

BREAD CRUMBS

Joshua Kane Gomes & Sarah Radzi



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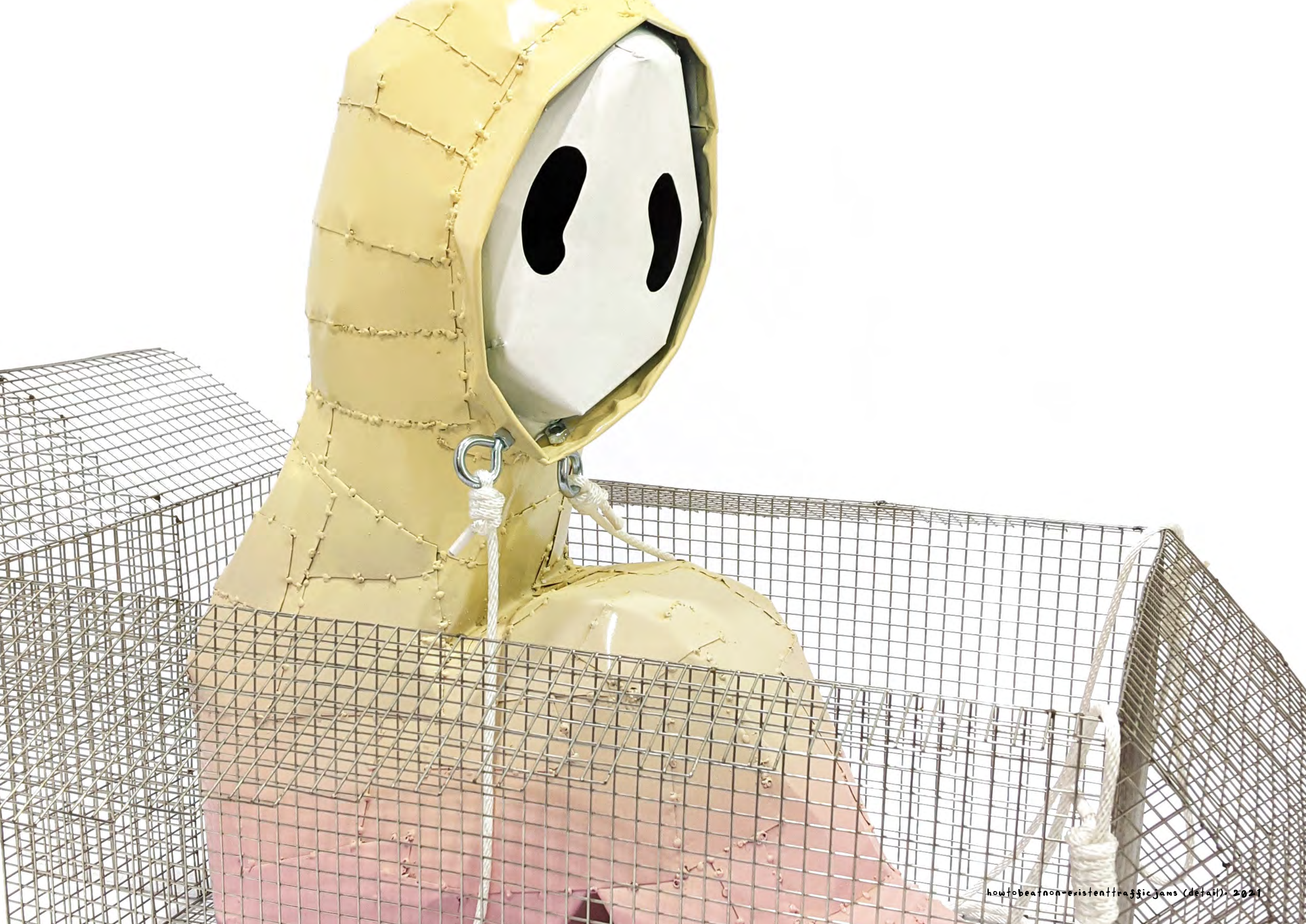
A digital catalogue for “Bread Crumbs”, an exhibition by Joshua Kane Gomes & Sarah Radzi

Richard Koh Fine Art, Blk 47 Malan Road, #01-26 Gillman Barracks, Singapore 109444

14 - 29 January 2022

Second Self

Essay by Euginia Tan



J o s h u a K a n e G o m e s

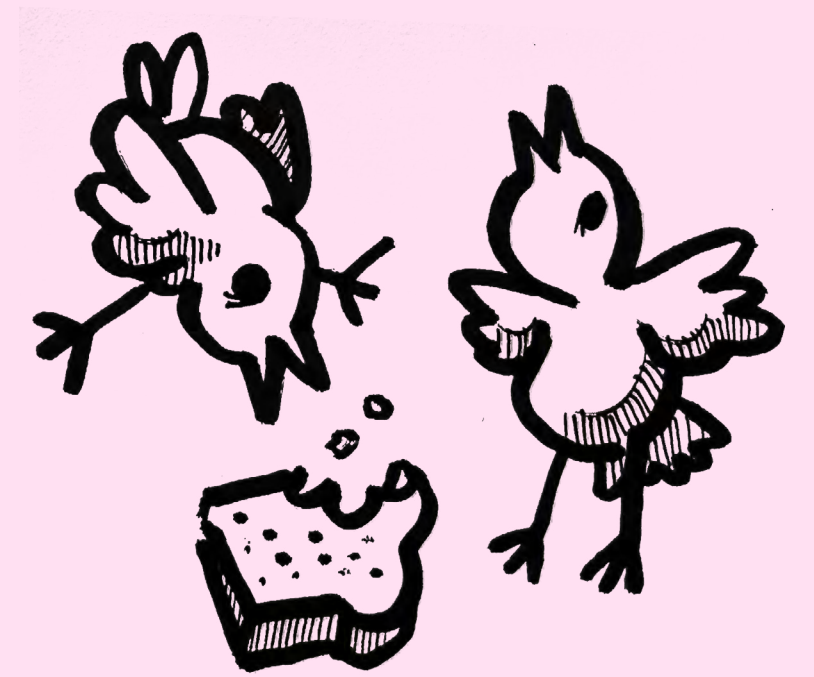


The forces of our memories are hard to predict. Some memories are delicate, tip-toeing in our minds furtively. Some are brute yet invisible gales of strong winds. And there are others that come abrupt and short-lived, like the flick of a matchstick. We carry and juggle the weight of our memories with varying efforts. Sometimes, we are fortunate enough to deliver an effective balancing act. Occasionally, something falls from our grasp and we lose our footing, struggling to get back up on our feet again. As we cope with an assortment of memories, we have adapted as the hermit crab has. We learn to outgrow and manoeuvre our thoughts into new shells, particularly larger ones that fit and provide more breathing room.

What then, becomes of our old shells? What do we leave behind when we move on? In Joshua Kane Gomes and Sarah Radzi's dual exhibition *Bread Crumbs*, the artists commemorate notions of duplicate personas in response to lingering memory trails. Using installations and paintings as artistic devices for cocooned reflection and malignant vulnerability, Gomes and Radzi present a vivid palette of past and present recollections in an unspecified time of limbo. This essay will elaborate on their current body of works around themes of a "second self", i.e. the artists' respective versions of an innermost state of being.

In Gomes's choice of works for Bread Crumbs, a central hoodie-clad figure pervades most of his narrative. It is mouthless and limbless, innocuously endearing with an air of unassuming sadness. The figure's posture tends to be bent, never straightened. It curls, slouches and slumps in different degrees of self-depreciation. Encasing the figure are mesh cages, providing some sort of accompanying vessel to the figure's posture. In the works *howtobeatnon-existent traffic jams* and *howtorunfromimaginaryseamonsters*, the mesh cages appear to propel or transport the figure in an imaginary commute. Proportionately befitting and snug, the works suggest a certain comfort and sanguinity. As inferred from the titles, there is a sense of guaranteed escapism from conventional terrors, be it in the real world (of traffic jams) and its fictions (sea monsters). The figure and its cages are less adequately fitted in *fingerscrossed(waitingforthatgoodmorningtext)* and unfortunately, there's room for two, wherein the cages appear to be more interfering, in violation of the figure's proximity. The titles also suggest a more disorienting tandem in a realm of antsy waiting and imposed accommodation.

In scholar and critic Timotheus Vermeulen's essay *Contraction and Expansion*, he offers two polarizing insights on the authenticity of the self: The first in which authenticity is wielded by one's own impulses and decisions, with no influence whatsoever from external pressures. "The first voice contends, loudly and confidently.... That authenticity is the decision to act as oneself, according to one's own intellectual, spiritual and bodily inclinations as opposed to the pressures of the outside world..."¹ He further dissects that this point has been contradicted on various occasions, that it has "lost its power to convince in the wake of the structuralist and poststructuralist dissections.... According to this voice, in other words, authenticity doesn't exist, or in any case not in the way many may have thought."² The second insight Vermeulen extends is that authenticity is still very much rife in observation and empathy. Although we all have contrasting experiences in meandering through life, "the authentic act, here, is to share what something feels like to you, as opposed to presuming to explain how it works as a general matter."³

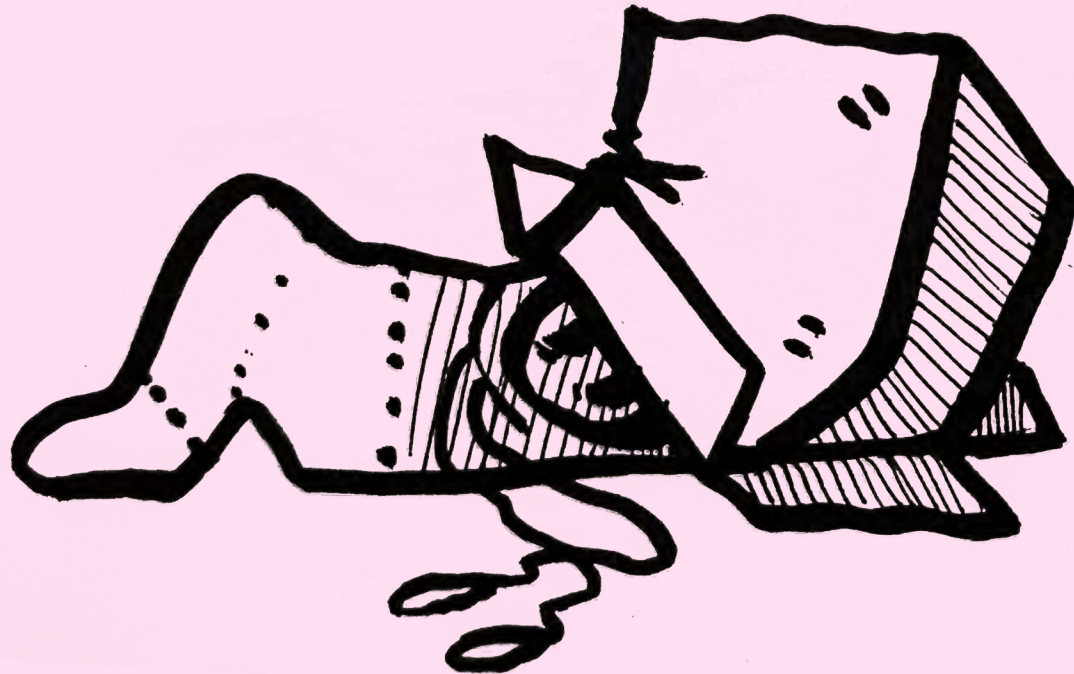


¹ Timotheus Vermeulen, *Contraction and Expansion* (Astrid Vorstermans / Valiz, Amsterdam, with Impakt Foundation, Utrecht, 2017), page 21.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, page 22.

What Gomes alludes to using his figure-motif is a murky swamp where our authenticity breeds deep- it fights hard to resist in conformity till it has no other choice but to escape, his first voice of a palpable authenticity lauding its passions. Yet on the other hand, his second voice of authenticity beckons the viewer as well, its resignation and piety to awkwardness and anxiety relatable and engulfing. Disposing ourselves of functions, responsibilities and purposes, is our authenticity still something we harness ourselves onto? Are we able to exist in a form that requires no specification of what we claim to be?



Gomes continues his text-based experimentation with *BLUESKIES*, drawing on the use of optical illusion to achieve an aftereffect. The work employs searing red neon lights, producing a cyan tint upon looking away from the work. Adhering to wordplay, Gomes also presents two other works *Washed I* and *Washed II*, referring to the slang of being 'washed up' in basketball. The works morph into literal bunnies in shoes, suggesting exaggerated 'dust bunnies' from the neglect and disengagement with previous contact (especially in team sport) owing to the pandemic's aftermath.

As we ponder about Gomes's observations on the need and lack of social contact, we can refer back to Vermeulen's points of social authenticity. Vermeulen expounds on the idea of an 'emotional resonance' as a pillar of aforementioned authenticity, contemplating on the kind of authentic relation to others we actively seek and forge. Whether it is "empathy, passion, trust, hope, or reliance, or even faith. What matters is that it is a register that relates to others, that isn't possible without a relationship to others. For instance, in the act of trusting, you impart part of the responsibility for your corporeal wellbeing, if its past or present or future state, in the hands of the other person or thing or activity... In performing emotional resonance, you acknowledge that you are at once the outcome of a social apparatus and its origin.... Each coming from where you imagine or pretend to find yourself at that moment."⁴ As we establish rapport in others, we attach a state of remembrance to them where we render ourselves vulnerable, because at the lure of being remembered, we take on a gamble of being forgotten. Gomes portrays the bait and tackle of this game of forget-me-not, where we can look away and remember something else, faded and inside out. Otherwise, we chuck and repress our memories into something that builds up, larger and more deceptive than what it started out as.

⁴ Ibid, page 24.



BLUESKIES

2021

Neon

28 x 36 x 5 cm

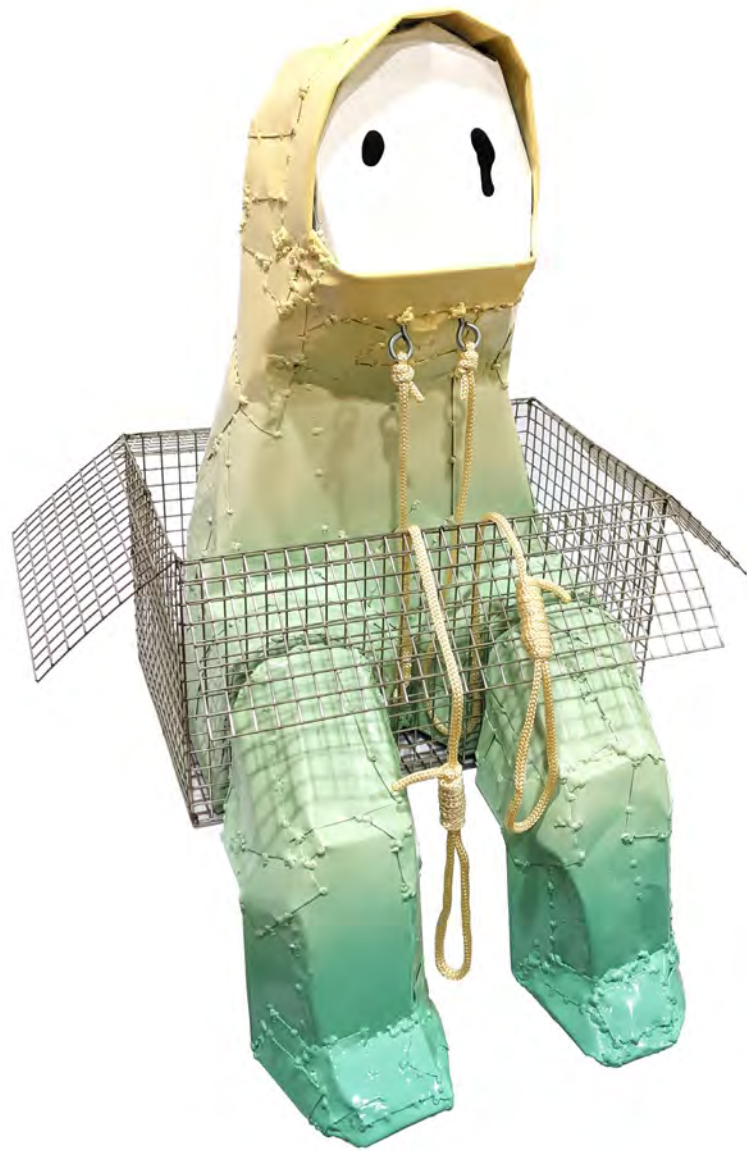


how to beat non-existent traffic jams

2021

Steel, stainless steel mesh, rope and eyebolts

68 x 98 x 85 cm

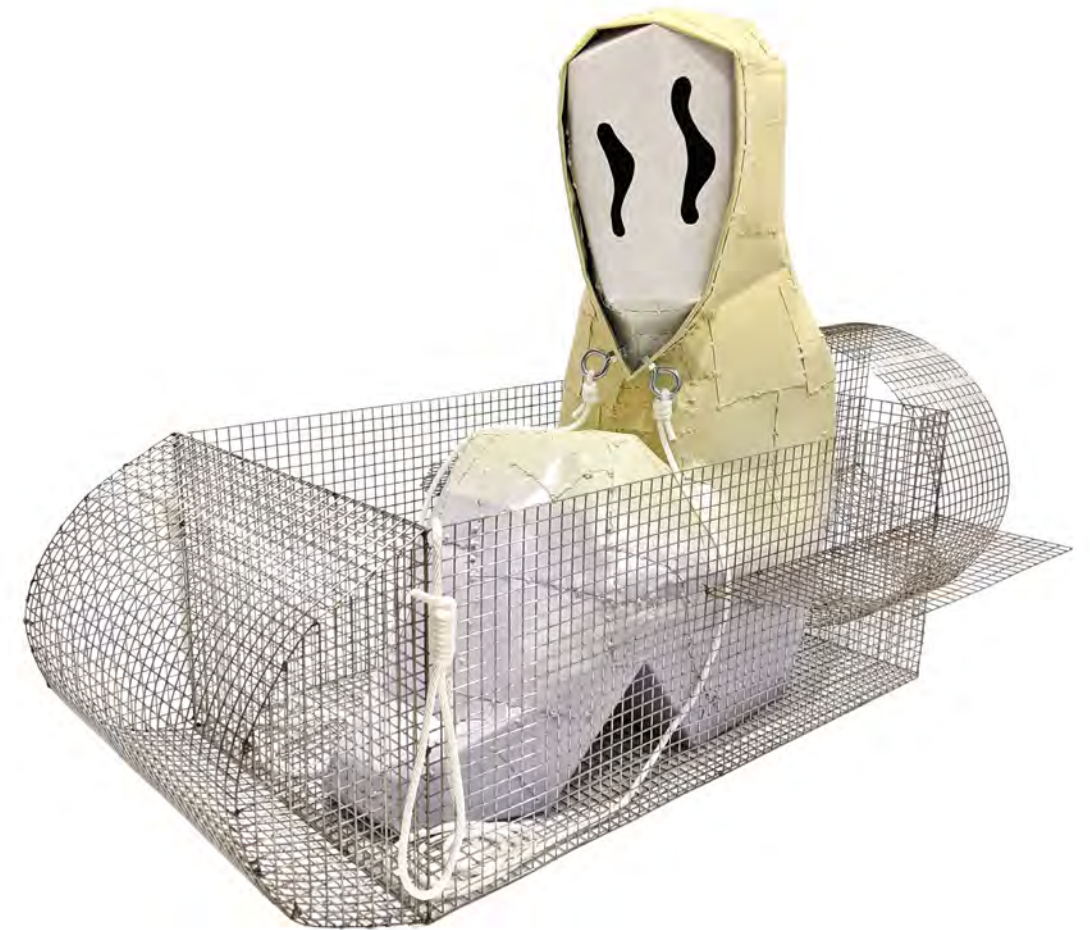


fingers crossed (waiting for that good morning text)

2021

Steel, stainless steel mesh, rope and eyebolts

61 x 54 x 49 cm



how to run from imaginary sea monsters

2021

Steel, stainless steel mesh, rope and eyebolts

69 x 104 x 70 cm



unfortunately, there's room for two

2021

Steel, stainless steel mesh, rope and eyebolts

102 x 62 x 71 cm





Washed I

2021

worn sports shoes, felting wool and buttons

20 x 37 x 33 cm



Washed II

2021

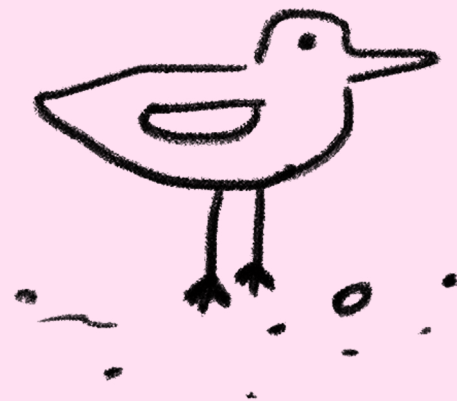
worn sports shoes, felting wool and buttons

17 x 33 x 24 cm

DANCING THE JITTERS AWAY



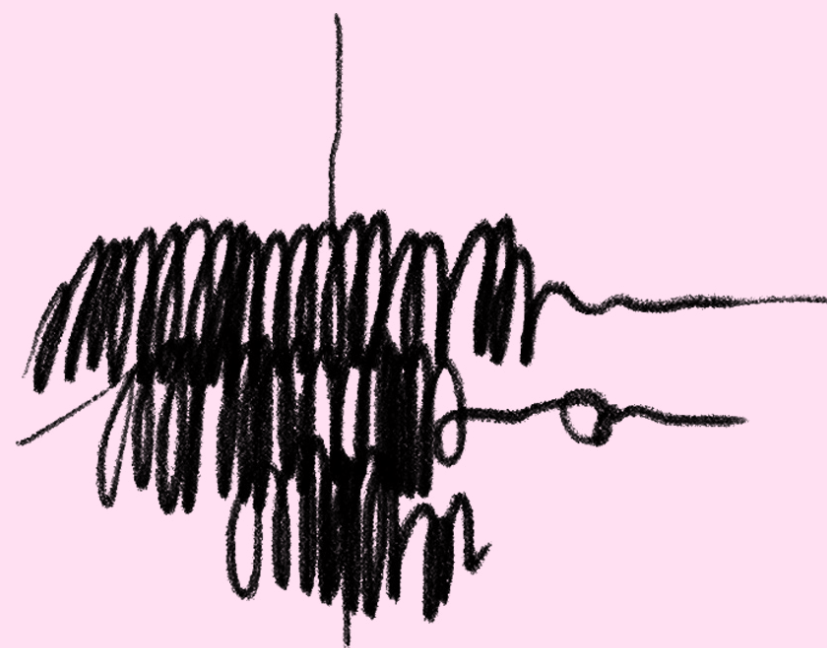
Sarah Radzi



For Radzi's five paintings, we also observe figures of ambiguous gender, form and species take reign in her works. There are slightly more features attached to some of them, such as hair, ears, eyes and mouths, but their overall appearance is open to interpretation regarding the type of place and climate they inhabit. The backdrop of the paintings provide a dream sequence of activities; there is movement, touch, dissolving and evolving. Every nook and cranny gathers a fulcrum of possible fiction, finished with a calm, mirthless landscape. Though emphasized thoroughly with colour, the works exude consistency in a certain dimension. Radzi conjures a portal into personal myth where the psyche flits in and out of waking and hibernating.

In Radzi's works, we can think about the second self as a performative instrument. The idea of a performative aspect in the self has often been documented in various material, and we can convey this outwardly via speech, appearance, writing, etiquette, etc. In artist Tavi Meraud's essay *Iridescence, Intimacies*, she uses the idea of camouflage and shine to describe a personal armour. She describes this in the scope of the animal kingdom, where light and luminescence are emitted from creatures under the sea. "Embedded within the flesh of this specific squid, but also found in similar instances throughout the animal kingdom, iridescence is always a marker of this interior-exterior negotiation. It is a kind of sign, secreted from within the being of the animal, working its way toward the external world."⁵

Radzi's works emit a similar mystery in her negotiation of inner and outer selves. In the works *Fake it til You Fake it* *Some More* and *Meeting of the Mind*, phantom and flesh figures meet each other in the middle of the canvas, acknowledging a presence the way we would pick up traces of scents. Smells permeate our surroundings without needing to be seen, conversely, the other selves in Radzi's works command visibility although they have not been actualized. Another kind of performative slant present in the works showcase figures in motion, as in *Of Perseverance and Misery* and *An Intervention for a Destructive Behaviour*. The former presents a female figure dancing next to an unmade bed, carefree and effusive. Outlines of movement murmurs shroud her, the scene is simultaneously quiet and energetic. The latter work shows five different coloured figures of different hues and opacity, each seemingly echoing the next in a confined space. A small window allows the only source of light and ventilation to where these figures are positioned. However, light and space travel freely, the room is never claustrophobic.



⁵ Tavi Meraud, *Iridescence, Intimacies* (e-flux Inc. Journal, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2017) page 141.

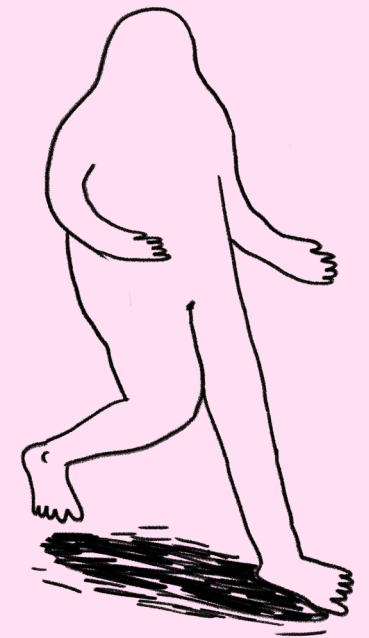
In Meraud's essay, she elaborates further on the thought of surfaces as a theory of moving and revolving akin to astronomer Copernicus's theory of revolutionary suggestion, "just as the sun no longer revolves around the earth but the earth around the sun, objects do not form our cognition of them but rather we form them. The locus of the production of reality has shifted."⁶ Meraud counters these ideas of shifting reality using philosopher Edmund Husserl's concept of phenomenology, whereby Husserl argued that the study of consciousness must actually be very different from the study of nature as we know it to be. "for it seems that we begin with conscience experience, we begin with an awareness of the world, and to begin to question the hows and whys of this awareness, to bracket all potentially dubious elements of that cognitive moment, it seems necessary to bracket everything that is foreign to consciousness. But then we ostensibly become stuck in the mind and cannot go back out to the world, the world that must be really out there. This is the problem that haunted Husserl..."⁷ From these two perspectives, we glean that external surfaces, armours or camouflages either challenge us to wonder about the nature of a thing- is it a mere platitude to label matter as being in movement to one another? Do we study the idea of consciousness on a separate plane altogether? How does that hinder us from experiencing the world?

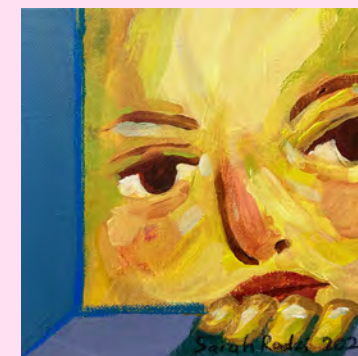
⁶ Ibid. page 149.

⁷ Ibid. page 150.



Radzi's final work could suggest a harmony of Meraud's surface exploration. In *Lonely Conversation*, the figures are drawn in resemblance to one another. As opposed to the other works' where there are clear distinguishing features from one figure to the other, these figures seem to be near identical. They are relaxed in a horizon with no definite angles and skyline- we might be looking at them the way we would watch a movie on screen. Alternatively, it is also possible to be looking at them in real life, in real time, the way we would partake in a picnic outdoors. Through Radzi's paintings, we could also ponder on this very phrase of making a "body of work". What is a body of work? What are bodies in works? Within and without the premises of a body, what then is the idea of work?





WAIT, I'VE
SEEN THIS
SOMEWHERE
BEFORE.

An Intervention for a Destructive Behaviour
2021

Acrylic, oil pastel and charcoal on canvas
152 x 182 cm; 15 x 15 cm; 15 x 15 cm



An Intervention for a Destructive Behaviour (detail), 2021



Fake it til You Fake it Some More

2021

Acrylic, oil pastel and charcoal on canvas

183 x 137 cm; 30 x 30 cm; 15 x 15 cm



Lonely Conversation

2021

Acrylic, oil pastel and charcoal on canvas

183 x 137 cm

THE FEMININE
URGE TO LIGHT UP
SCENTED CANDLES
AND CALL IT A
SELF CARE.



Meeting of the Mind

2021

Acrylic, oil pastel and charcoal on canvas

183 x 137 cm; 30 x 30 cm; 15 x 15 cm

THE FEMININE
URGE TO LIGHT UP
SCENTED CANDLES
AND CALL IT A
SELF CARE.





AND I DANCED AND
DANCED, AROUND AND
AROUND TIL I AM
NUMB—SUCCUMBED
TO THE VOID TIL
SILENCE
SURROUNDS.

Sarah Radzi 2021

of Perseverance and Misery

2021

Acrylic, oil pastel and charcoal on canvas

152 x 183 cm; 30 x 30 cm

S e l f , S e c o n d e d

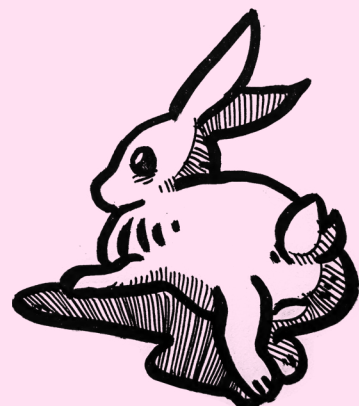
Through the vouching of different iterations of the self, Gomes and Radzi command as mechanics in repairing second-hand memories. At the core of our remembrance and nostalgia lie defects of the mind, the wheels of our past wear and tear while we emerge fazed and scathed. When we upholster our memories in the name of self-preservation, change and resilience, we may wince at the thought of who we were and who we succumb to being.

Perhaps there is a silver lining at the thought of never having a true self. When life proves gruelling and the maze of endless possibilities test our limited tolerance, there is comfort in re-invention and erasure of identity at our own hands. Gomes and Radzi lay bare the bones of a fragile, scattered memory album left to be flipped at any possible direction. They magnify the irony of having been, and question the point of being. And while it may appear indulgent, it is inevitable that in the servings and portions of the self, we very often ask for seconds.



Joshua Kane Gomes (b. 1993) primarily engages themes of identity and space in his art practice. Documenting his mental processes and states through the artmaking process, Joshua peeks into the grey areas between cold rationality and sentimental sensibility. He often works with sculptures and installations that leverage on evoking mood and atmosphere, be it through form or material language.

In his current body of work, Joshua focuses on captured moments of vulnerability with a sprinkle of levity, stemmed from the artist's musings during periods of isolation. The works are the product of time spent lost in thought, wandering his own mindscape, the hazy recollections of sluggish days that blur into one another.

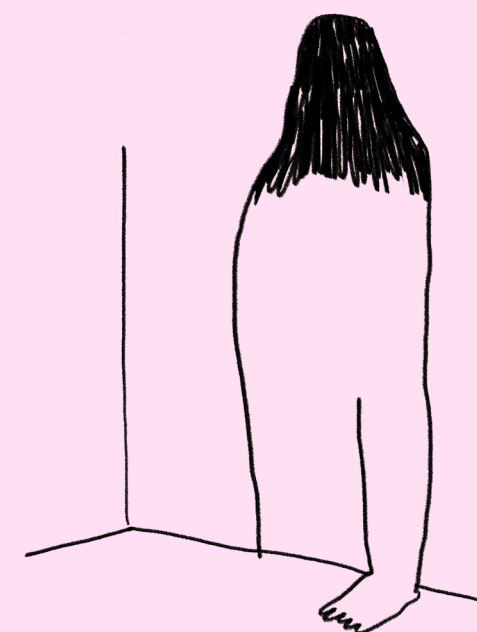


Sarah Radzi (b. 1995) is an artist based in Selangor. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts majoring in painting from MARA University of Technology (UiTM) in 2019. Currently working with paintings and drawings, she explores her identity through ambiguous figures and space.

Her works are a form of emotional releases and also results of unresolved teenage angst, personal growth like the constant noises or curiosities in her head, conversations and the relationship with the people around her, and made-up scenarios of what could have and should have been. Growing up, she has always been aware of the little things like a certain smell, color and small details from her daily life which later helped with the narration in her artworks.



Eugenia Tan (b. 1991) is a multi-disciplinary writer with experience in poetry, theatre and creative fiction/non-fiction. Her curatorial writing for Richard Koh Fine Art includes - solo exhibitions for Faris Nakamura, Melissa Tan, Ben Puah and Odelia Tang, as well as group shows (In Our Own Frame, A Decade Apart/Together, Bread Crumbs) for the gallery's commemorative anniversaries and milestones.





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Founded in 2005, with spaces in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Singapore, Richard Koh Fine Art is committed to the promotion of Southeast Asian contemporary art on regional and international platforms. Centred around a core belief in developing an artist's career, the gallery looks to identify understated, albeit promising practices, and providing it opportunities to flourish. Through its regular exhibition cycles, print & digital publications and cross-border gallery collaborations, Richard Koh Fine Art engages the art community with the aim of developing regional and intercultural dialogue.

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