the core of what we do, revolving around it is our personal research and engagement in decolonizing, diversifying and questioning hierarchy as well as sustainability. We are two very different and engaged women from very different backgrounds who share common values and ethics on work, people and just life in general. We met in 2018 at the RCA, and we've never stopped collaborating since.

At 'Sold Out' we ask what references are left out of the academic and practical spaces within Graphic Design. The question is what and who is excluded and why, who is producing knowledge and who is distributing it? We started this project from the simple observation that there is a lack of diversity in Graphic Design. We want to address how the issues of a white curriculum – the bastion of Eurocentrism, white heteronormative privilege and superiority in particular – remains. To do this we aim to publish toolkits, essays, manifestos, exercise books and many other multifaceted media. In an attempt to connect these knowledge gaps and address material and structural inequalities, we hope to create reference points through published materials within Graphic Design. With the will to understand *why* and *how* to break this system down. Our tagline – 'We're sold out, but you can be too' – is both an invitation and a provocation that the published content either doesn't exist or is failing to come into existence at the moment. Our intention is to challenge the consensus and redefine it by collaborating with a wider group of people.

Siddhi Gupta

#24

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My practice lies at the intersection of education, culture and communication. In this I am informed by my education in communication design and experience in art education in different environments and in different capacities.

Why do we need art? In education or otherwise?

Why do we need education? About art or otherwise?

There is something about education that can let us all be artists.

And there is something about art that we can all learn from.

Who can teach us? Art or anything?

Who can be called an artist? Qualified or otherwise?

There is something about education that it can happen anywhere, anytime.

And there is something about art that it can exist everywhere, all the time.

How are we all educated, yet only some think they can do art?

How are we all artists, yet unaware of the fact?

My graduation project Kalakarm Curriculum questions what should be taught when teaching art, and how.

'Kala' is art and craft, dance and music, drama and writing, drawing and painting.

'Karm' means action.

'Curriculum' is the subjects studied in a school, college, etc. and what each subject includes.

This is Kalakarm Curriculum.

Kalakarm Curriculum is a resource/process/museum/collective that exists so that there is art in education + education in art.

Written in Tears

We say we are from the School of Communication: we are the experts of so-called communication. But what on earth is this communication that we think we know? If you really have listened to the trees, to the winds, to the light; if you really have touched a soft petal of a flower, the wrinkles on the bark of a tree, if you really have ever tasted a drop of water, smelled the scent of soil when it's freshest after a spring shower, how could you not know deeply within your heart, how could you not tremble with immense joy and emotions, that everything, every single being on this earth, in this universe that's surrounding us, is in constant communication with us, only muted by our limited minds and beliefs?

My role is simply to be the medium, the channel that celebrates the very existence all around me, and in that I shall blend, disappear, form and be reborn.

一炷三清百无忌

芥子须弥万有生

In the breath of divine symphony shall the fear of limits be gone
And in the embryo of stardust may the grand play of life begin.

I've found that people often focus their contempt, frustrations, resentments on a tangible 'thing,' most often a specific demographic or entity. For the sake of this piece of writing, I am going to name our frustrations X. I will define frustrations as any of the feelings, thoughts or opinions an individual may hold in regard to how they navigate and experience their world. X is the cause, the person, idea, entity, being, behind the madness. Perhaps X has originated from the same place, but has developed, manifested, grown into and embodied other things, people, places, identities, ideas. But what if we've been misidentifying X all along? How many have considered that our versions of X share more similarities than we might initially have thought? Perhaps X has sought to create chaos in an attempt to destroy autonomy. To disable, to paralyze, to destroy, through various methodologies, each methodology catered to the perceived weaknesses of those targeted.

To challenge, provoke, interrogate and ultimately confront X, there is a need for autonomous spaces: printed matter, digital platforms, physical exchanges. Formulated spaces that seek to give participants space to stand back, engage, ponder. And reclaim their agency, 'seeing' X.

Publish,
Repeat,

Publish,
Repeat,

Publish,
Repeat,

Resisting X.

Acknowledgements

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Royal College of Art

Postgraduate Art and Design

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