

Larisa David

Waiting Tenses

23 October – 30 November 2020

Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

These days, the day starts and is recognised as starting. It moves toward the destination of the start of the following day. The destination is reached. Another day starts and it is recognised as starting.

"How did you spend your day?" the language teacher asks, in order to introduce the use of new words: then, now, after. Break your day down for us, we are asked. Separate a progression into frames so we can comprehend it, contain it, and share it. The new words – then, now, after – keep a feeling of motion via an allegiance to sequence, like frames that can blend to make a film. The teacher uses them to ease into a lesson on tenses. Tidily separated, isolated, and shelved. Uncontaminated.

"These days...", people keep saying. How can "these days" be held, propelled, and satisfactorily shelved? The present tense becomes simultaneously the past tense and the future tense. An interruption in the movement that is neither still, nor backwards, nor forwards. The tenses mingle. Together we are waiting tensed. The day starts and is recognised as starting.

How might you embody this tense, while we are waiting?

I'm uncertain.

Unbound Anthologies

Ayo & Katrina Niebergal

5 March– 5 April 2021

Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

Unbound Anthologies is the first collaboration between artist-run initiatives project space at7 and Available & The Rat, and is the beginning of something ongoing between the two. We invited Ayo and Katrina Niebergal, and during the months preceding the exhibition, an introduction and a familiarisation between the two happened.

Ayo and Niebergal's works in the exhibition surface from their separate ongoing research practices. Ayo weaves text, music, image, sculpture, and video in her studio, creating new methods to excavate – a word borrowed from the artist – and re-tell diasporic stories across space and time. Katrina Niebergal dreams without fences. Beginning from a research project told through a fictional character, her work at this point embodies the intuition and joy of childhood making – a way to respond to spontaneous and deeply ingrained visions, poems and vignettes from an ongoing and lived story.

Together, the artists use the space to ask incomplete questions – presenting moments of intuitive object-making. The works present chapters in larger anthologies, characters of the past interacting with the present, and personal-historical weaves which invite us in and branch outside the exhibition space for the upcoming weeks.

at7 and Available & The Rat came together first on the grounds of available space, and continue to learn from each other as artists who work with artists – by learning from the artists we show. We began to think together about hosting, invitation, care of introduction, staying in touch, and the possibility of a collectively written manifesto. When we endeavoured to write collectively, what emerged was something different:

*there is support
for asking incomplete questions
people talking in a living room
surrounded
with petals and leaves in their hair
simultaneously
on the airwave of an exploding balloon
they stay in touch*

Excerpt from a collaborative text by
at7 & Available & The Rat, written in an online
writing workshop by artist Xenia Klein, October 2020

text collaboratively written by Bergur Anderson, Lili
Huston-Herterich, Vera Mennens, & M. Maria Wallhout.


AVAILABLE & THE RAT

Daniel Tuomey

Frankenstein

17 April– 9 May 2021
Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

This text will remain a work-in-progress until the opening of the exhibition.

"Let us begin by citing an authoritative woman"¹:

Soon, a quote from Jennifer Croft's translation of Olga Tokarczuk's *Flights* (2007) will sit here.²

A male body that procreates.
The expectation of a kin.
The feeling of an eye on ones back.
The wonder of one's own eye and brain:
The pursuit of an understanding of a body.³
The journals of men who have made our bodies.⁴
The bodies used for science.
The excuses of men using bodies for science.⁵
The laws made from excuses from fathers and grandfathers.
Informal masculine camaraderie.⁶

A total control of birth and death.
The understanding of a body decaying.
The letting a body decay.
The food for the worm: dirt nap.
The un-squeamish in the face of death.
The worm inheriting the wonders of the eye and brain.
The worm's big brain.
The eyes and brains of the Lords of Creation.
Lonely separation of superiority.

A worm is not a man.
The soft flesh of a stomach, a bicep.
The man that stands in front of a mirror.⁸
The flickering of another kind of body.
The understanding of ones' self in relation to another.
The incapacity to understand outside this relation.
The incapacity to understand without books.
The incapacity to read words never written.
The projection of everything one cannot accept in themselves:
Hysterical specificity to transform another into a useful artifact.

An unforgiving mirror.
The ubiquity of one's own image.
The advantage of one's own image.
The granted access to phallic territory.
The hesitation to like one's own image.
The passing as one's own image.
The refinement of one's own image.
The creation of a bettered iteration of one's own image.
The expected control of mind and feelings.⁹
Immeasurable subjective excess.

A history of entitlement.
The outsourced satiation of one's emotional needs.
The complicity in oppression.
The rising cost of duties and labour.
The legislation made to bring manufacturing home.
The refusal to return to paying living wages never paid in the first place.
The dependencies and expectations of supremacy.¹⁰
The creation of machines.
The oiled joint mimicking an elbow.
Smart factory solutions.¹¹

A nourished rage in the face of expectation.
The disobedience assigned monstrous.
The punishment of pathologization and invisibilization.
The reduction of transformation to mutation.
The insistence of categories.
The denial of linguality.
The violence of a lesson taught.
The refusal to be wounded by a determined monstrosity.¹³
The creature that threatens the Lords of Creation.
Daily, eloquent imitation of the birds.¹⁴

THE BENIGN LONELINESS OF THE SOCIALLY ALIENATED
THE MALIGNANT MELANCHOLY OF THE ERSTWHILE MASTER¹⁵
THE LACK OF SYMPATHY FOR A SIDE EFFECT OF VICTORY
THE SUBJECT WHO SEES THE WORM IN THEIR EYES OF MEN

THERE IS A WAR WITH NURTURE:
A WAR NOT ALL CAN NAME^{16 17}

Most footnotes gleaned from conversations with Daniel Tuomey, and from the generous transparency of his sound work *Footnotes to Frankenstein*.

¹ Modification of the start of *The Malignant Melancholy*, Amba Azaad (essay in *The New Inquiry*, 2018)

² *Flights*, Olga Tokarczuk (novel, 2008)

³ A description from a book called *Looking at Men* by Anthea Callen, encountered originally from *Footnotes to Frankenstein*, Daniel Tuomey (artwork, 2019)

⁴ *My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage*, Susan Stryker (essay 1994)

⁵ Olga Tokarczuk (see footnote 2)

⁶ Cigarettes over a surgeon's table (an image)

⁷ from the title of a performance in progress, Ash Kilmartin (2021)

⁸ *Frankenstein*, Daniel Tuomey (artwork, 2020)

⁹ Susan Stryker (see footnote 4)

¹⁰ An article in *Harvard Business Review* by Willy C. Shih (2020, intentionally unnamed)

¹¹ An article in *Forbes* by Kenneth Rapoza (2020, intentionally unnamed)

¹² Susan Stryker (see footnote 4)

¹³ Susan Stryker (see footnote 4)

¹⁴ The garden *Serena* in hail and sunlight (12 April 2021)

¹⁵ Amba Azaad (see footnote 1)

¹⁶ *Frankenstein* (see footnote 8)

¹⁷ The writer is a cisgender woman, and the artist a cisgender man.

Scrap Metal Dream Boy

Dagmar Bosma

22 May - 13 June 2021

Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

1.

ACT I OF I

Scene 1 of 1

CHARACTERS:

STUD: soft, on their knees

FRAY: tall, worried eyebrows

TUB: content

SCRAP METAL DREAM BOY: a worshipper

STUD, FRAY, and TUB sit on a window-sill facing the street. They are ground level, and we can see and hear cars passing. It is daytime, the light is natural with no hard shadows. Perhaps it's raining.

FRAY

(anxiously)
It is possible they'll never come, you two know that right?

STUD

When they come, I welcome them with soft ground.

TUB

When they come, I ready them frictionlessness.

FRAY

Oh sure, ok. I mean when they come, I'll come, but come ON you two. Can't you see the possibility that they'll never come? That we're slipping and sliding together in some tepid and shallow excitement, anticipating our levels to raise with their displacement, resisting evaporation, stagnant and catching dust that falls. Can't you see how much we have to lose? We are setting ourselves up for a disappointing failure. We are losing --

STUD

(interrupts and begins to sing, smiling)
...got to loooooooooooooooooooooo...

TUB, STUD

(TUB joins STUD in singing)
...got to... loooooooooooooooooooooo...

FRAY

(exasperated, stands up and starts pacing)
You two just can't see the stakes here.

TUB

Fray, you are denying yourself the pleasure of
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TUB (CONT'D)
losing!

STUD
Loosen yourself. We can not engage with them productively: our terms are only unproductive. Let yourself feel the opportunities of that stillness.

FRAY
(stops pacing)
I see the marks that surface, I understand that something *happens*, but at what cost? Disintegration and dryness.

STUD
Not if you--

TUB
(interrupting)
looooooooooseeeeeennn yourselfffff!

FRAY
(begins to smile)
We've achieved nothing, us three. Circles and circles of talking at a window.

STUD
At least now you aren't calling it waiting.

At this moment, SCRAP METAL DREAM BOY slowly rumbles by, and stops outside the window. We notice for the first time a shrine. SCRAP METAL DREAM BOY reaches with pincer arms, grabs the shrine by its sky-reaching erect shaft, and pulls. The shrine gives way, loosens from its hole, and pulls out. SCRAP METAL DREAM BOY carries the shrine gently over their belly, and squeezes the shaft once more. The shrine releases, pouring what everybody didn't want into itself.

FRAY
(gasps)

STUD
We told you.

FRAY
Preservation, lubrication for exploration. Time can't chafe us and we can't ever get old.

TUB
No measures to mark it hold.

STUD
Too slippery for them after all. They stop looking and we can keep exploring.

FRAY
Everything happily loose.

CURTAIN

drip / fold

Kari Robertson

25 June– 26 July 2021

Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

On account of the coming rain, we decided to meet one day earlier. The days have been hot, and that day was the hottest. I didn't feel my uterine muscles cramping as intensely as I do in colder months¹, but my body still inflated with a slow continuous bubble², not rapidly but steadily, in my gut: a kind of carbonation.

Today was the day everyone and every app said the rain would come. I feel a bubble inside pop, breaking the surface of some liquid. Nothing has come, but there is something continually coming. The air is thick and swollen, which makes walking feel like swimming. It smells of what you³ tell me is petrichor. "When a raindrop lands on a porous surface, air from the pores forms small bubbles, which float to the surface and release aerosols." I read this on Wikipedia and drink carbonated water, sit with a carbonated belly, as an unsatisfying precipitation stops drizzling. Raindrops that move slower produce more aerosols, the headless tells me. As a human, I am sensitive to geosmin, a bacteria's metabolic byproduct that fills these popping bubbles. "Scientists", my pop-science article generalizes, speculate this is a sensitivity genetically reinforced for survival: to find where the water comes from.

It is the morning, so my logic is that overnight, the bacteria metabolized... something, and I sniff the result. From you, I've inherited a new ability: I can now imagine a night filled with different metabolizations. Someone metabolizing someone else; someone being metabolized⁴; hours of watching as metabolization; dreams metabolizing Wikipedia pages; wax metabolized by flame; the mark left on a plate where a candle once burned ; the experience of extracted landscapes metabolized by the body that thinks through them; resource extraction logic (supply and demand) metabolized in a bedroom, in relation to motherhood, a body metabolized. Loud waking hours metabolized in the quiet of the night. I hear the siren of dog-day cicadas, a temperature-triggered associative sonic hallucination.

The sound edges me towards New Orleans⁵: a place we will both return to, a place I travel to with the current of your words and images and work, a recycling of your experience of the bubbling swamps and the bayous and the heavy heat and the oyster hatcheries and the complex and muddy abundance of life and simultaneous industries denying it. You take me there and we loop around it. A stream (consciousness, water, milk) has memory (subconsciousness, tributaries, salival communication of infection, illness). A stream (consciousness, water, milk) takes time (lived, sedimentary, unpasteurized spoil).

I read *what happens to time?* in my notes and roll my eyes at my brevity, pretending time doesn't haunt me, as a candle burns slowly.

¹ A bodily experience identified from a conversation with artist Larisa David, late May 2021.

² Here, I borrow Kari Robertson's words (bubble bubble).

³ The "you" in this text refers to Kari Robertson.

⁴ The idea of someone being metabolized is borrowed from Kari Robertson.

⁵ Kari Robertson was an artist-in-residence at Deltaworks New Orleans in 2019, where she began a body of work on aquatic architecture in the swamps of Louisiana. She continues to work on this work, and will return to the city to present some of it in 2022.

*A river plus a river are not two rivers:
A temporary support office for those who fear closed envelopes.*
Santiago Pinyol

25 June– 26 July 2021
Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

AVAILABLE & THE RAT

Subject:
An invitation to reverse the flow
22 June 2021

Postaddress: Gouwstraat 21
3082BB Rotterdam
Internet: www.availableandtherat.com
Contact person: Santiago Pinyol

Our reference number: ~~~~~

Date: July 2021

**Aan de bewoner,
To the resident,**

Dear bewoner, dear resident, have you ever turned a river inside out?

With this letter, we invite you to make contact with *A river plus a river are not two rivers: A temporary support office for those who fear closed envelopes*. We hope that our address to you, without your first or last name, you understand our position. We have no personal information of yours, nor are we asking for any. We come to you from this envelope with general information that may benefit you. Please stay.

Have you opened this letter late? Is today the day you have decided to dive into your deepening pool of cluttered abstraction, facing your fears and holding your breath only to realize this letter comes to you without threat, but with an invitation? *A river plus a river are not two rivers: A temporary support office for those who fear closed envelopes* has finally found you. And we are happy you've chosen this day, albeit delayed, to read our words.

Leaking through mail slots or under doors, dropped in locked boxes, or left in stairways, envelopes like these continuously push towards you. Like a river, they only flow in one direction: until now. This month, *A river plus a river are not two rivers: A temporary support office for those who fear closed envelopes* will move in to Available & The Rat at Gouwstraat 21 in Charlois.

Would you like to benefit from the support we offer? You can respond to this letter within 28 workdays by sending an email to hi@availableandtherat.com, by calling **(06) 40 20 4200**, or in person at the office at Gouwstraat 21, 3082BB Rotterdam. Our office hours are every Saturday and Sunday from 26 June to 25 July.

For more information about *A river plus a river are not two rivers: A temporary support office for those who fear closed envelopes*, visit www.availableandtherat.com.

Together, we will open all the way up.

A Home at the End of the World

Ghislain Amar

5 November – 5 December 2021

Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

Ghislain Amar and I once tried to photograph an image from a dream I had, with the help of another friend and artist Pascale de Graaf. Explaining a dream is usually a disappointing kind of sharing. Your listener may struggle to access the shifting scales of time, size, and place your dream likely occupies, and you, articulating what was last night so vivid, may be chase a fading recollection through articulation. It can become a race against time: say the dream before saying the dream catches up to and erases itself. The logic of language erodes with articulation the many unarticulated logics upon which a dream world operates.

This "race against time" is similar to the feeling of resisting, for the first days of meeting them, the logic of "knowing" someone. Between recognition (you'd be able to see them in a crowd) and intimacy (you don't know if their parents are alive) is a space where acquaintances have the potential to be anyone, before they fit or develop into a role as someone in the logic of familiarity.

Ghislain Amar's *A Home at the End of the World*² is an analog slide-show with four projectors and a 45-minute video. Amar hired three non-professional actors and a production assistant to spend four days with him in a small house in rural France to produce his work. He wrote in the original call for non-professional actors:

Unlike other times, I would prefer people I don't know at all, or not well.

This preface "Unlike other times" is written for readers who know him and his previous work. For years, Amar has been working with photography, video, and painting to make portraits of those he is in close relation to: friends, lovers, and what he calls his community. He distributed this call widely through social media channels and personal connections, hoping to reach the edges of this network that have also often been his subjects. The resulting group – Ariela Bergman, Simon Mielke, and Kenny Owens, with Gianna Surangkanjanajai as production assistant – were all artists that Amar had not yet known. Their roles as subjects were clear, as was Amar's position as photographer. The resulting work, *A Home at the End of the World*, flourishes both with this clarity of relation, as well as the distanced and growing familiarity of the whole group to one another.

Intimate photographic portraits can often interrupt intimacy: the camera wedges its way between eye-to-eye communication, inviting other errant eyes temporally and relationally distant. Contrarily, Amar's photographs in the installation *A Home at the End of the World*, projected on four separate DIA carousels that each show one day of the trip, show a different kind of intimacy. Repeating images follow one another with slight changes to exposure, photographer's position, or subject position. In one image, a subject stares into the camera lens; in the following, they look away. The directions of the cameraperson – Amar – are made evident. The group of people who do not yet know each other, in the four days they get to know each other, are clear on their roles in the project at hand: creating *A Home at the End of the World*.

The work travels along a mutual trip taken together from strangers through acquaintances towards something else³: the between place before the logic of familiarity can begin to make short-cuts to concretize the relation of these people in each other's lives.

The four day trip was finite, but the four projectors "play" those four days on an infinite loop in one room. Refusing a nostalgia, a "remember the time when we", it insists as a continuation through the gestures of a photographer often made obscure through still images: directing, re-shooting, pushing exposures, editing, and sequencing are all present and insisted upon in this one work. They repeated over and over through a cycle of still images, as a film before the video in the following room. An insistence.

In an early edit of the video *A Home at the End of the World*, a character⁴ says:

I feel sometimes I am the pepper without the pasta. [...]

I had this conversation once - I thought that I was an adjective, not a noun or a verb.

If I personify grammar in the way I think I understand her doing, a noun has a concrete finality, a verb an unchanging purpose, and an adjective changes in relation to what it is sidled up against. Ghislain Amar is invested in these three "characters" not only in relation with one another, but in relation to himself. Amar's work has been, and now continues to refine, his fascination in the many ways life is lived through the personal, the specific, through relation. *A Home at the End of the World* does not present a narrative or story with three characters, but there is something that happens there, outside of the logic of temporality, sequence, or scale of storytelling: familiarity happening. Something that is, as a dream, is very difficult to describe as a phenomenon.

Returning to the "race against time", the works cycle on loop towards knowing, but doesn't get there. That will result inevitably somewhere else, in the future of the work, life, or otherwise of Amar and the others involved in *A Home at the End of the World*.

Available & The Rat is presenting the premiere of *A Home at the End of the World* in November 2021, three months after the trip Amar organized to the house. The exhibition is in Rotterdam, the city where Amar has lived and worked since 2008.

¹ Pascale de Graaf lived in Available & The Rat and programmed the space for six months in 2019.

² *A Home at the End of the World* is the title of a 1990 novel by Michael Cunningham about, roughly, the relation between three people over the course of decades. Amar was influenced by the novel in the conceptual development of his own work, but told me later during a studio visit that he "had a lot of expectations when he reread it that weren't filled". Some images in Amar's *A Home at the End of the World* are based on the covers of different editions of the novel. I chose not to write about the relationship between this book to Amar's work mostly because I have not yet read the book myself.

³ On 12 November, Ghislain Amar's project space Peach will be exhibiting a group show that includes the works of Simon Mielke and Gianna Surangkanjanajai, artists Amar was originally introduced to through this project.

⁴ Is she a character, or just Ariela Bergman? I write from the position of a viewer, so assign the role "character", but Ghislain's work makes me question this impulse.

⁵ There is much that self-destructs through articulation; or perhaps operates on a level outside of language that is transmitted through writing or speaking. I started a list of things that fall into this category, as alluded to in elements of Ghislain's *A Home at the End of the World*:

- a. Explaining to a group of people you don't really know how to play a card game only you know;
- b. Encountering a manufactured scent (perfume, cleaning product, processed food) that you cannot place where you've smelled before;
- c. Rereading a book that made you feel many things the first time and feeling nothing this time;
- d. Explaining why you live in the city you live in to people who don't live there.

Balanced we were / Never to be

Merve Kılıçer

5 March – 10 April 2022

Gouwstraat 21, Rotterdam

AN EXHIBITION TEXT IN PROGRESS

(TO BE PUBLISHED FULLY ON THE OPENING DAY OF THE EXHIBITION)

1

*Expectations, album as a method.*¹

We go on a trip together, and we take pictures. We stand for the pictures. We wait for the pictures. We change our route to make sure we get the pictures. We separate for the pictures, we pose for the pictures, we imagine the pictures. We get the pictures. We look at the pictures, we remember the pictures, or we let the pictures remember for us. We organise the pictures. We save the pictures. For years, we keep the pictures.

It was something about the ruins, about the histories of past cities and their gates, thresholds, entrances, libraries, columns we leaned on. But it was about the ruins, really. The ruins were conducive to thinking through histories, thinking through the then (still) small bodies, living and soft leaning up against these histories. So it was something about the ruins in the pictures that would help. But when the pictures came, it was nothing about the ruins. Or, the ruins were ruined, or the ruins stood tall encased in another system of logic, of order, of power, of imbalance, our systems, our score. And the thing of it was, this encasement obscured the ruins only for us. The pictures still effectively carried the *ruins as simply ruins*. But our witnessing of the ruins, and the record of this witnessing in front of and behind the lens, makes *ruins as simply ruins* impossible, for us.

An impossible slate. Bukağı, the unity we taught ourselves to keep ourselves taut.

2

Making new work is impossible. It can never a tabula rasa. Esse Rasa - impossible slate.

IMPOSSIBLE SLATE

IMPOSSIBLE STATE²

On one of these past very busy days, an important list of chores stored digitally was unintentionally erased. Standing shocked and now aimless with no longer a script to guide them, the user shakes the device in desperation. The list reappears in response.

Tablets made from beeswax intended for note-taking could be heated and smoothed for eternal blank slates. Then chalkboards. Then galleries, with walls painted stock white and holes always small enough to fill, pencil marks rubbed off with rubber. They read: new words, fresh ideas, preceded by nothing, shall be replaced by something. The user shakes them in frustration. Have you no memory? No lineage? Haven't your ideas come from some where, from some one? Even your ideas of your self? The user walks around themselves to see their whole surface, knowing wrapped tightly coiled inside is a lineage longer than they can perceptively, or practically, shake out.

¹ Excerpt from studio visit notes, 10 February 2022.

² Excerpt from studio visit notes, 3 January 2022.

3

Proedria: the right to sit in front seats at the theatre or public games; or, the area separating the orchestra and the audience. ³

Sitting on two stone chairs are two people who sit on the stone chairs to be captured sitting on them. They are places many people before them have sat - most recently for the same reason (the photographs for the albums around the world), and further back as people with respect, with a particularly elevated societal position that needed to be matched in its height (the chairs are tall) and permanence (the chairs are ancient).

It is likely the two people feel the seat of these stone chairs differently. One ass recognizes the elevated place as similar to what they have been told, through words and actions, they belong. The other ass sits crooked on their stone seat, a posture that is a combination of humor, mocking, pride, and resistance: all responses to the imbedded understanding that they have not been told, through words and actions, the same as the first ass, and that they sit to watch, not to be watched. This Kodak moment is the exception.

4

*I've spit the seeds
Covered them up with earth
I escaped from your shadow
Planted a tree of my own.* ⁴

On good days it feels like a difficult level of a game. The first rounds, so long ago, two mandarins bouncing between two hands - was a meditation and an optic pleasure. Now, with many more added through shouts or whispers or stares, on a good day it feels like a difficult level of the same game. You're destined to fail, really, but how you fail is the question. Shall you leave kicking and screaming, denouncing the conditioning you've been subjected to outright (no one listens, but perhaps they'll hear only far past your years)? Shall you let them all drop sadly, fulfilling expectations by reassuring your audience your predecessor will do better having witnessed your failure (securing the persistence of the condition)? Or shall you subvert the skills you were conditioned to know, and put one mandarin after the other on your head, your audience at once transfixed and disgusted by your adept misuse of the traits you were given?

The seeds of mandarins are the capsules of their lineage. In earth, they activate, stretching and reforming as little hairs, reaching to the edges of shadows to continue beyond.

³ From a screenshot of a definition of proedira from a website called Wordnik.com, sent to Lili by Merve the night before the opening of the exhibition.

⁴ Last verse of *Mandarin Poem*, Merve Kılıçer, 2022.

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