

PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND
GERTRUDE PRESENT

Contact High

18 + 25 JANUARY

Performance Review, Gertrude and the exhibiting artists acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which this project takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

RED HERRINGS, RED
HERRINGS EVERYWHERE

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CONTACT HIGH
CURATED BY ANADOR WALSH

In line with Gertrude's commitment to supporting curatorial practice and the presentation of ambitious projects and public outcomes, the month of January will again be dedicated to *Contact High*.

Piloted in 2022, *Contact High* is a three-year partnership between Gertrude and Performance Review exploring the transference that occurs between performers and audiences in the gallery.

Over the course of four weeks, four Naarm based artists will be given full access to Gertrude Glasshouse as a space in which to develop, rehearse and workshop new or existing performance works, before showing them to the public.

On Wednesday 18 January, Sophie Gargan, Diego Ramírez and Kenneth Suico will present solo works.

In the period Tuesday 24 January - Wednesday 25 January, Gabriella Imrichova will exhibit a durational performance "24.01.23 - 25.01.23" with performers Anika De Ruyter, Mara Galagher and Sophie Gargan.

On Wednesday 25 January there will be closing drinks for this performance 6-8pm at Gertrude Glasshouse.

Wednesday 18 January, 6–8pm

Sophie Gargan, *when did you stop laughing*, 2023
Kenneth Suico, *Nostos, Sing It To Me (Balikbayan)*, 2023
Diego Ramírez, *I am a 'diaspora' Latinx. Hola. It means everyone back home thinks I am basic*, 2023

Tuesday 24 January, 4–8pm

Gabriella Imrichova with performers Anika De Ruyter, Mara Galagher and Sophie Gargan, "24.01.23 - 25.01.23", 2023

Wednesday 25 January, 4–8pm

Gabriella Imrichova with performers Anika De Ruyter, Mara Galagher and Sophie Gargan, "24.01.23 - 25.01.23", 2023

RED HERRINGS, RED HERRINGS EVERYWHERE
ANADOR WALSH

I'm a sucker for Dean Kissick's "hot takes", it's my most toxic trait. I eagerly awaited his Downward Spirals (may they rest in peace) and wholeheartedly agreed with his 2022 Instagram proclamation that Ye (formerly Kanye West) is our "greatest living artist".¹ Though I'd argue that Ye is actually our greatest living performance artist. In his final Downward Spiral, Kissick writes: "Kanye is a tragic hero. "Tragic" in the classical sense of having, over the course of a life, had a great rise followed by a mighty fall, and of being completely responsible for his own destruction and downfall".² For me, Ye has always been the ultimate marker of where art and culture more broadly is at. For nearly three decades now, I have watched him invent and reinvent himself with unwavering confidence, in ways that have kept him culturally relevant. He perfectly exemplifies what I'd argue is the core tenant of our present moment: the now indistinguishable bleed between art and the personal, perpetuated by the internet, especially social media. In 2023, everyone is their own main character and "all the world's a stage".³

Contemporary existence is marked by the transformation of our lives into digitally digestible content, starring a persona of our own creation, whose character develops through a combination of self-mythology and mythologisation by others. In his penultimate Downward Spiral, Kissick locates this sentiment within a contemporary art context. He suggests that in the art world we have become obsessed with the identity of the artist, writing: "...it has recently felt like your identity, which is now seen as residing elsewhere, in your race, your gender, your sexuality, your personal history, your trauma, has become a key part of what gives value to your self-expression".⁴ If Ye's character arch and current trends in performance art are anything to go by, I have to agree. Contemporary performance (like all contemporary

art) is characterised by the blurring of an artist with their work.

Contact High began in 2022, as a reaction to the transformation of performance practice into digital content during the 2020 - 2021 Covid-19 lockdowns and is premised on the moment of transference that occurs between artists and audiences when performance is presented in the gallery. When I set out to curate this year's *Contact High*, I did so from this conceptual base. In trying to facilitate four moments of encounter with four Naarm-based artists, I have curated a performance exhibition that touches on the present nature of this medium. In some way or another, the works of Sophie Gargan, Gabriella Imrichova, Diego Ramírez and Kenneth Suico all deal with identity.

A satirical take on diaspora art, Diego Ramírez's *I am a 'diaspora' Latinx. Hola. It means everyone back home thinks I am basic* perverts his childhood memories of breaking piñatas. In the guise of a devil, Ramírez continually strikes a black piñata until it breaks. Each time he makes contact with the piñata, the object elicits an anguished groan, colouring a traditionally joyous Mexican festive ritual with ominous connotations. In this way, Ramírez parodies Western expectations around Mexican artists, using mockery to reflect on how diaspora tropes obey the audience's desire, by "corrupting the ideal of a perfect Latinx artist in diaspora".⁵

Similarly, Kenneth Suico's participatory karaoke performance, *Nostos, Sing It To Me (Balikbayan)*, sees him assume the character of the smoking, singing Filipino spirit Kapre/Agta. In this role, Suico blends the Filipino practice of *Balikbayan*, or returning to the Philippines after living abroad, with the concept of *nostos*

(or homecoming) outlaid in Homer's *The Odyssey*. Laying on a soft sculpture, in front of a projection of a rolling sea, Suico invites the audience to participate in a duet that serenades Homer's sirens and longs for far-off homes.

Like Suico's *Nostos, Sing It To Me (Balikbayan)*, Sophie Gargan's *when did you stop laughing* also centres on a journey, though an internal one. A dancer who often labours as a delegated performer in the work of others, in this work, Gargan uses dance as a process of undoing the body to uncover the foundations of her own choreographic practice. Navigating a video and three sculptural works of her own making, Gargan intuitively employs a refined improvisation practice as she moves through Gertrude Glasshouse. During *when did you stop laughing*, Gargan attentively encounters, ingests and synthesises sources of inspiration, then expels them as dance.

If Gargan's *when did you stop laughing* is an exercise in finding meaning through improvisation, Gabriella Imrichova's "24.01.23 – 25.01.23" is one of tight control, bordering on the micro managerial. "24.01.23 – 25.01.23" is an evolution of Imrichova's 2022 work *methods for collapse (m4c)*, presented at BLINDSIDE, Naarm. Since January 1st, Imrichova and her collaborators have occupied Gertrude Glasshouse writing and learning the score "0". On 24 and 25 January, for four hours each day, "0" will be looped and pushed through various processing techniques. Described by Imrichova as a "cage for myself", "24.01.23 – 25.01.23" uses structural devices, such as sequencing, timing and controlled movement, to create meaning, rather than imposing it through language.⁶ When experiencing the destruction of "0", the audience witnesses situations that have been contrived by Imrichová, to separate this work from previous framings of her practice.

In a time where our grasp of an artist's persona has become essential to our reading of their work, strategies that direct us away from an artist's identity and re-draw focus to their work are important. We've become far too comfortable finding our bearings in a work by using our perception of an artist as our guide. The four works

in the 2023 iteration of *Contact High* challenge this framework of understanding. Ramirez's macabre piñata; Suico's melding of nostos and *Balikbayan*, Gargan's peeling back and exposing her influences; and Imrichova's use of destruction as something generative, are all tools that draw you into these artists' works and aid in the formation of meaning, outside of this established mode. In the lead up to this project, Gabriella described these tools as red herrings, employed to produce something new. If that's indeed what they are, I'd like to see red herrings *everywhere* in performance practice.

1. Dean Kissick (@deankissick), "Greatest living artist. And. Anna-Sophie Berger," New York, 23.05.22, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd3mDeMFVaU/>
2. Dean Kissick, "The Loveliest Trick of the Devil," Spike Art Magazine, 15.12.22, <https://spikeartmagazine.com/?q=articles/downward-spiral-loveliest-trick-devil>
3. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* (United Kingdom: 1599), Act II, Scene VII.
4. Dean Kissick, "The Dimes Square Spiral," Spike Art Magazine, 10.11.22, <https://spikeartmagazine.com/?q=articles/dimes-square-spiral>
5. Diego Ramírez, in conversation, Anador Walsh, 16.01.23.
6. Gabriella Imrichova, in conversation, Anador Walsh, 10.01.23.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

Sophie Gargan

when did you stop laughing, 2023

Performance, video and concrete sculptures (dimensions variable)

Sound: Allan Gargan reading a poem by Sophie Gargan, collected recordings and excerpts from *Behind her name chestnuts fall forever* and *Hills Bells Mother* both by composer Sofie Birch

I began by considering the idea of 'truth to material', and also considering:

"No hard-and-fast rule requires individuals pursuing faith to go through all six stages"
James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (1981)

I will do it again so we can really understand it

So I can really understand it

I will do it again so I can give it attention

My heart goes out to all the laughter we haven't shared

I can't help but think cement is beautiful - as is faith - *concrete faith*.

Let's take a closer look together - at time and space - at the body working, at the mind playing games

Let's watch them work against each other and for each other

Let's use them as an example of how to live harmoniously with one another

Let's laugh together again

It's operational - it's labour - it's a song

It's operational - it's labour - it's a song

Kenneth Suico

Nostos, Sing It To Me (Balikbayan), 2023

Performance

A karaoke performance that stems from *Balikbayan*, the cultural practice of a Filipino person visiting, or returning to the Philippines after a period of living in another country. Suico lays in a soft sculpture and sings on loop *Song to the Siren* by Tim Buckley/This Mortal Coil in cebuano (Suico's mother tongue). The work evokes the theme of nostos (a homecoming, returning) in Homer's *The Odyssey*. Just like Odysseus' wanderings in the epic, the artist is adrift in melancholic limbo.

Suico reimagines and parallels their personal longing and homesickness for their original home — the island of Cebu in the Philippines from Naarm/Melbourne, journeying 'by sea' as a lost Odysseus. Invoking the sirens by singing to them, they invite the viewer to duet in a chorus of pining and migration in the hope of bringing about a sense of companionship and guidance.

Diego Ramírez

I am a 'diaspora' Latinx. Hola. It means everyone back home thinks I am basic, 2023

Performance and custom made black piñata with depressed limbs and reactive sound that resembles a grunt in a state of comical penance or *I am a 'diaspora' Latinx. Hola. It means everyone back home thinks I am basic*

is a live performance featuring a devil breaking a black piñata. Every time the devil hits the piñata, it responds with a noise that resembles a grunt to make it seem like the object is suffering. Ramírez corrupts his childhood memories of breaking piñatas, making them resemble a sadistic scene, amplifying the darker connotations of this festive ritual.

This performance began as a subtle image of the pandemic (from the god Pan) that reflects on the nexus between North-South relationships, disease and capitalism. However, Ramírez shifted this focus over time into being a satire of diaspora art in alignment with his wider push and pull with identity politics, as evidenced in his writing. It also draws from his previous research into the evolving iconography of the devil in art history. This work is made in collaboration with Zamara Zamara on fabrication and Bonnie Cummings on sound.

Gabriella Imrichova

Gabriella Imrichova with performers Anika De Ruyter, Mara Galagher and Sophie Gargan

“24.01.23 - 25.01.23”, 2023

Durational Performance

24.01.23: “0”, the base score/phrase/blueprint/ yada yada yada, is pushed through numerous processing techniques/logics i.e. “0” becomes “1”, then “2”, then “3”, then “4”, then “5”, then “6”, etc. etc., until 7:59:59 pm.

25.01.23: “0”, the base score/phrase/ blueprint/yada yada yada, is pushed through numerous processing techniques/logics which are then layered one on top of the other i.e. “0” will become “1”, then “3”, then “6”, then “10”, then “15”, then “21”, then “28”, etc. etc., until 7:59:59 pm.

BIOGRAPHIES

SOPHIE GARGAN

Sophie Gargan is a contemporary dance artist from Taranaki, Aotearoa, based in Naarm/Melbourne. Gargan is fascinated by the dancing body and the ever evolving contexts in which it can exist as a vessel of exploration and discovery.

A 2015 graduate of New Zealand School of Dance, Gargan has worked with companies including House of Sand (2016, 2017, 2018), Footnote Dance (2017) and Dancenorth (2019). In 2022 she performed in *methods for collapse* by Gabriella Imrichova and *COLLISION* by Jo Lloyd/Tasdance. Recent solo projects include *World Dance* for Unity Space, Naarm (2018) and *The World is Bleeding* for Experimental Dance Week, Aotearoa (2019).

GABRIELLA IMRICHOVA

Gabriella Imrichova is a 2019 graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (BFA Theatre) and 2022 participant in Dancehouse's Emerging Choreographers Program. Imrichova is exclusively interested in engaging in formal enquiries, namely the potential they hold for extreme micro-managing and control. They hope the cages they write for themselves and their performers become narrower and more fucked and more sexy and more impossible to execute as their research develops.

KENNETH SUICO

Kenneth Suico is an artist residing and working in Naarm/Melbourne. Born in Cebu, Philippines, they jump across a broad range of mediums, employing the modes of photography, video, pop song performance and installation in their practice.

The common motifs threaded into Suico's works are acts of repurposing or appropriating what are considered Western-based mythological narratives and imagery and skewing them into their personal history and cultural superstitions.

DIEGO RAMÍREZ

Diego Ramírez is an artist, writer and facilitator with hopes and dreams. He has shown at ACMI x ACCA, Human Resources LA, Westspace x Gertrude and Deslave, Tijuana. Ramírez has written for the Art Gallery of Western Australia, *Art and Australia*, NECSUS, *MEMO* and un Projects. As a facilitator, he is the Director of SEVENTH Gallery, sits on panels for Creative Victoria and the City of Melbourne and is a peer assessor for the Australia Council. He is represented by MARS Gallery.

CURATOR: ANADOR WALSH

Anador Walsh is a curator, writer and the director of Performance Review. In 2020 Anador took part in the Gertrude Emerging Writers Program and was the 2019 recipient of the BLINDSIDE Emerging Curator Mentorship. Recent writing includes: *Beyond human* for *The Saturday Paper*, *Performing Protest* for PICA and *Making Content from the Wreck* for Contact High 2022 at Gertrude Glasshouse. Until 2018, Anador was the Marketing and Development Manager of Gertrude.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Performance Review is a platform for critical and creative engagement with performance art.

Based in Naarm, we publish articles about Australian and international performance art and dance.

Performance Review was established in 2021 as a dedicated space for the development of discursive and experimental writing about live art. In 2022, through partnerships with Gertrude, Melbourne Art Fair and the Keir Choreographic Award, Performance Review expanded its mandate into the presentation of performance and the covering of theatre-based dance.

Recent projects include *Contact High*, 2022 at Gertrude Glasshouse, Naarm and Angela Goh, *Body Loss*, 2022 at the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Naarm.

GERTRUDE

Gertrude has been building the careers of Australia's artists for almost 40 years.

Since our establishment in 1985, Gertrude has played an essential role in the local visual arts sector, shaping the careers of many of Australia's most celebrated artists.

We are an incubator and launching pad for contemporary artists. Our artistic program – including our studio and exhibition program – is unique in its equal emphasis on the production and presentation of contemporary art. This enables us to support artists to explore new ideas and present work at pivotal points in their careers.

Gertrude gives audiences unique insight into the creative development of artists. Our audiences engage with risk-taking, formative moments that define artist careers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOPHIE GARGAN

Thank you to Gertrude and Anador for believing I have something to offer and for giving me this opportunity! I am forever grateful. Thank you Georgia Rudd and Mason Kelly for being my pillars!

Thank you Jo Lloyd, Gab, Brigit, Tyler, Anika and Enzo. Thanks always mum and dad, thank you nature for giving so generously... Thank you world, body, humans, experiences and of course thank you concrete.

GABRIELLA IMRICOVA

Thank you Anador for giving me the space to red-herring myself in what feels like my slow-ass, insurmountable journey with the landscape of 'language as proof'. I badly needed this breathing space<3

DIEGO RAMÍREZ

I am a 'diaspora' Latinx. Hola. It means everyone back home thinks I am basic was made in collaboration with Zamara Zamara on fabrication and Bonnie Cummings on sound. This project was funded by Multicultural Arts Victoria, as part of their Represent Commissions and supported by the City of Melbourne.

KENNETH SUICO

I'd like to thank Sharni Hodge, Yandell Walton, Aaron CV Rees, Anador Walsh, Performance Review, Gertrude, Liquid Architecture and West Space.

I'd like to acknowledge Debris Facility, Isabella Hone-Saunders, Allison Nator, Arie Rain Glorie, Testing Grounds, The Centre for Projection Art and WWAVE Sound & AV North Melbourne.

ANADOR WALSH

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, to the exhibiting artists for being a part of this year's *Contact High*. Thank you to the Performance Review board, Mark Feary, Tracy Burgess and the Gertrude team for their ongoing mentorship and support. Thank you to Amelia Dibbs for her endless inspiration and for making the trek to Naarm; Felix Webb for his unwavering patience and generosity and Diego Ramírez for his wit and editorial feedback on this exhibition's catalogue essay.

I would like to dedicate *Contact High 2023* to my late friend Owen Wright, whose belief in me kickstarted my career in the arts.

Design by Julian Hutton and Fraser Stanley of New Association.

Gertrude Glasshouse is generously supported by Michael Schwarz and David Clouston.

The 2023 Gertrude Glasshouse exhibition program is supported by the City of Yarra's Annual Grants Program.

The documentation of *Contact High 2023* is being facilitated in partnership with Open Practice Studio.

performance review

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