

THE pluralist

THERE IS SLIPPAGE  
BETWEEN THE TWO.  
CARE FOR OTHERS,  
CARE FOR THE SELF,  
AS WELL AS HOW WE  
RELATE TO THESE  
'BINARIES' OF SELF  
AND OTHER, ARE  
URGENT, TANGIBLE.

/ Other

#2B

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# EDITORS' LETTER

There is a relationship between self and other in writing itself. Roland Barthes wrote that “the pleasure of the text is the moment when my body pursues its own ideas - for my body does not have the same ideas I do.” Both poetry and prose contributions examine this tension between body and self, and the way that writing can expose these dualities. In considering these dual paradigms, we were drawn to last years' culturally viral hit – Jia Tolentino's essay collection 'Trick Mirror'. In the first essay, entitled 'The 'I' in Internet' she writes “It's as if we've been placed on a lookout that oversees the entire world and given a pair of binoculars that makes everything look like our own reflection”. This blurring of boundaries occurs more and more through the prism of the digital world — where the self ends and the other begins.

Writing or images on the other can centre around observation. How do we observe others and how do we decide someone is 'other' from ourselves? Self/ Other covers a vast terrain. Sometimes it's as trivial as jargon-filled internet jokes, sometimes it's more serious, perhaps divisive. This issue contains an essay on seeing an other (cephalopod) self in the ocean, poetry inspired by Jim Carrey, and an astrology column.

Continuing this line of thought about what passes for 'self' and 'other' — we decided to publish this issue of the pluralist in two physical parts. Design motifs indicate that content within these issues is loosely organised under the framework of 'self' and 'other' — whilst also implicitly acknowledging the impossibility of making such distinctions. So, please take a look

at both issues and our experiment with duality.

For the next issue we are exploring 'THE FAKE' and 'THE REAL'. Send us your notes, pitches, questions, ideas, writings, or visual submissions to [thepluralist.rca@gmail.com](mailto:thepluralist.rca@gmail.com).

the editors  
lucy, harri + eilis

By  
rose higham-stainton

Extracts from 'Mirror-Play' in *The Other Woman* - Collected Stories, by Colette, translated by Margaret Crosland, (Hamlyn Paperbacks, Feltham, 1983), p.86-88.

## colette's mirror play

You enter through a cold glass door, inhaling manufactured flora laced with root gum and plastic that reaches the back of your throat; a room that smells of *the faded lavender of angelica, the waxy rose of Geranium, extract of vanilla unnecessarily braced with resin*. Powders are re-applied; you catch your reflection; there is the hum of tongues, muffled by a corporeal red carpet, the chime of glasses and smell of acidified milk on silverware.

You are Colette. You came in from the cold, you have told us, in the opening line of *Mirror-Play*—a perfectly Colette vignette of two and a half pages—though you do not like it here, in this *Salon de The*.

You are seated, and from this place you observe and write one of your fleeting, miniature worlds out of two women—the *brunette* and the *blonde*—at a nearby table. Amongst the furs and sequins and feathers, theirs is a story of watching and being watched—the *envious looks enhance her just as summer rain polishes the enamel on a kingfisher*. Their's is a story of vanity—*what pleasure these two well-bred peacocks give to the eye!* Their's is a story of competition and imitation, pitted in friendship. *The more beautiful despises the most docile one slightly and the latter, you write, crueley, not without a jealous shudder, imitates her, adapts herself, corrects herself...* You paint them animalistic—*pigeon, peacock, pug, carnivorous mouth*—and manicured. Their's is a sore and wounding femininity, desperate and bound and rouged for—.

*A man appears*, you tell us. *Were they expecting him? I think so*. And so it begins—

Not quite Olympian in scale or weaponry but certainly violence of a kind, made of manners, the thrust of a *bosom* or a *chin*.

*I'm putting my money on the brunette and I'm losing*, you say, laconically, over the steam of your tea.

You see her *almond-shaped nail gleam close to her elongated eye*.

You lose. And the brunette loses, despite her dress of *ash and flame, her white face, her pink forefinger, her round breast which reveals an independent strength beneath the dress*. And in her bid to save the situation, *she risks, in imitation, wrinkling her nose, blinking her eyes and making faces*. And so it closes with this mirror moment—in her final futile plea, she loses her own reflection.

You know this game—you narrate it as if you're playing it, as if you approve of the *resplendent* dark and the *delightful* fair haired, bound as they are by competition, across the pressed tablecloth, and now and then introduce something out of the picture—the blonde's undertones of pungent ink, the brunette's tics. But you told us from the outset that *this brunette, this blonde and I are not going to spend our lives together*. You are observing their folly—that duality learnt and redressed—not taking part. *She plunges a tortoiseshell trident into her hair*.

In the temporal places of the opera box, hotel lobby, dining room, in *The Other Woman, The Other Wife, The Secret, The Portrait*—those other versions of ourselves—you are crafting moments of realisation that lay bare our neuroses and secrets. They function like sharp inhalations—these concentrated, cut down versions of our lives that don't demand we redecorate, unpack our boxes, bed in, but float on the perfumier's tails. Yet with every in and out, in and out that feeds our beating heart—our conscious heart—these become our truest stories.

# I DREAM OF YOU

## (claw at your ankles)

By  
ed maughan-carr

I dream of you 1.

We stand hand in hand looking out over the big black lake, no moon or stars in the sky – only thick swirling cloud racing fast into a midnight unknown. Our ears are swallowed by the slap and croon of restless water, backed by a high wind that thrashes the forest with ease. Little can be seen except a mess of black shadows and haunting shapes – some flitting in nervous confusion, others static and resolute in their faceless moan.

You grip my hand until I can feel no cold, and my palms begin to sweat.

You lift your free hand and point to the blooming clouds. They crack apart and reveal the pale yolk of a full moon, dripping to the earth and basking our shivering bodies in naked midnight goo.

You turn to face me, pressing your head into my shoulder. Your hair is soft and smells of wheat left to rot on soaking ground. Your skin smells of salt; weeds rippling beneath a restless ocean. You begin to weep quietly, as each boom of the ferocious lake swells.

I wrap my arms around you, pressing my fingers into your damp flesh. The clouds recede to reveal a sky moist with stars, rattling their silvery chains without care.

The wind rages.

Trees shake and branches crash.

My shoulder is now soaked with your tears, icy in the night's hollow chill. Leaves whip at our feet, and droplets of water rush from the lake to nip at our legs. The light from the moon bloats until we are fully exposed, two dots swirling in greasy, black ink.

I move you away and your cheeks are bruised, eyes bleeding, mouth agape and gruesome with hatching maggots. I fall to my knees and begin to sink, your flesh falling away onto the muddied ground. I reach out to grab at your ankles, my waist now deep beneath the soil. The flesh falls away to bone and I dig in my nails, flaking and bleeding.

I claw at your ankles.

I dream of you 2.

You smile at me through the harsh shadow of a winter-stripped tree. Cold light cuts black scars across your widespread face.

My chest is tight. Heart thunders. Heavy.

In the empty sky crows swarm on a lonely hawk, a battle of murderous screeches and bloody squawks. A feather lands to the left of my feet. The tip is tinged with dark blood. It smells rank and foul.

You continue to stare at me, smiling, motionless in the burning sun. Your hair shimmers like a spill of crude oil. The greasy strands turn to warm feathers. You open your mouth and stare. No teeth – just a fat, red tongue – throbbing – pulsing.

I cry out but only silence comes. The birds squeal above.

More feathers peel through your cracked pores, winching through the skin to crack black at the edges. Your skin is drowned in a dirty, feathered black.

I try to move towards you, but my legs are weak. My hands brittle. I look down. Gashes cover me, gaping and raw with flesh and blood. They leak pus.

I look back but you are gone – birthed into a bloating and ferocious crow, you spread your wings and beat searing air, throwing salt into my cuts. I cry out again

-silence-

The pain swarms my body, a hot wax holding me still. I vomit feathers, blood and bone. The branches shudder, the shadows now lost on your feathery void; blackened stumps of dead galaxies beyond. I urinate and it streams down my leg, thumbing into the cuts.

My eyes water. Jaw clenches. You open your wings again and fly towards me.

Above the hawk wails.

By  
gertrude gibbons

<sup>1</sup>A garçonnière is primarily a small apartment or studio for sexual liaisons.

<sup>2</sup>Pygmalion is a sculptor from Greek mythology, most familiar through Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, who falls obsessively in love with his creation – an ivory statue made to represent an unattainable ideal of womankind. He imagines the statue is living, and eventually the goddess Venus does bring it to life.

## a response to THOMAS HUTTON

*"The features are those of a real girl, who, you might think, lived, and wished to move, if modesty did not forbid it. Indeed, art hides his art. He marvels: and passion, for this bodily image, consumes his heart. Often, he runs his hands over the work, tempted as to whether it is flesh or ivory, not admitting it to be ivory. He kisses it and thinks his kisses are returned; and speaks to it; and holds it, and imagines that his fingers press into the limbs, and is afraid lest bruises appear from the pressure."*  
Ovid *Metamorphoses* X (trans. AS Kline)

The temptation is to touch. The glowing white surface hypnotises; it appears to emit its own light. This pure light is reflected distantly in the deep blackness of the surrounding wall mirrors. There the glowing pillows appear to float alone in outer space, eerily, like odd-shaped moons. This sense is troubling: the viewer might almost feel an intruder as they observe the sculpture placed on the double mattress in these rooms which were once those of a garçonnière<sup>1</sup>. One is reminded of the usual 'object' belonging upon a mattress, in a room where natural light is dim through the half-drawn curtains, frosted windows, smoky lights and mirrors. Is this object, then, "flesh or ivory"?

No flesh was good enough for Pygmalion<sup>2</sup>, as he criticised imperfection after imperfection of womankind. Instead, he would be content to create his own perfect idol. With obsessive attention, he perfected an ivory figure, so careful that it reflected back the life

## at STUDIOLI ROMA

and warmth that had formed it. The cold stone somehow absorbs its warm creator's feeling, a desperate desire so powerful that it eventually becomes realised; Pygmalion's statue is given life. His own flesh, heart, is consumed by passion for representation, for art. The intensity of this passion is such that art itself is forgotten: "art hides his art"; the journey towards it, the process of making, disappears lost and the object floats pure and alone. There is an ensuing confusion as to whether the heart of flesh Pygmalion is more real than that of his ivory sculpture. Whose stillness is the more filled with motion, whose silence shouts the louder: Pygmalion as he waits, or the sculpture as it forever hovers on the edge of impossible response.

The sculptures upon two mattresses at Studioli were indeed once real pillows. Abandoned at the bottom of a travertine quarry in Tivoli, the cushions were used to remove stone from the quarry walls. Now they are entombed in plaster of the same calcite they once helped prise from the Earth. Like Pygmalion's heart, art has consumed, literally encapsulated, these real pillows. An object becomes an art object. Its 'reality' has been hidden, veiled under an illusion of cloth reminiscent of sculpted cloaks on tomb effigies. "Flesh conceals bones" writes Thomas Hutton describing his exhibition at Studioli. Layer upon layer obscures, covers what lies beneath. The real object is masked by the illusion of a real object, such that its reality is negated. And there is a two-way

exchange of substance: flesh covers bone and, equally, soft 'flesh' (both physically as that of the underlying pillows, and imagined as that of a human object upon the mattress) is here covered by hard calcite. Pygmalion loses his heart but his art gains one, and his idea is 'given flesh', its ivory concealed.

Here there is a play between juxtaposing objects and sensations: the hard false pillow upon the soft genuine mattress; a clean, pure and glowing object upon an absorbent and dull bed. The bed feels too hard and cold; the sculpture too perfect, precious, holy. Its most proper place seems the dark depths of the mirror, perhaps recalling the words "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). We wish to touch it, and by touching it satiate our hunger for that real beyond the mirror.





# RESIDENT STRANGER

By  
fiona glen

Pale filaments of undersea gunge churn hypnotically in the dramatically downlit water. Lashing into sight, a distinctively octopodal arm tapers from whip-slim to muscle-dense, flourishes with open suckers, is followed close by a pulse of head-body, slips between new blooms of rolling arm whorls.

*We take our way of existence for granted. But there are other ways of being.*

If this is what you see, then you are on your sofa or your bed, in company or alone, eyes on a television. Or, with your laptop resting on your knee, you watch each sucker cup blossom within a browser tab. Your screen, a hard-edged rectangle of liquid-crystal clarity, becomes an aquarium of shifting shapes and colours. And now, illuminated by the glow of the tank, you see our narrator in the studious profile of a human male, aged around fifty. He trains his attentive gaze on a great terracotta-coloured octopus, pressing its thinking limbs against the glass just centimetres away.

*I'm going out on a limb a little... Taking my octopus fascination a step further.*

Cut to a cowslip-yellow wall, unmistakably domestic, punctuated with picture frames and table lamps. Flat as a theatre backdrop, the scene is suddenly occupied by a frayed, disembodied shadow – and an octopus rises into the shot, arms rippling as she levitates, suspended in invisible water, in front of ornamental plates and

prints that bear her likeness. In fades the text 'The Octopus in My House', hovering around Heidi the octopus as she hangs, apparently mid-air in the archetypal living room. Astounding as an apparition or an alien craft, she is presented, at home in an environment that is not her element.

For the next hour, you will follow Heidi's strange homestay with Professor David Scheel (a marine biologist and our narrator) and his teenage daughter Laurel. The passage of a year will be signposted by the Alaskan seasons changing around their modest suburban house, by shots of a mailbox perched by a leaf-strewn driveway, or moose wandering over snow-laden lawns.

*In the wild, I visit them for only as long as I can stay in the water... What would I find out if I invited an octopus into my house?*

BBC's 'The Octopus in my House' (2019) embodies a cultural (less a literal) appetite for octopus that is swelling in the Western world; our desire for proximity and connection with an entrancing animal that is better illustrated by the documentary's alternate title on PBS, 'Octopus: Making Contact'. This is a fortunate moment for Professor Scheel to be commissioned to fulfil his octopus specialist's dream of closer study, although he will stress to you that he is 'not trying to do science here', but thinking. Heidi is an idea brought lithe and writhing to his Anchorage home, in a permeable transportation bag designed for delicate marine creatures, in a few gallons of

warmish water, in a polystyrene crate marked FRAGILE.

No, not brought, invited – a word you will hear often over the hour, as we, the audience, surely must have Heidi's imprisonment, far from the warm seas where her life began, presented as a graciously accepted welcome. The documentary would hardly be air-able otherwise, when we so desperately want animals to reflect our society. We yearn for David Attenborough to tell us relatable tales of a Planet Earth full of protective parents and thwarted courtships; we visit the zoo to see the animal families, happily home in their units. We are constantly exercising the capacity to see animal others and our encounters with them as we wish to, making it easy to imagine reciprocity into the Heidi experiment. Let's play house.

The imaginative traffic flows both ways – we animalise our domestic, and domesticise the animal. David Scheel describes how octopuses make their dens 'home', not just 'shelter'. Dwarfed by a giant Pacific octopus lying placidly on the seafloor of his local bay, the scuba-suited professor describes how 'they throw the hard shells outside their door... You can get a lot of information from looking at their garbage piles' – the tell-tale middens of debris that mark an octopus den.

Patronising or accessible? Distorting or poetic?

We are a metaphor-making animal, our worlds filled with emotion and imagination. We are tool beings, language beings, flawed beings, and these are the flawed linguistic tools we have – games that clutch at connection. Welcome home,

Heidi. That name, attributed to an initial shyness, begins to remind me of the Heidi series, stories of an adventurous little girl growing up in the Alps (and my mother's favourite childhood books).

## chapter 1. heidi moves in

Before the big day, Laurel and David Scheel rearrange their living room. They point and gesture, then rotate the sofa. A gaggle of neighbours in thick winter coats bumble endearingly as they shuffle the heavy tank through the house.

Homely quirks: a knitted octopus nestling inside David Scheel's glass desk lamp, while a felted one dangles from another.

When it is time to release Heidi from her netted bag into the water (suckers clutching at human fingers), Scheel speaks to her in a low, tender voice: 'nope, nope, not yet – just a minute – there you go.' She flows out into her new world, clambers to a corner. Then two curious, complex organisms regard each other from two sides of the glass.

## chapter 2. heidi makes a friend

Cautiously, Laurel approaches the tank from the opposite side of the room. Mirrored in its glass, she lifts a hand to wave. Positioned somewhere between an unorthodox pet and an exchange student educating her adoptive family with her unfamiliar worldview, Heidi is actually a compromise between father and daughter. Her animacy and interactivity fulfil

Laurel's long-standing desire for a dog, quelling her campaign for a more common companion animal.

*An octopus is kinda fun because it comes running...  
They're pretty affectionate.*

Now Heidi and Laurel have their arms entwined. Close-ups of sucker cups pulling at skin, leaving pink-puckered rings, narrate this strange intimacy. David Scheel wonders if Heidi, with her chemically sensing skin, can taste the oestrogen Laurel shares with her. Foils for each other, the mollusc and the girl develop an 'extraordinary' relationship over the months; a humanising friendship.

We learn that octopuses are part of only 1% of animals known to use tools; it is clear that they enjoy play, experimenting with objects for pure entertainment, an exceptional trait in the invertebrate world. 'Oooh, you got it, you vicious predator!' growls David Scheel as Heidi wins a game and a morsel of shrimp.

Familiar alien, resident stranger, Heidi is both like and unlike us. The documentary plays constantly on this border, splicing together the warm, golden tones of domesticity with the cool, filtered blues of an aqueous world. Now, your screen is cut vertically by a wall – David Scheel prepares dinner in the kitchen on your left, while Heidi lashes her limbs around her own contained domicile, on the right.

### chapter 3. heidi watches tv

Clamping herself to the upper corner of the tank, where the vantage is best, Heidi angles herself correctly. Her eyes widen; she begins to breathe faster. We see Laurel watching the octopus as she watches the television – Blue Planet. The girl stands up and adjusts the screen to better face her companion.

*She's taking part in our lives outside the tank...  
And so, we have TV time with the octopus.*

### chapter 4. heidi owns the image

Heidi is spectacular, her fluid movements enviably hypnotic to the eyes of a bone-filled mammal. Broadcast to hundreds of thousands of human homes, she is among the myriad animal spectacles with which we patch the absence of real animal movement, sound, and touch. Laurel drops her iPhone, clamped in a waterproof case, into Heidi's command. We see the human smiling down at us, the submerged eye, as she laughs, 'well, now she's filming me!'

Within twenty-four hours, four friends and colleagues from different countries and demographics send me a link to a fast-motion clip of the sleeping Heidi, stuck suckered near the surface of her tank, changing colour so dramatically that she appears to be animated. You could almost narrate the body changes and narrate the dream. Since her documentary aired across the USA, her alchemical, unconscious shifts have dispersed through uneven international digital networks, swollen through trend trajectories and personalised content feeds, to reach me, multiply, virally, again.

# THE VITRUVIAN MAN ON THE MOON

By  
greer dale-foulkes

the vitruvian man on the moon

jim carrey  
jim carrey  
jim carrey:

the grounding incantation for any mid-week malady  
—a spoonful of mysticism that makes the crash  
crisis that certain comes go down, down, down;  
like devouring fruit pastilles  
whilst reciting only the minor notes of a bach symphony,  
watching the sugar crystals wolf-whip  
the major chords in the mirror, tongue out,  
as The Mask cradles you in the background.

jim carrey  
jim carrey  
jim carrey:

you are more tenacious than tulipomania  
more capacious than your hyphenated, hyper-extenuated behaviour  
more ostentatious than a macadamia posing as a lemon—  
i could squeeze you rotten you vitruvian vulture—  
jim carrey jim carrey jim ....

carrey.

a basketballer on heat has less  
lift than you do less  
vomit gift to the groundlings than you do less  
chafing too, i suspect,  
like irving suspects the spherical. to sink  
into a bath of unused jokes that have lain, gin stained, on a comedy club floor in toron-  
to  
still seeping into the fibres of a discarded napkin  
is to dimly detect, touch the corners of your kaufmanniana-contentment  
like millais touched water and knew what weeping wasn't,  
or at least brushed the business of not knowing with his resentment.

jim carrey jim carrey jim  
carrey:  
you know about borders more than most,  
you know how to swallow sink the ghosts and make them  
dance in the belly  
like a burlesque without nipple tassels in the houses of commons,  
like an un-popped cherry, frigid but frazzled and crying  
out for jam jelly doughnuts in the middle of math class  
like a banker needs a dominatrix  
like jo needed her hair  
like my hand touching your poster, wet with wear and thinking  
i could grow teeth like yours if i  
smiled wide enough if i  
caressed buddha with my pinky and  
wrote my manifestations in invisibly inky.

jim carrey:  
bite every bit of my i can't  
oh!—  
and sit in that gentle, steaming seat of the universe  
and rest from teaching us how to care  
less.

jim carrey:  
i am here and you are there and we are  
bathing in the orbit in its compass sprawl in the confetti as it  
falls in the green lines that burrow and link  
malibu with the tube as you  
look to the ocean and wink and i  
fidget flip an insensible giggle  
rip—  
rage, rage, RAGE jim.

Alrighy then.

jim carrey  
jim carrey  
jim

carrey.



# GOING NOWHERE

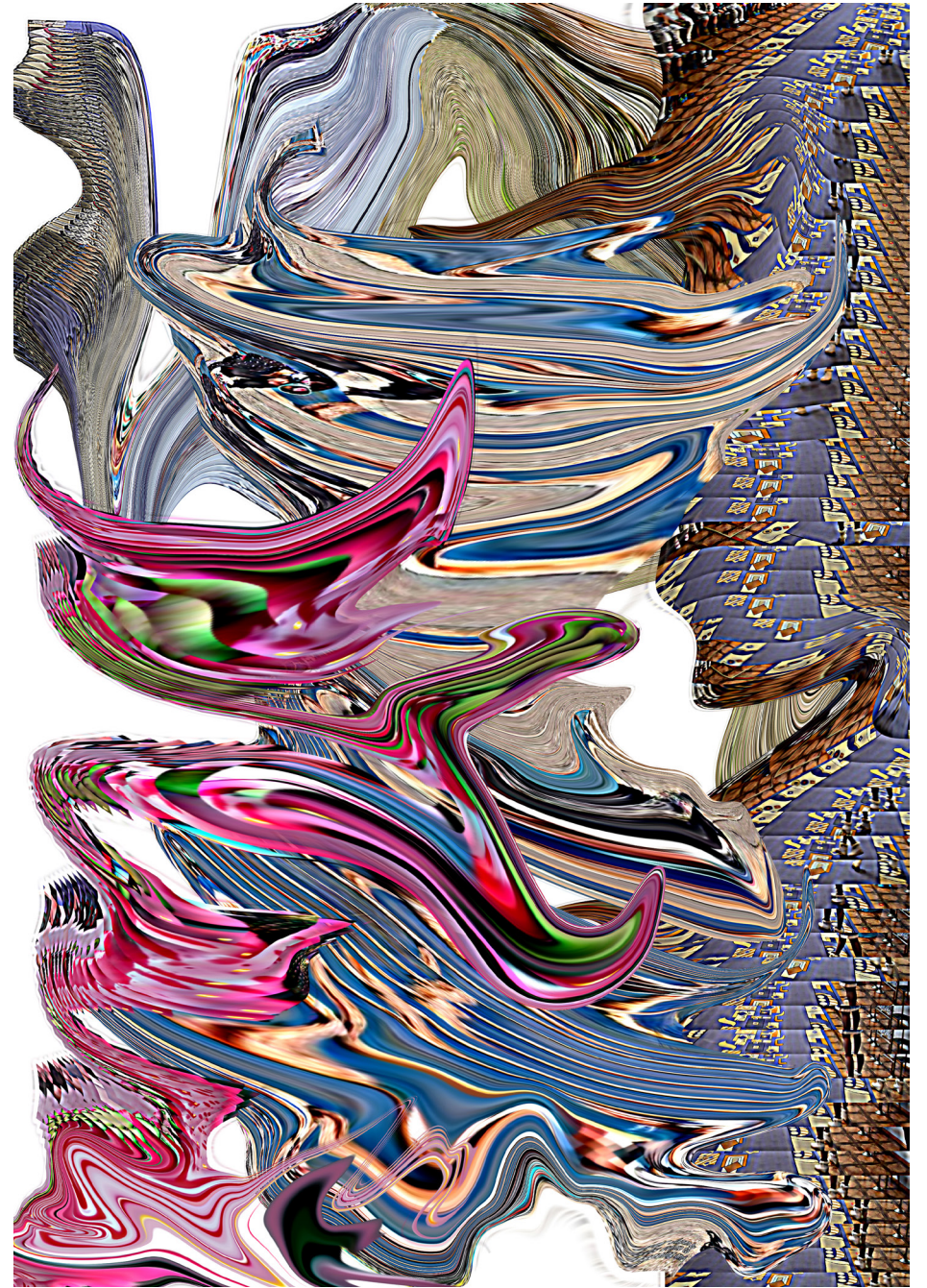
By  
baleska noemi

he liked when he liked what everyone supposedly disliked. feeling cautious. watching the thoughts others planted in his environment. it comforted him to focus on the crinkled london eyes in the seats and the way they plastered a larger map over a less convenient version. giving him sensitivity and a heritage to squeeze in. patterns to make him a little rectangle holding onto another one. one “excuse me” holding onto a “sorry”. could they tell the difference of him by his wandering eyes? or did the headphones even it out? it felt random to him. as if he might as well just slip from the surface of the self-made definition of this segment of people in this segment of vehicle. as if he could be the wrong human for the circumstance but the definition of the circumstance would never be wrong. was the girl at the window less pretty because of the unnatural redness on her ears? or was it the make-up that made her ears stand out? or the brightness making him see her in a different light? pretty wasn’t wrong. behind locked doors and walls so narrow he couldn’t believe he wasn’t feeling their scratches. wondering if not everyone had the irrational desire to put one’s finger in the stream, touch the tunnel, just once. if someone amplified just one detail – he swore the spark would have the power to kick-start humanity right there. at the peak of collectiveness where nothing seemed human. it might as well just be everything. this nothingness of going nowhere a

network making no individual move possible anyway. rooting again to the children, the eating, the sleeping. he used to play with his thoughts trying to figuring out from afar if the other one was asleep or drunk, both or neither, or had a phone in their hands that he couldn’t see and that didn’t look back at them anymore. maybe no one dared watching because the anonymity made the space the sacred bit of self unawareness and hyper awareness at the same time. making space to let go and be tight all together. being close and further on levels he could unravel with every evening standard. either prepared or falling off his frame again. not being used to seeing unoccupation. every book that surfaced yet another possibility to be active. to turn around and go back. to what we are, what we can be, to how we should love and find ourselves and do yoga and keep learning and make careers, how to sleep and eat and how our world will end tomorrow if we remain seated and don’t take our belongings with us. all readers almost floating on the same nostalgia into separate abysses. sinking into his idea of a dichotomy creating the disruption to be visible. being that glitch. for everyone to reach the destinations under his view. where more time was waiting for their interpretation of them and his idea of himself as part of them and articles on us and papers of now and jobs for yesterday and thoughts for at home and drinks for nothing.

# 600 frames

Over 600 frames of footage depict examples of immaterial and traditional labour from across the world. They have been manually compiled and digitally altered to serve as a visualisation of the complex relationship between the Self and the Other in contemporary geopolitical labour conditions.



By  
emily schofield



# contact

By  
fiona glen

*Creatures touch edges and tread in each other's traces: shed hair, trails of mucus, shattered claws, secretions, scat, and scabs. We live in the debris of many kinds, amongst their lively textures, sounds, and scents. So, let yourself brush a rain-wet pelt; let another type of tongue taste your skin; listen for the sink of pond-dwellers who sensed you first; find the feel and form of animal bodies in the world around you. We are never ourselves without these others.*





# victorian portraits 01 and 02



By  
ike stiltz



# self love



# PICKLED

first exchange: after the change has happened, it is difficult to get out

*Ari is a university student specializing in performative arts and music. We met online several years ago and we keep a long-distance friendship. She has the peculiar characteristic of being able to often say the right thing at the right moment, without realizing. She is an impulsive empathiser, and sometimes she hurts herself too much because of this.*

*When I ask her about Pickled Sentiments we are both in a bar drinking cappuccinos. She has just finished eating a custard donut. She licks her lips to get rid of the sugar crystals, and looks at me confused. This is when we start.*

« So, I am writing this series of transcribed chats, it's completely anonymous, and I am writing the second chapter. I would like to ask you, what do you think about the fermentation of feelings? You can ask me questions! It's an exploration, so I am also not sure about what it is. »

*« Is there a theory about it? About the word fermentation? Did you read anything about it? »*

« Yes, well, from a chemical point of view fermentation is the transformation of a food or drink from a state to another, like wine or beer... or milk. »

*« I was actually talking about milk. I immediately thought about milk. »*

« How do you mean? »

*« I don't know I just thought about cheese and milk straight away. And then I thought*

*about sentiments... I am not sure, it's difficult. The transition from a state to another... I was thinking more about fermentation in a sense of a persistent, durable sentiment that doesn't mutate, but roots even deeper. But I guess if it is the passage from one state to another... »*

« Well, it is also how you want to see it. »

*« I associate to fermented feelings more of a negative connotation rather than a positive one, if you don't know how to manage them. Because after the change has happened, it is difficult to get out of it with mental mechanisms that don't destroy you. »*

« Do you think that the fermentation of a feeling can have negative repercussions on the subject? »

*« Yes, as well as positive ones. There is a 50/50 possibility, it depends on how you face this sentiment and, above all, towards whom this feeling is directed. In reality, I'm always thinking negatively. When an ugly sentiment, tied to an ugly happening, ferments, it triggers mental mechanisms in which you blame yourself, you try to find "the error", what you did wrong, what you could have changed... and you find yourself in a loop that is difficult to escape. »*

« And "the error" is like the enzyme that starts the fermentation? »

*« It could be, yes. Yes, because every sentiment if excessively fermented can drift you negatively or positively. Especially in relation to the attachment to someone. Even when the attachment is positive and healthy, it can bring you to a morbid,*

# SENTIMENTS

*unhealthy attachment. When you can't live without them. It's strange, but I can only think about it negatively. »*

« Why do you think it is about the morbidity of relationships? »

*« Because I keep seeing dynamics between friends and lovers around me that I don't like. »*

« For example? »

*« I see superficial relationships. I would never be friends with someone I can't talk to. I see these friendships with these 'unseasoned people' that cannot confront serious issues, or that behave like they are constantly making fun of you. »*

« And how do you associate this to fermentation? »

*« Well, if you have feelings for a person like this even if they are like this, the feelings will develop. I don't understand why, but they will. I forgot where we started from, but I see these dysfunctional dynamics everywhere, and it is rare for me to spot a couple with balanced dynamics, where mutual respect is practiced, where there is a right fermentation of feelings and values. »*

« Fermentation or transformation of feelings and values? »

*« Both. The only couple that I can think of where this happens and happened through time is my cousin and his partner. They still look in love with each other like they were at the beginning of their relationship. There is much respect between them, you know, those intimate glazes that say so*

*much. They still touch each other after twenty years of being together. I see that sentiment grow every day, and every day it becomes bigger and every day it is there. Respect grows and love grows. And that is positive, but not easy, because it requires hard work from both parties, and if the effort comes only from one or from none of them, the sentiment becomes sour. It crushes and it stains. »*

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*Pickled Sentiments is an ongoing project that reflects on the fermentation of feelings, and how the chemical process of fermentation metaphorically relates to the human mind. But what is a "pickled sentiment"? I will try to unravel this through a series of surrealist dialogues; manipulating real life interviews, to protect the identity of my interviewees and to convey the thoughts expressed by each of them efficiently, obviously with their consent, and creating experimental readings that will tackle the topic from different perspectives.*

By  
elena lo presti



# UN-MODEL FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

## review of (eco)logical sense

*Forwards for the fairweathered knotweed; onwards for the economic development model? Sustain Lab is working against immediacy and small- or single-scale thinking in their recent show at the Hockney Gallery*

Right now, we find ourselves between a rock and a hard place; one being the bureaucratic bloating of higher education and the other being the fundamental compromises of cut-throat business strategies. And what a small space it is between them.

Bordered with UCU strikes and email-chain bedlam, this space, the fine-line-hairline-fracture seems more like fantasy than certainty. With the Royal College of Art's five-year, ten-year, X-year plans at serious risk of students' and staffs' rejection, the Sustain Lab has produced its own alternative to the university's clean-cut, multi-step cash-grab plot in the form of a group exhibition. In opposition to the lack of environmentally and socially sustainable conditions on campus, *(Eco) logical Sense* radically breaks away from the claustrophobia of university-business models and their ceremonial scheming. The show instead focuses on possibilities over planning, and consideration over consumption. As un-models, the artworks displayed highlight fragmentation, experimentation, scholarship and a future in potentials.

A model is usually a small-scale strategy of a large-scale operation, a successful operation—at least economically speaking. And while prototypes such as Liz M Miller's *Future Wardrobe* and experimentations such as Marina Belintani's *Japanese Knotweed Project* are included, I hesitate to describe any of the show's pieces as 'models' because of a basic philosophical distinction in intention. As seen in recent university-wide developments, models for a more sustainable future are not promised to be carried through, or adopted into the larger university's governance (the very existence of the student-run Sustain Lab was grounded on the university's abandonment of the Sustain RCA Lab in 2016). The idea of 'models' as an appropriate method of future-proofing no longer holds any weight because they do not guarantee completion or directly include crucial flexibility, the malleability required in today's socio-political climate. I therefore suggest the term 'model' be used only for more mono-focussed plans. Plans that largely disregard issues like sustainability, ethics, age, gender and accessibility. The existence of models for a more sustainable future thus seems like an oxymoron, tainted by neo-capitalism and efficiency.

By  
nina hanz

As a 'Lab', such group shows are usually burdened with research, fantasy and ideals. Limited not in terms of values or concerns, but follow-through. But instead of proposing diluted plans for a possible future, the artists and researchers of the Sustain Lab use art to oppose such damp business-fixated tactics. What the Sustain Lab has displayed are what I propose are un-models, artworks that take the consideration of planning and modelling to draft and produce new possibilities with an awareness for the long-term future. Un-models are not in opposition as suggested by its prefix, but a further-development; their opposition lies not with modelling per se, but in their contextual use of models as currently misused by recent trends in massification, economic exploitation and lack in thoughtfulness. Un-models try to undo these paths. As a result, the works displayed in the Hockney Gallery are free flowing, reflective, profoundly reformist and constructed with a care that allows makes them socially and environmentally responsible.

One part of the criteria of taking such an un-modelled approach is functionality, multi-functionality. To the left of the gallery space is a body-sized windmill, an *Air Pigment machine*. Developed by Peter Green, the sculpture was built from found objects—reclaimed steel, reclaimed aluminium, waste material. The multi-blade rotor, dirty and chipping, rests on top a lattice structure ready for harvest. Reminiscent of both farmlands and industrial landscapes, this functional sculpture harnesses wind power to produce sustainable etching ink from pollutants. This structure is a prime example of un-modelling, of a taking single-purpose materials and re-imagining, re-modelling their use to meet new environmental expectations in the arts. It is not just a solution, but an actualisation. No longer simply an idea, a model.

As with conventional model-building, sustainable un-modelling requires experimentation. Yet the importance of this concept is that they challenge the unforeseeable futures by thinking further than the single-quadrant economic model. This multi-dimensional thinking is what allows the exhibition to be so effective.

Throughout the whole exhibition various modes of research are made prominent.

# UN-MODEL FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE (cont.)

Through sculptures, videos, sound pieces and prints, (Eco)logical Sense highlights the various methodology from Woo Jin Joo's prominent plastic knotting to Marina Belintani's sharing her studies. Much like a responsible brand might make their supply chain transparent and open, Belintani displays various tests made from the Japanese Knotweed. As a particularly widespread plant, its roots, stem, leaf, flower are an accessible and viable natural dye for fabrics, woods. Resting on thin ledges, different textures and tones make little patterns like soil layers. Not dirty, but born from. Working with the excesses of the environment, Belintani has carefully curated fabric swatches and plant samples, pristine in tiny jars, to demonstrate a new lifecycle for the plant, delaying decomposable, organic waste and offering an eco-friendly alternative to an otherwise harsh chemical industry.

Models, business or otherwise, value immediacy and of course solution-finding, qualities that are not necessarily debauched. But paired with output and capital, they can be crippling in the long-term. Marina Belintani's, visual explanation makes sustainable thinking easily comprehended and applied—practical, sculptural. And most importantly, its value-systems are wider than just profit. The exhibitions un-models therefore share a layers affect, like multiple pages perfect-bound and hard-covered. It is not the planning or research faulting the conventional model, but the execution. Betty Brunfault and Magda Tritto likewise demonstrate this in their *RCA Sustainability Report 2020*.

Questioning the universities approach to sustainability, and lack of recognition for student/staff values, the report cross-references of the university's governance model and commitments to a sustainable global economy. The sustainability report is not only factual and comprehensive, but well-conceived, designed to promote critical thinking and to magnify individual voices alongside crucial data. As it is the RCA's first of its kind, Brunfault and Tritto invited Dr. Paul Thompson to the show's private viewing. Receiving a decline to their invitation from Vice Chancellor's office, the two decided to frame the email correspondence above their book to demonstrate true transparency. While models usually remain rigid and shrink other issues for fiscal profits, this report has not lost the fine details that otherwise get lost in the trickling stream of information made available directly from the university's business model.

For me, the beauty of the group exhibition really comes from these layers, the uncompromising dedication for the creative practices to be leading towards more widespread

and inclusive design. Addressing issues of coastal erosion and rising sea levels, Harriet Hellman's *Ebb and Flow* captures this multi-layered approach perfectly. In her film, we see a rounded object being dropped from a cliff. Getting closer, we see it is a mass of unfired clay. Fingerprints notched into its soft form. We see waves crashing, knowing the clay might disappear into these tides. But we know from the two sculptures included in the exhibition that not all of these forms go missing. Now dry, their once cream-coloured body is now teething with the forces of Devon's maritime boarder. Like soil layers, the clay objects are eroded, tides ripping them into thin sheets with rock imprints now prominent. And like soil layers, they are encrusted in stripes of dirt within its original pristine cream. For me, these clay sculptures are the perfect example of what I am trying to describe as un-models because they are condensed symbols of the larger issues our oceans face daily. And in doing so, they also cultivate a weighty status within a culture of not-doing-enough. These layers hold importance, not just knowledge, but an awareness that things could change at a landslides pace, the rotation of a windmill, a cloud's condensation. As un-models, they know layers lead us closer to a future where we sometimes need to give-up complete control in favour of adaptation, making sure our methods have a multi-focused viewpoint, that our methods have the openness too thinking in new possibilities.

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# call me by your sign

On upcoming Aquarius & Pisces seasons, heartbreak, and some advice to Aquarians out there.

*‘Let the sun shine, let the sunshine in...’\**

\*the epilogue scene from ‘The 40-Year-Old Virgin’ when people dancing in circles around Steve Carell\* (who is, by the way, a Leo)

...and this is how I’d love to greet you people for this installment of astro guidance for Aquarius season! Also, another reason to sigh (peacefully) is that Pisces season will kick in soon. We have left the tremendous and stressful 2019, full of retrogrades, and Capricorn season is behind us. So, let’s surrender to the fluidity, intuitive threads and volatility of Aquarius & Pisces combo. Please, do not wait long on sharing your sacred data of planets and signs and email me any questions or doubts. I promise I will not be an intimidating, TMI type!

Another element to factor into the current heavenly domino effect of the planetary alignment is that Mars is in Sagittarius (it has been there since the beginning of January) and that quite responses the vibe of these Air and Water seasons. In other words, we have all the reasons to fly and no Earth can stop it, as no stress is worth it.

Is there something ominous about the fact the Western day of Love actually exists in the season of Aquarius? It is just a couple of days away from the most obvious season it could belong to. As we know (some from extremely close experience) love under Aquarian rule is peculiar, as Aquarius is in its nature. Although, under the armor of Aerial rationality, Aquarius marries ties and connections of friendship and romance, or even equals friendship and romance. Although it can all be gone with the Southern or Eastern winds the next moment. Perhaps the ease and coolness of the air will help us stay saintly and go through the steadiness of winter and all the challenges it predicts for the current year.

*“Thoughts were snakes shooting through high grasses. Now you see them, now you don’t. As you walk in the high grasses, you must take a stick and beat the ground. Scare up the snakes, purses them to the edge of the field into the open and see them, exorcise them.”*

Modern Love, Constance DeJong

Talking about the most culturally and commercially proclaimed month of love, February, it is impossible to not mention Heartbreak (the most cursed word that we do not pronounce...). A sinister cliché of the commercialisation of the industry surrounding Valentine’s Day. Which of the signs could absorb and appreciate the notion of cliché the most? Pisces, Taurus!? Let’s stick with Pisces. As it comes with aches and blood of Heartbreak, you really want to believe yours is the only exception in a million and that

you didn’t get caught in the webs you know so well. Sadly or luckily it all aligns in the perspective of a cliché that we despise as much as we know by heart. Blame Aquarius for that if... They might share with you a hell of a lot of conspiracy theories, be your fun friend from the moment you met and tell you all anti-mainstream tips. Something might even be spark in your hollow dead-inside-meme-like substance. But they just disappeared and they didn’t genuinely mean it. Also, it is not in their spirit to do flashy comebacks. The same feelings of cliché brings freedom once you realise that you are free (from good-ol’ feeling). Just like that \*fingers snap\* and you seem to be seeing things in a normal way again. Not romanticising, just the boring way they are. Most important – you can be yourself again. Here are tips from Pisces on how to deal with that sassy Aquarius, who does not mind others’ hearts:

\* point out to Aquarius the things they like that are pretty popular among everyone  
\* just daydream about having a night walk like in Manhattan (1979) with your new victim

*“Cut me and I bleed Dior.”*

– Liz Taylor (American Horror Story)

*“February. Get ink, shed tears”*

– Boris Pasternak

What if you are an Aquarian and you are single this time? (As I received a semi-anonymous and semi-request on that issue). Nope, you haven’t broken hearts and no one has taken yours yet. This season for you here to focus on treating your inner self (and it is promising it will be successful, if you, Aquarius, just try, because Venus proceeds from Pisces) and step out to be there for people you want to care about. Well, yeh! That is a huge YES billboard to answer this question. Generally, looking at all the migrations around the blue skies between Moon, Venus, Mercury and Mars. I’d dare to say Kirakira skies as it looks like LOVE is a big thing this season in 2020. In any possible way how you identify it. It will work out! This way, as a punch line for Aquarians out there, I’d say you will have to pick up from your opposite Leo on material generosity and promise me that you won’t be stuck with romantically unavailable people this year. It won’t be a cliché this time, rather, a brand new flow of things.

Good luv!

*I want your lo-o-o-o-ove...*

\*bridge from *You Spin Me Round (Like a Record)* music video\*

By  
linda jagidulina

Dear Art College,

Your monthly report from me from the future (2060). Unfortunately, I have some more bad news.

One day last month the intersection of temperature/humidity was low enough to go outside without dying immediately. (By the way this combined temperature measurement is called Wet Bulb Temperature, won't bore you with the details it's how we tend to measure temperature in the future, but honestly you're grand and don't need to worry about it at all if you have air conditioning in your house).

I spent some of that day going outside.

Jesus Fucking Christ lads, have any of ye actually been outside? That shit is mad. Here is a list of some things I saw that disgusted me:

1. Someone had poured thousands and thousands of bottles of Fiji water down a mountainside. It was collecting in a giant puddle at the bottom and whoever was paid to clean it up was doing a really bad job. I went on google maps and it's been there at least since the satellite last passed over two years ago, so no excuses there really.

2. Couldn't really make heads nor tails of this, but I think I stumbled across some raw paper factories. There were all kinds of contaminants in and around them, including animals literally shitting amongst them. I won't be buying paper from that company any more.

3. Some mad bastard had carpeted half the asphalt but they'd chosen green - not the colour I'd have chosen and didn't look very good, can hardly have improved the function.

So with all of this in mind I have done some reflecting, after recuperating for a few days in my bed from the shock. I've come to some conclusions. But...actually back to my last point, come on, how hard is it to keep animals out of somewhere? I was surprised to see any living commodities allowed outside at all, let alone being let to run free & unsupervised amongst a fragile unprocessed resource, I'm going to complain.

Back to my conclusions I have taken away from this, I hope you agree.

1. Someone between you in 2020 and me in the future (happy new decade by the way) has really fucked something up if this is what it looks like outside now.

2. At some point you guys allowed capitalism to break down, which was pretty shitty of you, so I'd encourage you to stick with it so you don't have to live in a future as fucked up as this.

3. Don't go outside again that shit's not worth it and I don't like it. (This one's more a takeaway just for me.)

Which leads me on to a final set of conclusions or takeaways that are action points you in the past MUST do for the next forty years to avoid this untenable climate situation in the future.

1. Given that the way to keep capitalism afloat is endless unbound continual limitless never-ending infinite growth I would encourage you to stop thinking of ecosystems like "arctic tundra", "other human bodies", and "space" sympathetically so that you can just go ahead and start processing their material resources right now.

2. Maybe on that point stop building solar power and wind farms and tidal generators because that renewable shit isn't very efficient and maybe that's where it went wrong. I wouldn't expect any of you to be able to help fix/change/control anything going on outside if you're already hampered by your choice to use inconvenient energy sources.

If you follow these action points you'll be able to have a headstart on much more of the market and its capital accumulation, and therefore have a bigger political say on the decisions that are going to have a big effect on the world for much of its future. Hopefully you won't have to suffer through what I experienced when I went outside a few weeks ago.

You'll be able to choose things like, what colour the carpets are for the asphalt once everyone stops going outside and what cleaning company is contracted for mopping up Fiji water spills.

Lots of love from the future,  
Humanity

For the next issue we are exploring  
**'THE FAKE'** and **'THE REAL'**.  
Send notes, pitches, questions, ideas,  
writings, or visual submissions to  
[thepluralist.rca@gmail.com](mailto:thepluralist.rca@gmail.com).

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