

ZERO...

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*PANDEMIC (vol. 21)*

**Neil Beloufa**  
**Guillaume Bijl**  
**Enzo Cucchi**  
**Irene Fenara**  
**John Gerrard**  
**Eva & Franco Mattes**  
**Emilio Prini**  
**Michael Rey**  
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22nd June > 31st July, 2021

ZERO... is pleased to present PANDEMIC (vol.21)

**Neil Beloufa** (1985, Paris)

Global agreement

Interviews conducted on Facebook and WhatsApp chats with male and female members of armies around the world, focusing on why interviewees became soldiers and investigating their daily lives.

**Guillaume Bijl** (1946, Antwerp)

Guillaume Bijl is known for his large-scale installations and visual realism. Since the late 70s, Bijl created realistic decors using found objects. In doing this, he had a pioneering role in the resurgence of the ready-made. Bijl shows the audience various aspects of our western 'civilisation' and consumer society. Using extreme stereotypes, he creates a sort of 'archeology of our time' in a tragi-comedic, alienating way.

After searching for a mode of expression which could enable the audience's involvement, the young Guillaume Bijl, a self-taught artist, started creating projects on paper in the seventies ('Project Pleasures'). The most important series comprised nine 'Treatments'. This series exposes various societal determinations and phenomena like the church, the army, the education system, the holiday business, sex, businessman or the daily grind of blue-collar workers. In these depictions on paper Bijl draws a trail, accompanied by a step-by-step script, guiding the visitor from room to room to follow the life course of, for example, a soldier. It's these projects at the root of his following oeuvre both visually as in content.

In 1979 Guillaume Bijl creates his first installation Autorijschool Z at Ruimte Z, an artist-run gallery in Antwerp. The artist exposes what shouldn't have happened: the gallery being turned into a less appealing commercial institution, a driving-school. In this life-like décor, the artist provided chairs and benches for the students, a blackboard, didactic boards with traffic signs, a model of an engine... In this first installation three elements that will become characteristic for his entire oeuvre can already be recognised. Firstly, there's a game between fiction and reality resulting in a sense of alienation or confusion for the spectator caused by the artist's act of displacement. Secondly, Bijl criticises a contemporary societal phenomenon and, last but not least, the fact that the installation is placed inside an art space, turns every object into a sculpture and a visual image.

This driving school was the first of a series of transformation-installations, which evolved into a visual epos of societal phenomena. In many museum institutes and galleries, Bijl created a Fallout Shelter (Liège, 1985), a Shooting Gallery (Eindhoven, 1985), a Caravan Show (Grenoble, 1989), a supermarket (Liverpool, Frankfurt, Basel), a Central Airport Basel (1986), a Futon Store (New York, 1989), a wig store (Brussels, 2012), a dog grooming salon (Zürich, 2016), etc.

In addition to these transformation-installations, there are 5 other types of works in Bijl's oeuvre. The names for these different types of works are also the titles for the works. In his situation-installations, Bijl creates fiction in reality, usually in public space. In 1995 for instance, he mounted stuffed birds on roofs and lanterns during Documenta 6 in Kassel. Compositions, sometimes called Composition Trouvée, are fragments from reality, objects that seem to have been taken from antiquaries or gift shops. These often kitschy-looking works are smaller in scale and always thoughtfully put together.

His Sorry works can take on different forms. They are compositions of objects or installations with an absurd element to them, making them fall out of reality, into the surreal. A beautiful example is the bird's nest containing one red and two white billiard balls, a bizarre still life.

- Nadia Bijl

**Enzo Cucchi** (1949, Morro d'Alba)

UN'OMBRA ALTA

**Irene Fenara** (1990, Bologna)

The work of Irene Fenara (born 1990, Bologna) is primarily based on the appropriation and reworking of images produced by our society. The majority of her work is comprised of photographs and iconographic material that the artist does not "create" in the classic sense of the word. Instead, she obtains the result through modes of operation that form an integral and constituent part of the work itself. Irene Fenara is part of that group of artists that delegates the "dirty work" to others. Or perhaps it is more correct to say that Irene's work begins at the moment others start to play dirty.

This is the case in the work titled Supervision, part of a series begun many years ago when the artist discovered how easy it is to use a personal computer to access surveillance cameras all over the planet which are connected to the Internet, if the camera owners have not changed the default password set by their manufacturers. These cameras are, for the most part, positioned in anonymous locations: abandoned parking lots, streets, alleys. But many of these show domestic interiors, shops, and workplaces. Irene inserts herself in the endless flow of the creation and death of these images, downloading them and saving them from oblivion. (They would otherwise be erased every 24 hours.) Like many of Irene's series, they possess a dual nature: on the one hand, they show how the society of control is expanding, inserting itself within the folds of not only public space, but also private space. Then there are the existential and poetic aspects of the work, which thread through the political discourse, revealing how in many cases it is we ourselves are bringing the "thief" into our houses and our intimate lives. We intensify security until it surpasses the invisible line beyond which it becomes a prison – built with our own hands – in which freedoms are abolished for all, save those from whom we didn't know to defend ourselves.

The same happens in the video Struggle for Life, which is as astonishing as it is simple and profound. This is her first work created using surveillance cameras, and it is presented on an LED video wall that is freestanding on the floor. It is composed of images of a Danish farm made up of large, anonymous, repetitive stalls. Through her computer, the artist manages to move the camera upwards, capturing clouds in fast motion and strips of sky. This view lasts just a few seconds. The program automatically repositions the camera downwards, and its weight points it towards the ground. The dance continues in a frustrating way for several rounds, and with each push upwards comes the inevitable return, in which the space of dreaming and the spirit is rejected by the weight of what lies below. As in the Supervision series, and in many other of Irene's works, this is a piece that can breathe new life into classic genres such as landscape, for example, which is reinterpreted here in an entirely new and disturbing way. But these are secondary critical reflections. Struggle for Life is a painful work.

- Antonio Grulli

**John Gerrard** (1974, Dublin)

I have long been fascinated by the visual phenomenon of gasoline on water. Known technically as a thin film refraction it produces alluring prismatic forms on streets and bodies of water, both highly attractive and toxic. Working with a programmer the physics of millions of rays of light hitting oil and splitting was simulated and the result placed upon small portraits from the banks of four great continental rivers. The Yangtze, Nile, Amazon and Danube. I consider the works to be realistic. Colourful like national flags and softly undulating on the surface of the rivers they point less to global differences and more to a shared global culture of gasoline. As of 2020 this unified system consumes one hundred million barrels of petroleum a day.

Quote from: [hyperallergic.com](http://hyperallergic.com)

A mysteriously hovering vantage point slowly rotates above muddy, languidly rippling waters. We grasp for context in these distorted reflections of land and sky, but little is offered. Our attention remains focused on a splash of gas centered in each frame. The conceptual link connecting these disparate bodies of waters (the Yangtze, Nile, Thames, etc. — each named in the piece's title) is not the water itself but the gas, the defilement. These digitally rendered waters make up John Gerrard's new series, *Flag* (2017), and their global soiledness is the subject.

But who are these bleak flags for, exactly? I believe that, more than any country, they wave for the Capitalocene epoch writ large, spanning national and international borders. Proposals for new nations, causes, even the Anthropocene — which posits humans as the defining force of the planet — are not represented. These flags are digital renderings of water, not a painting or a video but a programmatic artwork with a year-long playing time. The software mimics reflections of various waters around the globe, in accordance with a solar cycle of night and day.

**Eva & Franco Mattes** (1976, Brescia)

No other images are shared and circulated online as often as those of cats, the fluffy favourites of the internet.

The taxidermic sculptures *Half Cat* by Eva & Franco Mattes refer to so-called lolcat memes, a social practice in which cat pictures with witty captions are shared millions of times on the internet.

*Half Cat* is based on the image of a deformed cat with only two legs and no ears walking along a street. It began circulating on the internet in 2010 with the caption "The longer you stare, the weirder it gets."

At first it was assumed that the strangely truncated image of the cat had been created by a technological error such as a Google Street View glitch or failed panorama shot, which is why the meme is often called *Panorama Fail Cat*. Later, however, users of online forums were able to track down the original image of the four-legged cat with pointy ears, identifying its place of origin as Ottawa in Canada.

*Half Cat*'s unusual form is thus the product of skilful photoshop editing.



Owing to the lack of clarity about its origins, Half Cat can be seen as a metaphor par excellence for the networked image for copies of images that are constantly on the move and constantly manipulated.

- Doris Gassert

### **Emilio Prini** (1943, Stresa - 2016, Rome)

In full trauma of hyperdigitization, in “digital mourning,” it is a pleasure to present this work by Emilio Prini from 1995.

The Internet had just appeared on the horizon. We artists caught on immediately. There was The Thing by Wolfgang Staehle, and in Vienna, at Linda Bilda’s Art Club Spitalgasse, so many strange things happened. It was there that I, together with a few nerd friends, founded INTERNEZ – an imaginary museum on the Internet.

I invited artist friends and even famous artists to participate. I wanted to make the encyclopedia of the world. I recall that Luciano Fabro responded, “No, thanks, it would be like getting another fax...” Carla Accardi and Emilio Prini joined right away – it rejuvenated them.

Prini had created all of his early works during his travels, and this new voyage interested him and it brought him back to a freshness that he no longer found in the Arte Povera movement. He rejoined that later, in 2001, after the end of the world.

A longtime friendship and an electric exchange of visions was born.

I will never understand how he could live in all the racket of Rome and stay ascetic, curmudgeonly in the way he renounced that which was not essential.

We had this line from Apollinaire in our heads:

“Mes enfants si vous n’êtes pas sages, vous ne mangerez plus jamais de paysages”

There is a tension in keeping the landscape pure, in the broadest sense: space, color.

Wit was always the board we used for surfing, and the name INTERNEZ (internaso, or inter-nose, at the beginning) was born that way, poking fun at a “net” created by painters.

On the homepage was a picture of the nose of the Mona Lisa.

Prini realized: “ESCO: A sequence of infinite colors that the viewer can interrupt at any moment to connect to other pages on INTERNEZ.”

All of his (pre)occupations: machinery, the capital, communication, reproduction, were absorbed and burnt out in an instant on the screen.

A sequence of infinite colors.

On that screen machinery disappeared.

Color is only color.

All the colors the machine could produce, in random order.

When we launched ESCO the first time, there were five seconds of the same shade of yellow! Among the millions of colors that were “randomly” selected, it had chosen to present the same one five times!

Prini always said, “COSA CASO CAUSA.” (THING [that] CHANCE CAUSES).

We presented it live on a few occasions. Once, in a small gallery in Rome, everything was set up, but we were missing Mauro Cattivello, the technician, who never showed up. The opening was empty. This often happened to Prini.

It circulated on the Internet, on the site among the other works, until the funeral of INTERNEZ, which was celebrated at Documenta X.

We had already gotten bored with it.

Now, over on that wall, but reproducible only on the devices that support it, ESCO offers itself to the world. While others are minting and creating NFTs, ESCO presents itself as a simple work of art, to contemplate, comfortably, for eternity.

- Emilio Corti

## Michael Rey (1979, Sarasota)

I am interested in making shapes. I consider my work a hybrid between painting and sculpture, an otherkin of the two categories. The process of making my work first begins with drawing. The drawings start out intuitively, and over time these shapes become more refined, until I decide they are finished. Through drawing I am able to capture the fleeting shapes that come up in my stream of consciousness. After I finalize the shapes that will become wall works, these shapes are then cut from wood. Sometimes the shape of a piece evokes an immediate association with a specific color, and sometimes a color is worked out in the studio through the act of painting. Early on this work came from an entropic anxiety of the corporeal, but over time this work has become about finding an emancipatory freedom through abstraction that dissociates from the signs and images bound to the world.

## Hans Shabus (1975, Watshig)

In 2010 I completed the work "Tower of Babel", six different sized puzzles of the painting by Pieter Breugel the elder. the original hangs in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. especially in winter i worked on it and it took several. a few years later, i had the desire for so-called winter work again. i ordered online all findable puzzles of "mona Lisa", from different manufacturers. all in the same size and number of pieces. 1000, approximately 70 x 50 cm and thus similar in size to the original painting by Leonardo da Vinci. in 2014 i started the first of nine puzzles. there were winters where little happened and winters where i finished one or two. a few times i dropped a puzzle on the floor. the pandemic then helped to finish all nine. it eventually took 7 years, the same amount of time it took da Vinci to complete his portrait.

## Ylva Snöfrid (1974, Umeå)

Regarding rites and rituals, and my obsession with this in life and as a motive, the Swedish composer and researcher Gunnar Valkare wrote in the book *Varifrån kommer musiken* - "As the dictionary indicates, we usually place the ritual in a religious sphere. However, the ritual is something much larger, something much closer, something much more universal and central to human life than what the common idea indicates - the ritual is even a prerequisite for us to shape and maintain societies, one of the mechanisms that make human to human." At this moment of time I think this is more obvious than ever when many rituals are broken and we have to invent new ones.

### A

**Irene Fenara**  
*Struggle for Life*, 2016  
video  
19 '52 ", loop

### B

**Emilio Prini**  
*ESCO. An infinite sequence of colors that the viewer can interrupt at any time to go to another page of the INTERNEZ*, 1997  
file on floppy disk  
dim. variables

### C

**Eva & Franco Mattes**  
*Half Cat*, 2020  
taxidermy cat  
24 x 15 x 42 cm

### D

**Enzo Cucchi**  
*OMBRA ALTA*, 2021  
paints, oil and resin on wood  
250 x 180 x 9 cm

### E

**Irene Fenara**  
*Supervision*, 2021  
inkjet printing on baryta paper  
52 x 70 cm

### F

**Ylva Snöfrid**  
*The Rite, the Painter's Transmutation, the Dance*, 2021  
oil on canvas, diptych  
48.5 x 33.5 x 2 cm

### G

**John Gerrard**  
*Flag (Amazon)*, 2017  
annual solar simulation  
67.2 x 15 x 67.2 cm

### H

**Michael Rey**  
*ANZ QUIISP*, 2016  
oil on plasticine on panel  
213.4 x 71.1 cm

### I

**Guillaume Bijl**  
*Sorry*, 2021  
various materials

### J

**Guillaume Bijl**  
*The Chair of Maria Callas (A souvenir of the 20th century)*, 2016  
various materials

### K.

**Guillaume Bijl**  
*Sorry*, 2021  
various materials

### L

**Hans Schabus**  
*Mona Lisa (pandemic)*, 2014/2021  
puzzles, wood, glass, aluminum, screws  
Section I 68.4 x 48.4 / 68.4 x 47.2 / 70.4 x 50.1 cm

### M

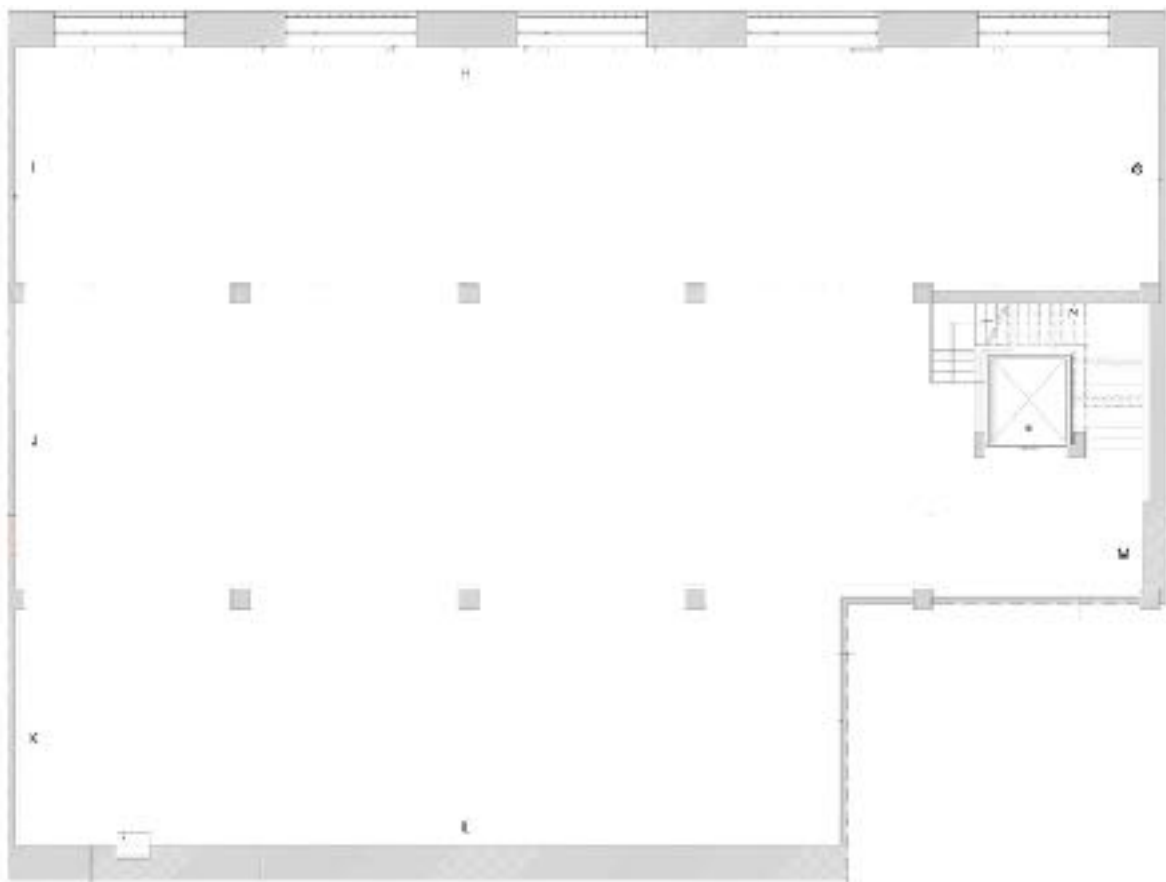
**Ylva Snöfrid**  
*Rite, the Painter as a Doll in Parts, Head, Hands and Feet, with Glass Sphere*, 2021  
oil on canvas, diptych  
38 x 47 x 2 cm

### N

**Neil Beloufa**  
*Poster 08*, 2018  
screen printing on paper  
105 x 75 cm



**GROUND FLOOR**



**BASEMENT**