

Regenerate

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**Cecilia Bjartmar Hylta, Elen Braga,
Carlos Caballero, Chloë Delanghe,
Bram Demunter, Effi & Amir,
Eitan Efrat & Sirah Foighel Brutmann,
Helen Anna Flanagan & Josefín Arnell,
Eva Giolo, Corentin Grossmann, Tom Hallet,
Nokukhanya Langa, Eva L'Hoest,
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INTRO

Human society has a remarkable ability to regenerate itself. After every cataclysm – whether man-made, natural or a combination of both – communities are eager to pick themselves up, dust themselves down and start again. While this process of reconstruction is seldom without its upheavals, pressing the reset button allows new priorities and new patterns of behaviour to emerge. The recent months of social isolation have offered the opportunity for re-evaluation, for examining what might become the “new normal”. It has revealed what is superfluous and what is fundamental, but the conclusions drawn are far from universal.

Artists have always been excellent barometers of such re-awakenings, either showing us the way or bearing witness

to our struggles and confusion. **WIELS** takes this moment to make public works that have been deprived of the attention they deserve. In this period of ever-increasing digitalisation, the exhibition privileges encounters that cannot be entirely replaced by online interactions. *Regenerate* explores what is emerging from this period of unpredictability, asks how the pandemic is shaping our imaginaries, and reaffirms the essential role of art in the reconstruction of society

BRAM DEMUNTER

b. 1993, Kortrijk (BE). Lives in Temse.

Bram Demunter's work examines how to deal, as a painter, with the wealth of art historical references and sources to which we now have access. *Moving House* reflects obliquely upon the idealization or conquest of nature, exploring how painters approach nature today and in the past, as well as questioning how we remember or experience a landscape.

The characters of *Forest* and *Landscape* – hung here in dialogue in the tradition of marriage portraits – are portrayed standing atop animals, in reference to the representations of saints who travelled on the backs of magical beasts. In contrast, *Mysterious boxes buried deep underground* depicts a claustrophobic,

subterranean landscape of wooden units, suggesting isolation and (self-) preservation in an unspecified narrative.

EITAN EFRAT

& SIRAH FOIGHEL BRUTMANN

both b. 1983, Tel Aviv (IL). Live in Brussels.

Meeting a flower halfway is a film installation that takes as its starting point the floral experiments of Swiss artist and healer Emma Kunz (1892–1963), known for her geometrical drawings of energy fields. Allegedly Kunz would “polarise” flowers, altering their cell structure with her energy so that they would grow a predefined number of “daughter flowers” out of the central mother flower. Kunz did so with the help of a spiral rod and wire models of flowers she created, some of which were documented by photographer Werner Schoch. One such archival photograph is presented here, together with a photograph taken by Efrat & Foighel Brutmann of their own adapted flower model. Their project examines how invisible things become visible and how they are documented. It rethinks the usual perceptions of cause and effect, of death

and re-animation, within the relationship between woman and nature.

CHLOË DELANGHE

b.1991, Ostend (BE). Lives in Brussels.

Minnebrieven (Love Letters) is a three-screen video installation filmed by Chloë Delanghe across Japan during a residency. It draws on the 1977 essay “Why look at animals?” by English art critic John Berger (1926-2017), in which he analysed the alienation of humans and animals as a consequence of 19th-century capitalism. Delanghe uses Berger’s text as a frame of reference for thinking about animals and our relationship to looking. The resulting images explore the agency of the camera but also emotions such as solitude and displacement through the artist’s cautious encounters with pigeons, ravens and deer. The work also acts as a missive home to her family, and complicates the idea of love only being read in romantic terms.

EVA L’HOEST

b. 1991, Liège (BE). Lives in Brussels.

Shitsukan Of Objects is an installation

comprising three sculptures and a video triptych. Recent advances in technology provide not only the tools used to make this work, they are also its subject, as Eva L'Hoest examines the rapidly shifting relationship between human perception and digital simulation. The moving images are partially created using reconstructed MRI scans from The Visible Human Project (the first digitized archive of a human body), data from video games and neuroscientific experiments. The polymer sculptures are produced via large-scale stereolithography, a type of 3D printing initially created for the reconstitution of archaeological models. They evoke an architecture of the human body that has an entirely new means of (de)construction. Whether the result is read as a utopian vision of hybrid humanity or a dystopic view of human disintegration depends perhaps on the viewer's own attitude towards digital technology, a science developing with exponential rapidity compared to the slow pace of human evolution.

CARLOS CABALLERO

b. 1983, Camagüey (CU). Lives in Ghent.

Carlos Caballero first trained as a graphic designer, his sensibility for typography discernible in his highly controlled canvases and painstaking drawings. He began making these intense, untitled works in 2015 and continues at intermittent intervals, a public extension of his private daily sketchbook practice. Some of these drawings – such as *Untitled (n° 46)* – are meditative exercises, in which he can lose himself for days. In parallel, Caballero works in acrylic on canvas to create precise compositions featuring forms that function like the letters of an alphabet, but whose meaning remains impossible to decode. His titles – such as *Arrangement (bold)* or *Array (lower)* – are drawn from typographic terms or the nomenclature of colour, underlining his deep-seated interest in such codes. This is also influenced by his experience of moving to Ghent without speaking Dutch, which he initially thought he understood, but later discovered he had been largely misinterpreting.

MARIE ZOLAMIAN

b. 1975, Beirut (LB). Lives in Liège.

The intimate paintings of Marie Zolamian range from the sensual to the fantastical, evoking dreams or folktales as well as various traditions of painting. At their heart are stories rooted in both Eastern and Western ontology. As she puts it: “I am trying to take ownership of the heritage of chosen communities that are foreign to me; I am questioning the concept of affiliation and belonging to a community, or a region.” The works shown here are all made in the past few years and are placed in a way that highlights their affinities or contrasts. For her titles, Zolamian chooses from a collection of words that she has assembled – such as *Corps d’ange*, *Pis que pendre*, *Sophisme* – whose meaning she tries to understand and remember. As such, the visual compositions act as a verbal mnemonic for the artist.

CECILIA BJARTMAR HYLTA

b.1992, Lund (SE). Lives in Brussels & Rotterdam.

In *Calculation of Incoherence*, Cecilia Bjartmar Hylta presents 17 airbags,

removed from cars and fixed in their inflated state by impregnating their material with resin. These usually hidden cushions are designed to save our lives in the case of an accident, but are sometimes themselves the cause of injury, if they misfire or fail to deflate upon impact. They resemble oversized human organs or balloon-like toys, evoking their close relationship with our bodies. Filled with air, yet rendered rigid, they also suggest the holding of breath. And their functional details – the printed serial numbers or ripped stitching – as well as the traces of rust they exhibit connect them to their original function and containment within the metal frame of an automobile.

HELEN ANNA FLANAGAN & JOSEFIN ARNELL

Flanagan: b. 1988, Birmingham (UK). Lives in Ghent & Rotterdam.

Arnell: b. 1984, Ljusnedal (SE). Lives in Amsterdam.

Helen Anna Flanagan investigates social structures and the political subtext of the everyday, in absurd scenarios that play with larger-than-life characters. Josefin Arnell addresses questions of stigma, control, trauma and healing. Embracing trashy performativity and pink-hued hysteria, her filmic universe has previously examined addiction, mental instability and dependence. *Blood Sisters* is the first collaborative video work made by the two artists. Shot in Groningen, it refers to the city's student fraternities. "We were particularly drawn to the traditional

hazing rituals, using them as a loose starting point to create a fictional initiation ceremony for four older females. Hazing rituals often involve forcing new members into humiliating acts to strengthen group cohesion and identity.” The work also examines the abject physicality of a woman’s body, conformity, social pressure, age and agency. It explores humiliation and hierarchies, focusing on shame as a way to control behaviour, a familiar strategy in the current pandemic.

SANDRINE MORGANTE

b. 1986, Liège (BE). Lives in Ghent & Brussels.

Sandrine Morgante's tragicomic series *Mélatonine* explores sleep and its absence. Suffering from insomnia, she writes and draws in a notebook in the middle of the night and transfers these musings – sometimes melancholic, sometimes frantic – onto photocopies of adverts for sleep-inducing medicine. There is a tension between the calming graphics and soothing language used to promote these drugs or homeopathic remedies and her own, hand-written commentaries. The latter evoke the Lettrist rebellion against normative language, and the punky aesthetic of fanzines or underground flyers. Despite its occasional note of desperation, the series offers a form of

resistance to conventional waking hours and the demands for efficiency and productivity that the daytime demands.

EFFI & AMIR

Effi Weiss: b.1971, Ramat-Gan (IL).

Amir Borenstein: b. 1969 Haifa (IL).

Live in Brussels.

Effi & Amir's practice employs video, performance and participatory strategies, often to examine the construction of collective and symbolic identities.

Places of Articulation: Five Obstructions takes the viewer on a journey across physical borders – from Albania to Tibet, Northern Ireland, Germany and Belgium – to examine the internal, invisible border of our oral cavity, which defines the sounds we can emit and the words we can pronounce. Moving between sonic, anatomical and political territories, this installation examines how voice and pronunciation are used as identifiers, eventually become mobile checkpoints that discriminate and divide. Employing different imaging methods and visualizations of the vocal apparatus, it

renders these checkpoints visible, while questioning the limits of identification and revealing blurred lines or zones of ambiguity that defy binary categorisation. The wall drawing is an illustration taken from a manual of the German immigration service, which explains how to use the biometric tool of dialect identification. The screen with the microphone allows you to test your own pronunciation patterns.

EVA GIOLO

b.1991, Brussels (BE). Lives in Brussels.

Flowers blooming in our throats is a cinematic poem created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As its title suggests, it is simultaneously beautiful and suffocating to watch. Filmed in 16mm, it captures the fragile balance of everyday life, which has become increasingly hard to maintain during the successive lockdowns of the last year, as symbolised by the spinning top that recurs in the work. Eva Giolo's piece was commissioned by Foundation In Between Art Films for the project Mascarilla 19 – Codes of Domestic Violence. She filmed friends in their own

homes, performing small actions under her direction. In her composition and editing, their gestures remain ambiguous, with an underlying violence that never quite breaks the surface. In addition to the tension established by the repetition of certain gestures, sounds and colour filters, Giolo invited BUREAU – Yuichiro Onuma to insert a subtle decorative moulding along the walls of the gallery evoking a different kind of friction, between the domestic realm and the public art institution.

NOKUKHANYA LANGA

b.1991, Silverspring, Maryland (USA). Lives in Ghent.

Nokukhanya Langa's work examines exposure, concealment and power. Neither purely abstract nor explicitly narrative, her subversive paintings exhibit a tactile confusion, as if unwilling to remain contained within the strict physical boundaries of the canvas. Langa plays with registers, mixing colloquial language or signs with painterly references. The surfaces of *Chris Mar Ave* and *Bar 4 Bar* evoke layers of symbols, graffiti tags,

or marks seemingly carved into a hard surface. Her untitled mural references the passivity line, a darker band of colour painted in interrogation rooms as a subliminal means of control, encouraging the people inside to stay seated and thus remain below the line. In Langa's version, the straight painted line becomes a playful wave, rendering the division more ambiguous. Her chain piece 25/8 evokes the demands of our non-stop society, where we are all supposed to be "on" – visible, productive, available – more than 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

ELEN BRAGA

b.1984, Caxias/MA (BR). Lives in Brussels. Elen Braga's practice is informed by her evangelical upbringing, whose traces she seeks to examine and exorcise. During lockdown, Braga produced *Prophecies*, a hand-tufted textile assembling fragments from various sources, including Brazilian mass-media fortune-tellers, biblical predictions, internet memes, and literary references. The theological notion of eschatology (doctrine of the end of

the world) is key to the work, as Braga draws from the imagery of Clarence Larkin (1850-1924), an architect and Baptist pastor who created charts to help the faithful visualize 'God's plan and purpose.' One of his most popular diagrams pictured a multi-metal statue of a giant, representing a timeline towards the apocalypse. Appropriating Larkin's diagram, Braga substitutes the male giant with her own body in a blue jumpsuit, creating a personal timeline that mixes historical, political and personal events as conjectures for the future. *On Fire*, a video installation presented on used iPhones, documents a performance by Braga and her mother's peculiar re-enactment of it. Over Zoom they discuss the collaboration, breaking into a popular hymn, which they never quite manage to sing in unison due to the delay in their connection.

BATSHEVA ROSS

b. 1977, Jerusalem (IL). Lives in Brussels.

Fitness Studies is a series of charcoal drawings and oil paintings based on online photographs of exercise classes such

as yoga, Pilates, Zumba or weightlifting. A devotee of certain classes herself, Batsheva Ross sees them as offering quasi-religious redemption, bringing people together just as religious services and rituals do (with their own degrees of competition and judgement). Ross' compositions underscore the central position of the instructor, who has adopted the position of spiritual leader or guru, helping to keep our bodies in good condition in the pursuit of health, beauty or to meet the demands of capitalist society. The painterly style adopted by Ross borrows from that of past masters such as Degas – particularly his paintings from the 1870s of dancers in rehearsal – or Rembrandt, with the interplay of gazes, hands and bodies evoking his painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632).

CORENTIN GROSSMANN

b. 1980, Metz (FR). Lives in Brussels.

The fantastical scenes rendered in painstaking pencil or pastel by Corentin Grossmann mix a variety of iconographic

influences, from medieval depictions of human folly (Hieronymous Bosch) and social rituals (Pieter Bruegel the Elder) to the simplified landscapes of cartoons or their digital counterparts in computer games. In the tradition of the Surrealists, Grossmann weaves dreamlike elements into figurative scenes, occasionally evoking hallucinogenic substances – the title *Special Kush* refers to a form of cannabis. Current events also find their way into his compositions. *W.O.S.* stands for Wall of Shame, a term used for barriers such as those built in Berlin, Israel, or on the US-Mexico border, but which is also used as a site for naming and shaming of people doing anything that dominant social groups deem to be shameful. And *Oceania* evokes the human invasion of the underwater world, although not without a dose of humour.

CAMILLE PICQUOT

b. 1990, Metz (FR). Lives in Brussels.

This series of analogue photographs taken by Camille Picquot (from 2011 to 2021), exhibited here for the first time

and titled *Salut soleil (qui sais mourir)*, reveals the consistency of her approach. Un-staged, as their compositional “errors” attest, these images underscore Picquot’s interest in light, whether the play of natural shadows or the glare of the flash. They also evoke a sensuality fused with a sense of the uncanny. The human figure is strikingly tangible, but remains elusive, perhaps because the people portrayed never meet our gaze and their faces are always partially obscured. Discovering these images in the time of social distancing, the tactility of Picquot’s work is particularly poignant, evoking the yearning for skin-to-skin touch. In addition to this series, Picquot’s film *Cao Bang* will be screened as part of *Regenerate*. A visually seductive travelogue, it recounts the story of a man who attempts to disappear and reinvent himself, an exploration of transformation and new beginnings.

TOM HALLET

b. 1990, Leuven (BE). Lives in Brussels.

Tom Hallet’s drawings function as letters dedicated to close friends and family,

to queer icons and activists, but also to those he describes as their violators. This explains the uncanny quality of his drawings, in which violence and tenderness co-exist, in a manner akin to fairy tales. Hallet revisits such founding tales as a way to unpick how they condition our imagination from a young age, particularly in relation to gender. His two sculptures, the wall-mounted *Tribute (Bertha)* and the floor-based *D.R.F. (A New Kind of Tenderness)*, are both made of natural latex. The former acts as an awning, offers shelter and also references sites for cruising. It sprouts hair gathered from the Bertha of the title, the artist's grandmother. *D.R.F.* evokes a body bag or beached animal, but in fact contains earth impregnated with seeds, which may germinate during the course of the exhibition, as the work actively regenerates.

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR VISIT. THANKS!

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