

Ways of Living #2

Penny Goring, Win McCarthy, R.I.P. Germain,

Frieda Toranzo Jaeger

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“The house shelters the dreams, the house allows one to dream in peace.”

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard argues the importance of having one's own dwelling. The spaces we inhabit, he argues, are repositories of our memories, and therefore of our very selves: *“the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind”*.

If space is where the self exists, how do individuals find a sense of space in places where attachment to space is devalued or even denied? We understand here the idea of dwelling not in terms of property ownership but as the right to one's sense of belonging, as an individual and as a community.

Under late capitalism, attachment to space has increasingly become a luxury that most do not have access to. This is especially palpable in today's biggest cities, where the urban landscape is ever-shifting as a result of aggressive real estate practices and the privatisation of public spaces, while gentrification leads to the continuous displacement of entire communities. Beyond the centuries-old loss of the commons, even the imagination of public space is predicated on a public only quantifiable when passing as consumer. Cities are littered with anti-homeless spikes and pedestrianised commerce (only) zones - here even twentieth century ideas of the flaneur or mallrat are obliterated, and the act of 'hanging out' a suspicious and impossible activity.

Ways of Living #2 asks how maintaining a sense of individual and collective belonging is possible in a society where space is subject to such precarity.

Precarity, as framed by Judith Butler, is a politically induced and unequally distributed state of instability and dependence.¹ This instability, or transience, compounds the unreachability of a dwelling. The works presented in *Ways of Living #2* assert the importance of carving space for oneself against the totalising structures of late capitalism.

If the house is, according to Bachelard, the shelter of our dreams, it is also the place where imagination and creativity begins. The house is where Penny Goring makes all of her work, as she prefers creating from the safety of a home and never had a studio. It is in her home that Goring's memories unravel before being transmuted into her works. With the *ART HELL* series, her traumas and anxieties give birth to mental visions that are projected into tiny iconic vignettes, where motifs and characters repeat and recur at

¹ Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, 2009

will. Like the home, the works act as repositories of the artist's self, but they aren't simply autobiography; they speak of a violence that is structural, universal and commonplace.

In her paintings, Frieda Toranzo Jaeger posits intimacy, lesbian sexuality and love as modes of resistance against technological capitalism. In *Visions* and *Dead Inside*, the engine, represented through car interiors and spaceships, act as symbols of late capitalism's obsession with progress through autonomy, speed and innovation. The question of space is central to Toranzo Jaeger's practice, as the artist continuously questions the space of painting: that of the picture plane, as her works consistently refuse the possibility of pictorial illusion, but also that of the painting itself as an object, as a body. The exploration of the space of paintings conveys a reflection on the relationship between the inner self and the outside world, a concern that is shared with Win McCarthy, whose practice contains an ongoing exploration of the boundaries of individuality: where does the world end and the self begin? At the centre of his work lies a quest for the self amongst the destructive logics of urban capitalism.

In *Large Baby Xerox 1* and *2*, images of a baby doll are scaled up to almost the size of a grown adult, floating in dark space. The result is both striking and uncanny: the doll, a figure of childhood innocence, appears unsettling, compelling us with its presence. Are we born innocent, asks McCarthy? Can those who benefit from capitalism and its obsession with opportunity and possibility, ever be innocent? For what remains from this perpetual quest for progress is an inevitable sense of emptiness.

R.I.P. Germain's installation *J.D.D... S.Y.M (Farin)*, which occupies a corner of the gallery, functions as a place of ritual within the exhibition, a sanctuary that visitors are invited to enter. Inside this delimited space, the audience can accompany the artist through the process of ridding himself from the memory of a painful family event that exposes the physical and mental trauma of being subjected to structural racism. Visitors are invited to take an active part in the ritual by throwing sheets from both stacks of letters into the barrel as well as by writing down a memory or thought that they might want to get rid of themselves, before throwing it in the barrel. The various pieces of paper gathered in the barrel will then be burnt on the next new moon, following the Tao, Buddhist and Pagan traditions that inspired the artwork. With this installation, R.I.P. Germain creates a space of safety and community within the gallery, willing together a site where our memories can no longer hurt us and where the shared experience of a ritual allows us to carve a space for ourselves, a repository of selves sheltered against systemic violence.

Penny Goring (lives and works in London, UK) makes drawings, paintings, sculptures, videos, and poems that access recurring personal trauma visions, and by layering these with grief, anxiety, imagination and rage, the subsequent invented mythologies become explorations of a contemporary state of emergency. Recent solo exhibitions include No Escape from Blood Castle, Arcadia Missa, London, UK, 2021; Those Who Live Without Torment, Galleria Federico Vavassori, Milan, IT, 2021; Escape from Blood Castle, Campoli Presti, Paris, FR, 2020. Recent group exhibitions include Paint, also known as Blood, group show at MoMA Warsaw, PL, 2019; I, I, I, I, I, I, I, Kathy Acker, ICA, London, UK, 2019; and Virginia Woolf, Tate St. Ives, UK, 2019.

Win McCarthy's (lives and works in New York, US) practice comprises photography, print, text and sculpture. His work explores dialectical relationships - city and citizen, friend and stranger, present and past - stalking the boundary between self and other, and seeking some reconciliation between the two. Recent solo exhibitions include God Shaped Hole, Atlantis, Marseille, FR, 2019; Apartment Life, Svetlana, New York, US, 2019; Gridlock Person, Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam, NL, 2019. Recent group exhibitions include I think I look more like the Chrysler Building!, Veeshal, Middleburg, NL, 2021; 100 Drawings from Now, Drawing Center, NY, US, 2019; The Same Room: Julie Becker in dialogue, Galerie Neu, Berlin, DE, 2019; and Mirror Cells, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, US, 2016.

R.I.P. Germain (lives in works in Luton and London, UK) is an interdisciplinary conceptual artist, archivist, lecturer and mentor. He focuses on disentangling the inner and outer wars that pertain to the Black male, through essays, interactive audiovisual installations and performances. Recent exhibitions and projects include EXERCISE (Library), an ongoing project with Amelia Scott & Marilyn Thompson; Dead Yard, Cubitt, London, UK, 2020; Gidi Up, Peak, London, UK, 2018; Double 6, a collaborative performance with Ashley Holmes, Index Festival, Poor Image Projects (PIP8), Leeds, UK, 2019.

Frieda Toranzo Jaeger (lives and works in Mexico City, MX and Berlin, DE) makes paintings that question the nature of desire in relation to technological capitalism. Her work engages with the canvas' representational space as one of political tension, central to colonial histories. Recent solo exhibitions include Fantasies of Autonomy, Arcadia Missa, London, UK, 2019. Deep Adaptation, Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin, DE, 2019, Autofelatio, High Art, Paris, FR, 2018; and Die Windschutzscheibe, Reena Spaulings, New York, US, 2017. Recent group exhibitions include the NGV Triennial, Victoria, AU, 2021; The Making of Husbands: Christina Ramberg in Dialogue, Kunstwerke, Berlin, DE, 2019; Paint, also known as blood, MoMA, Warsaw, PL, 2019; and City Prince/sses, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR, 2019.