

GUILLAUME VANDAME



CIRCA x Dazed Class of 2022, with Brody Mace-Hopkins, Piccadilly Lights, London, England; Berlin, Germany; Seoul, South Korea; and Melbourne, Australia - 29 September 2022 (documentation in London, England; Berlin, Germany, Melbourne, Australia)







symbols (2019-2021), flags. Dimensions variable. Beehive Passage, Leadenhall Market, 10th edition (2021-2022) and 11th edition (2022-2023) of *Sculpture in the City*, London, England



SET



nightsweats, SET, London, England, 29 August - 06 September 2020 - opening with poetry readings and BBQ and artist book launch to celebrate Thom Gunn's birthday on 29 August 2020. *nightsweats* (2020) includes original artworks by Sunil Gupta, Zack Menell, Anthony Iacono, and poetry by Adriann Ramirez, among twenty artists and writers.







My Adonis

Adonis, my Adonis

On the dance floor I am sweating

Loving the anonymity and red lights on my body

The picture of a desperate man with his shorts at his ankles

Shuffling around looking for another boy to love him if they're able

With their greedy mouths for the greedy lout

His leather strap in my

The leather strap on t

You are motherless, I

You are fatherless, I

I want to cradle him like

Selfish and unknown

Care for him, maybe

Heal him, kiss him

Maybe change his life

Si muero, entonces m

No me digas nada, p

And like the roses gas

His masked wish giv

How he longs to be m

To be free like me

To inhabit both streng

To be free

Adonis, my Adonis

I see you fading in the

the one in which you

Is it sweat or is it tear

Love with no fear, ca

And when the decade

all you knew and tell

You'll remember this

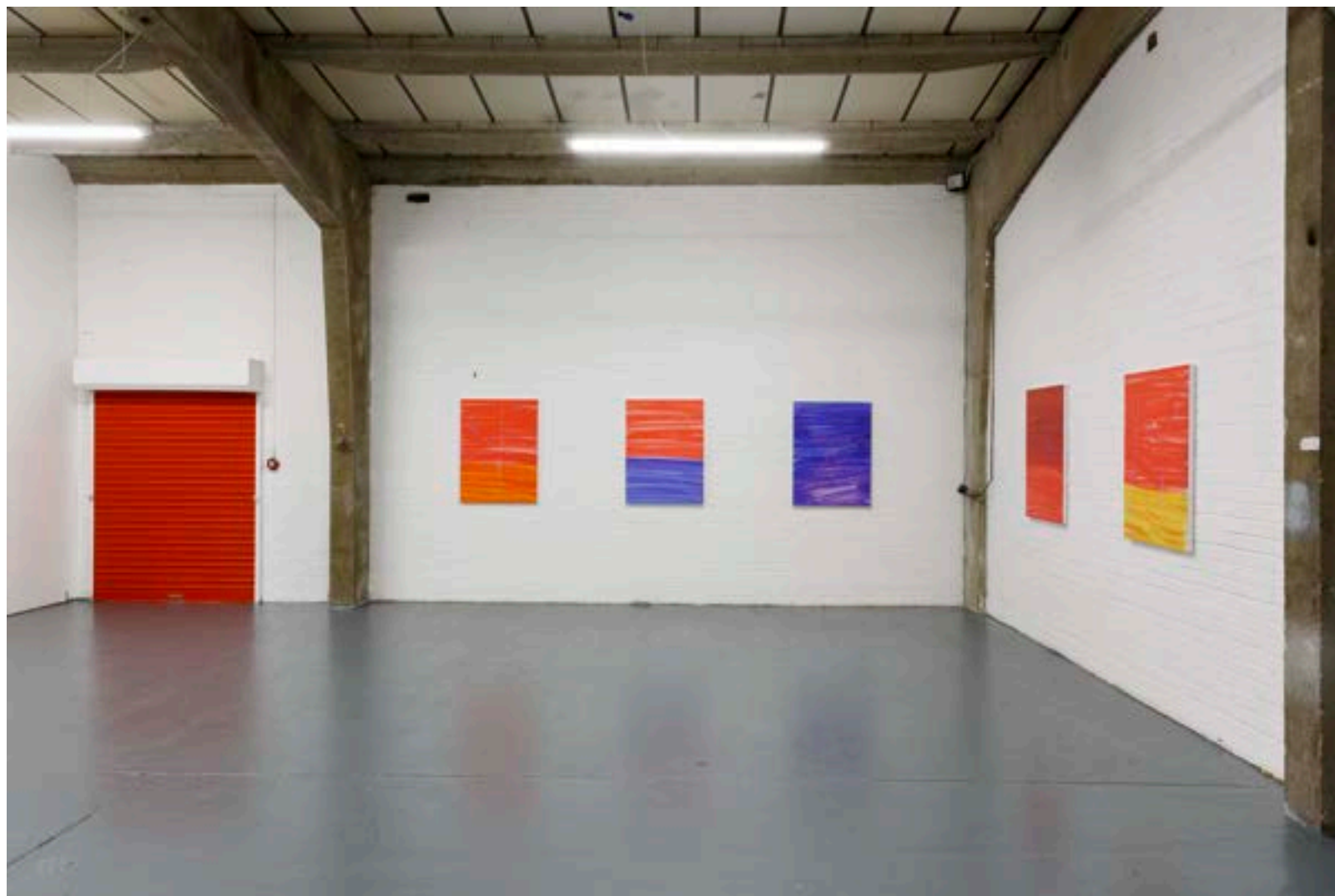
Adonis you'll look bac

my love and your fate

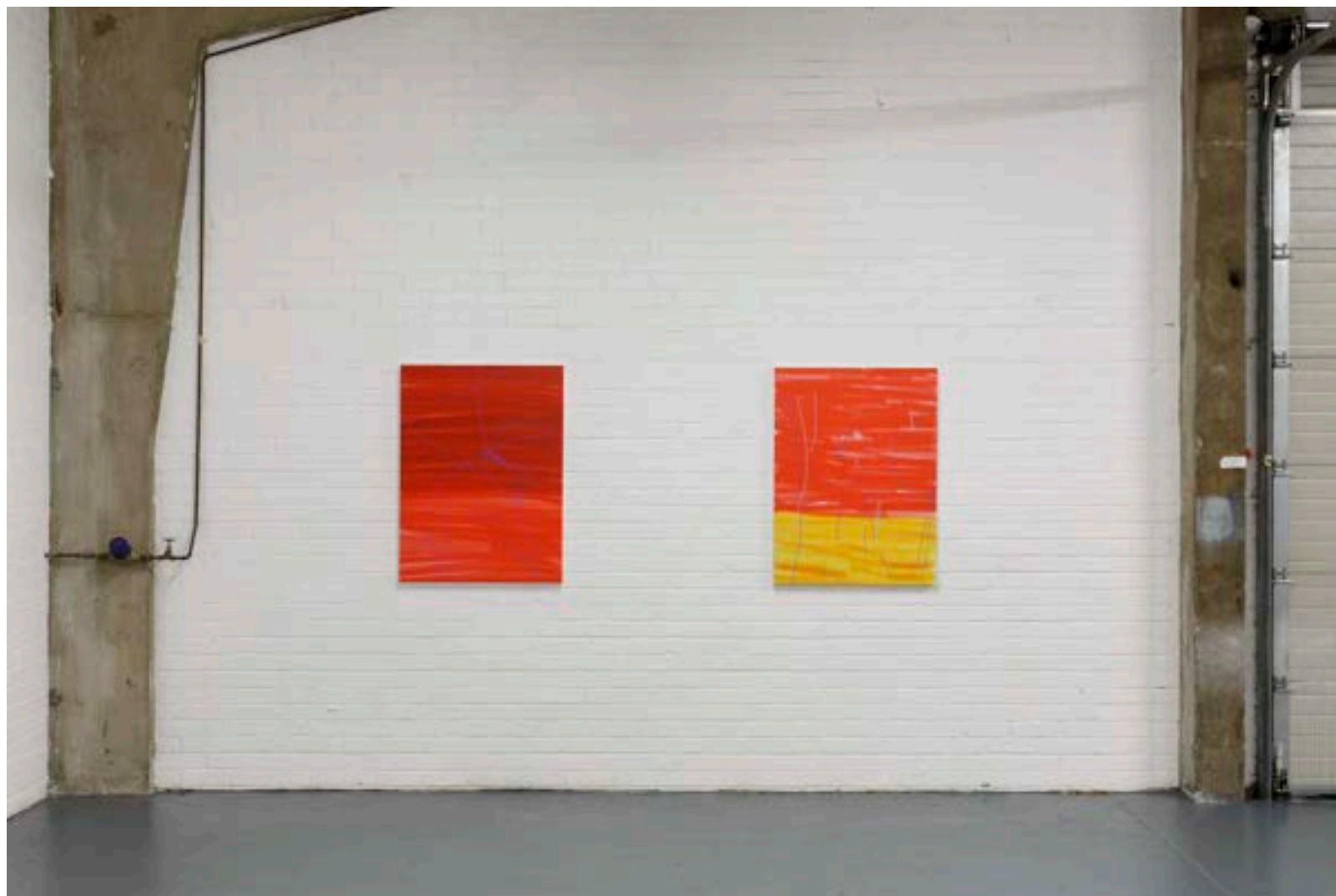
Adriann Ramirez

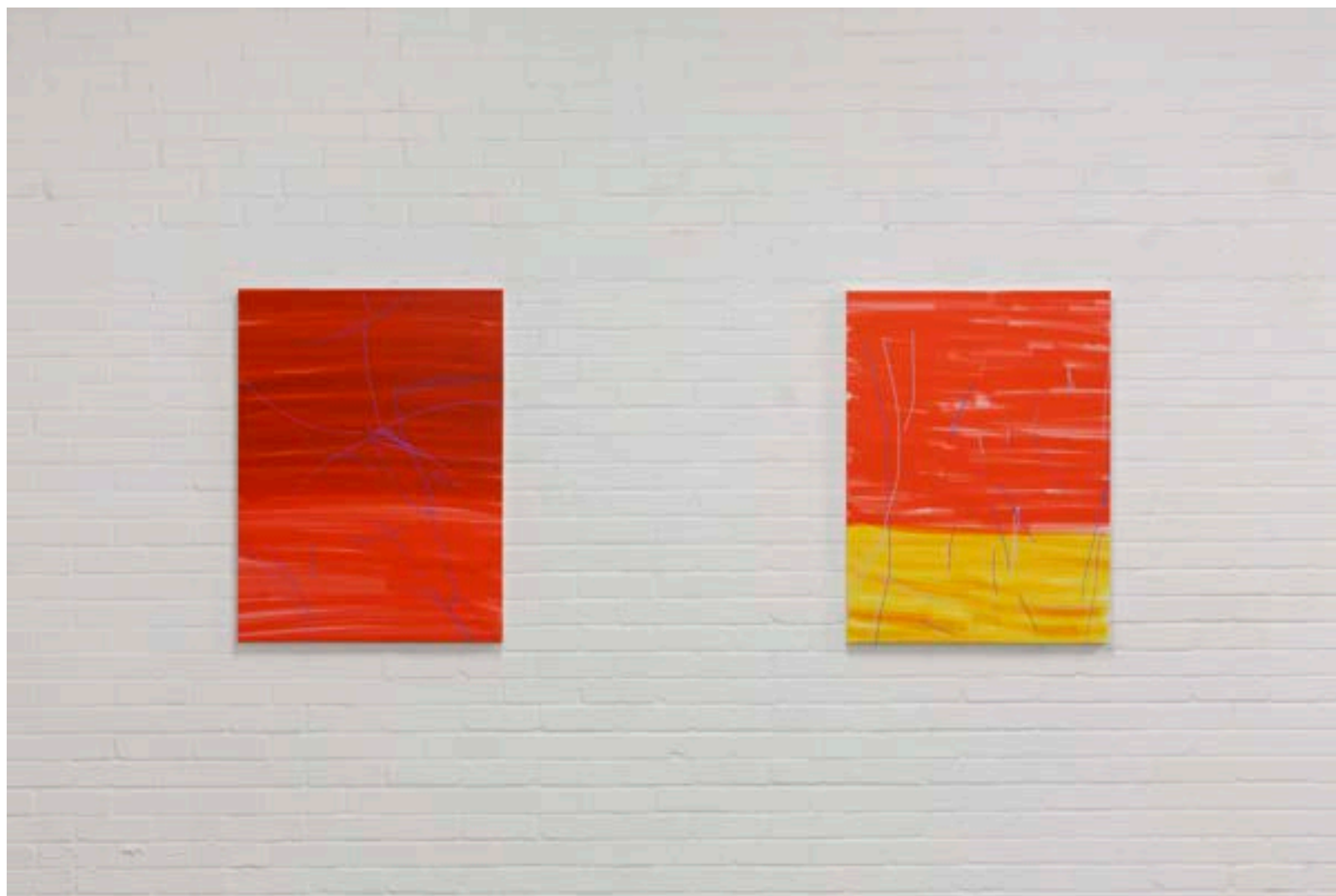
















Donald and Me (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



Joe and Me (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



Jimmy and Me (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



Joe and Me (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



Joe and Me (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.





Still Life (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 30 x 20 in.



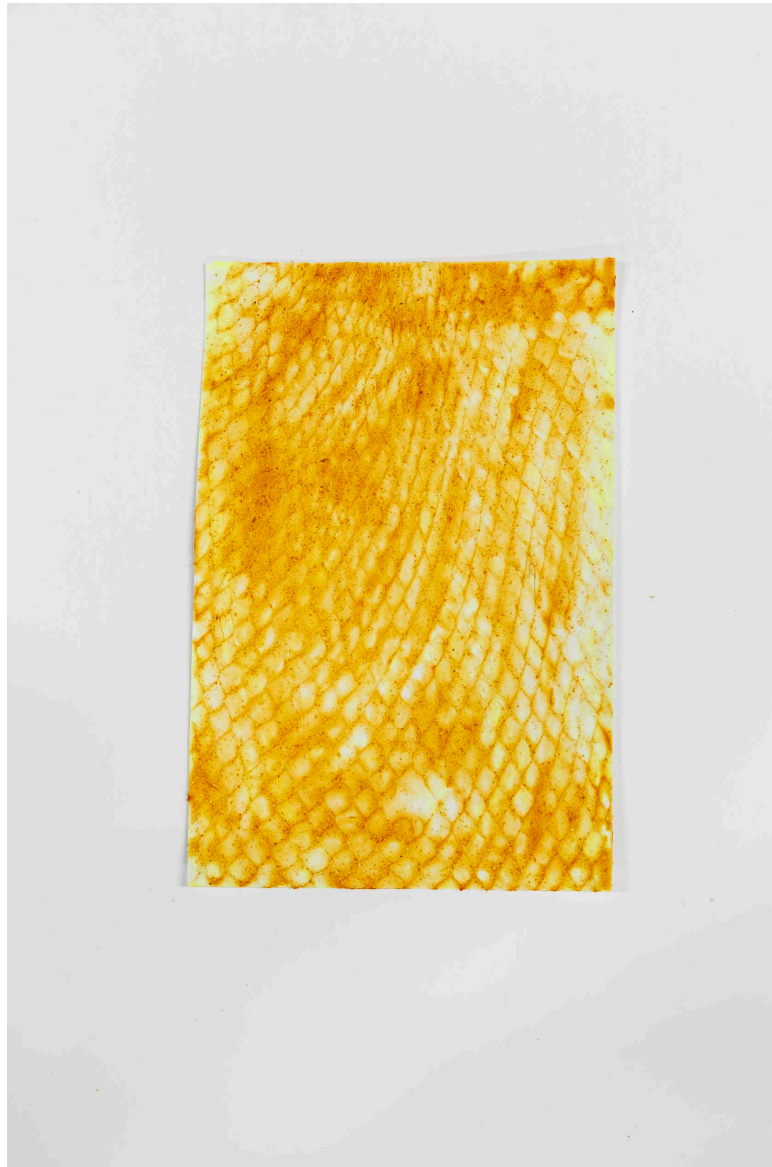
Untitled (Lovers) (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 12 x 10 in.







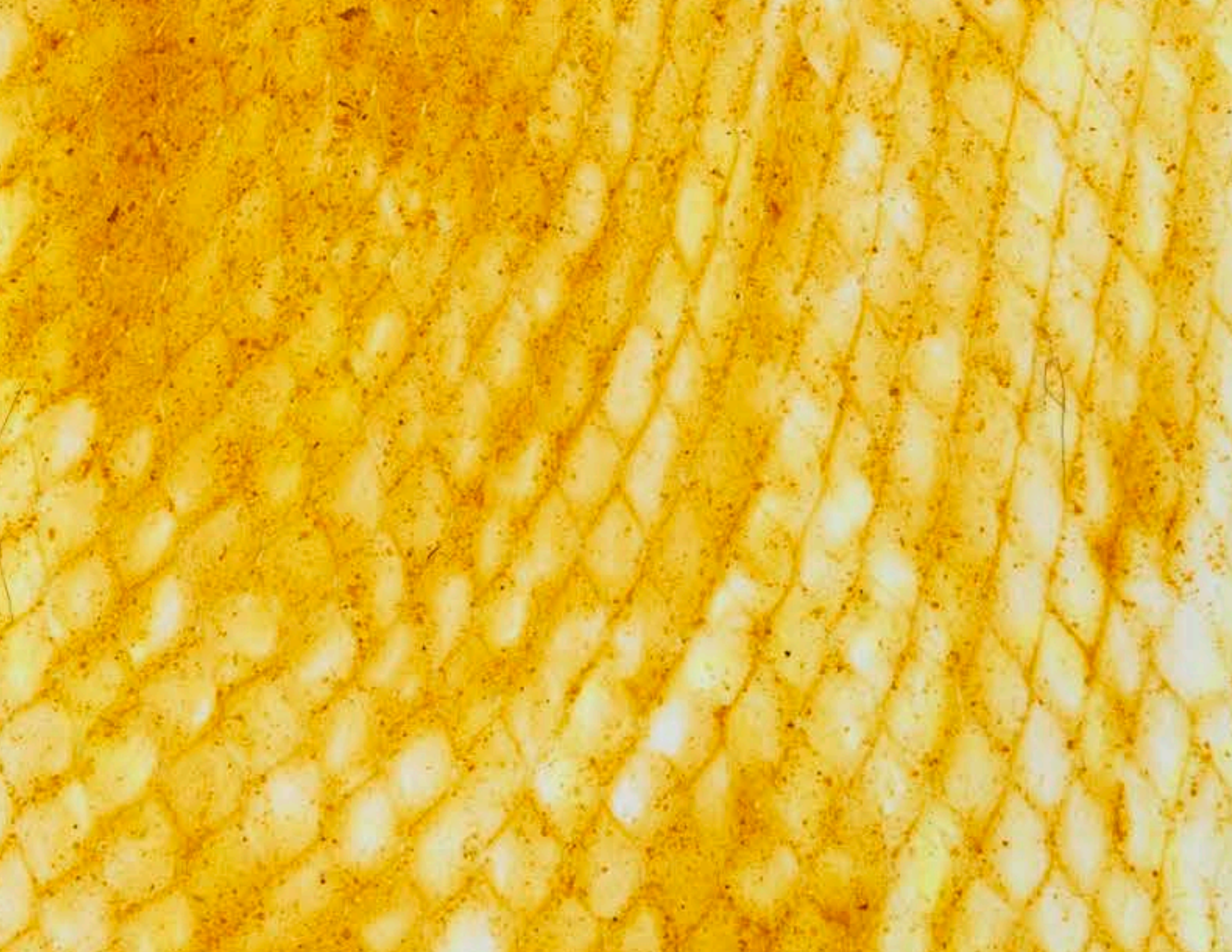
Psycho High (2020), Frank's® RedHot® Sauce and Durex Aloe Vera Lubricant on A4 Paper.



Psycho Lovers (2020), Frank's® RedHot® Sauce and Durex Aloe Vera Lubricant and Fluorescent Yellow Highlighter on Paper.



Psycho Lovers (2020), Frank's® RedHot® Sauce and Durex Aloe Vera Lubricant and Fluorescent Yellow Highlighter on A6 Paper.





anti-hero (2020), readymade monkey figurine and rubber cock ring, both gifts from ex-lovers.



Gloria (2019), found bottles with mysterious orange liquid, found pink metal pole.



Safe Sex (2019), Cherry pit, artist's blood, and used Band-Aid.



Homage to the Square (Daniel and Me), 2019, Pizza Box and Used Condom



Sexy Pizza Dance, SET, London, England, 12 - 29 September 2019 - opening with pizza party and live performance by the artist's brother and musician, Thibaut Vandame, on 12 September 2019



sexy pizza dance

***GUILLAUME
VANDAME***

Pizza Party (opening reception)
12 September 6 - 9 pm
12 - 29 September 2019
SET, Unit 1, Lewisham Retail Park
London SE13 7RZ











Untitled Lovers - Oslo, (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 60 x 40 in.



Untitled (Lovers), (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 60 x 40 in.







Untitled (Lovers), (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.
in.



Untitled (Lovers), (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30



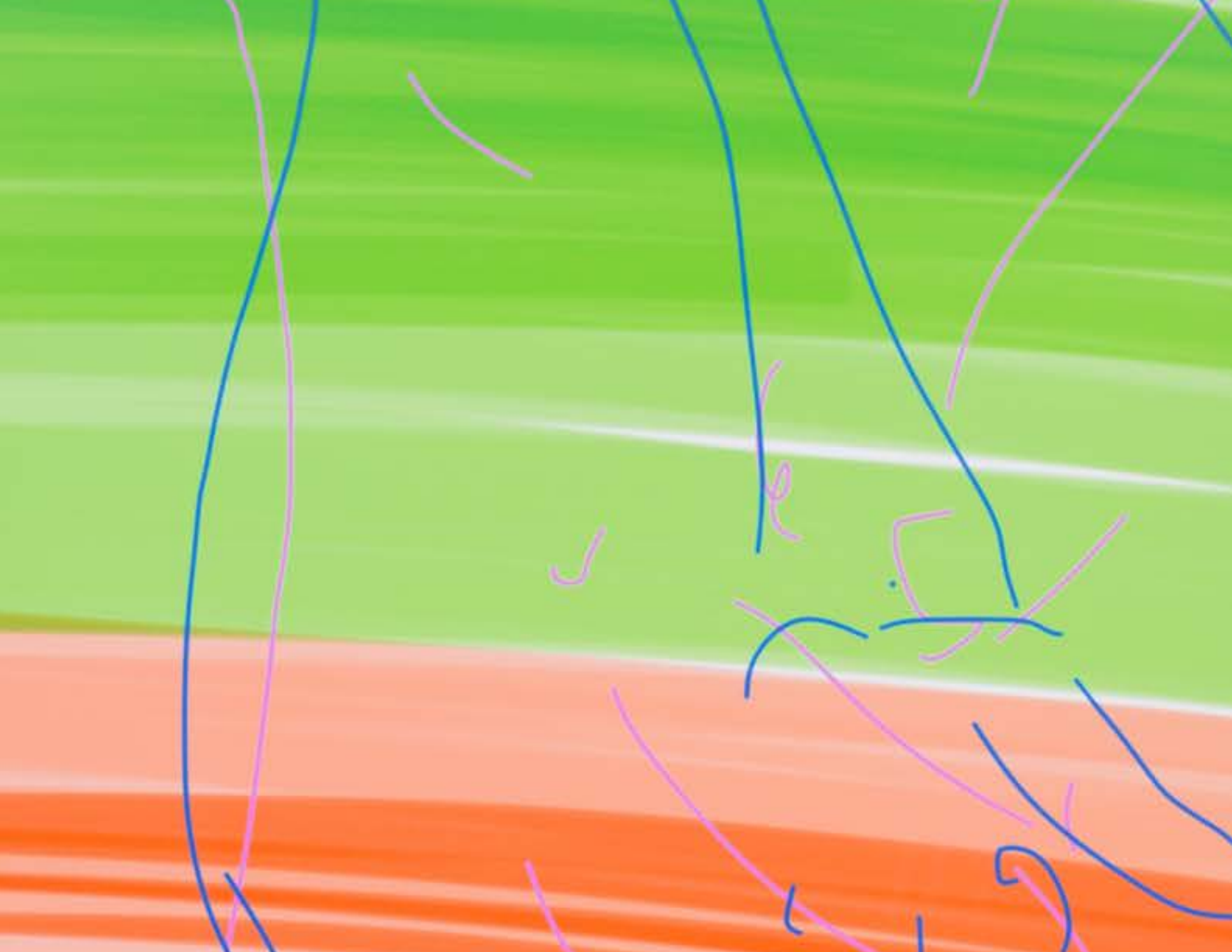
Mark and Me, (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



Untitled (Lovers), (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



Daniel and Me, (2018-2019), Digital print on canvas, 60 x 40 in.





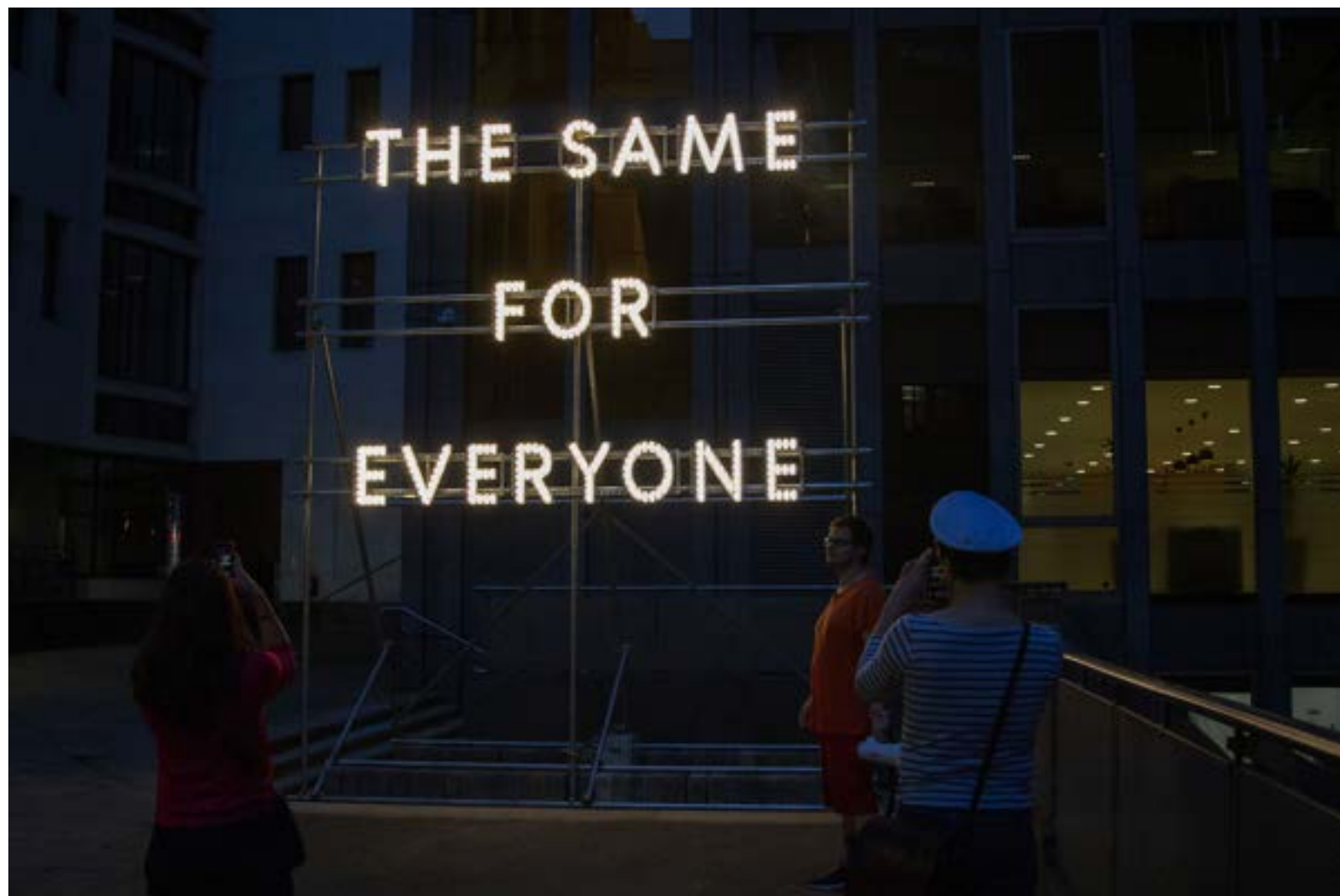
Notice Me (LGBTQIA+ Walk), (2019), commissioned for Nocturnal Creatures 2019, an annual arts festival in the City of London, presented by Sculpture in the City in partnership with Whitechapel Gallery London, England, 19 July 2019



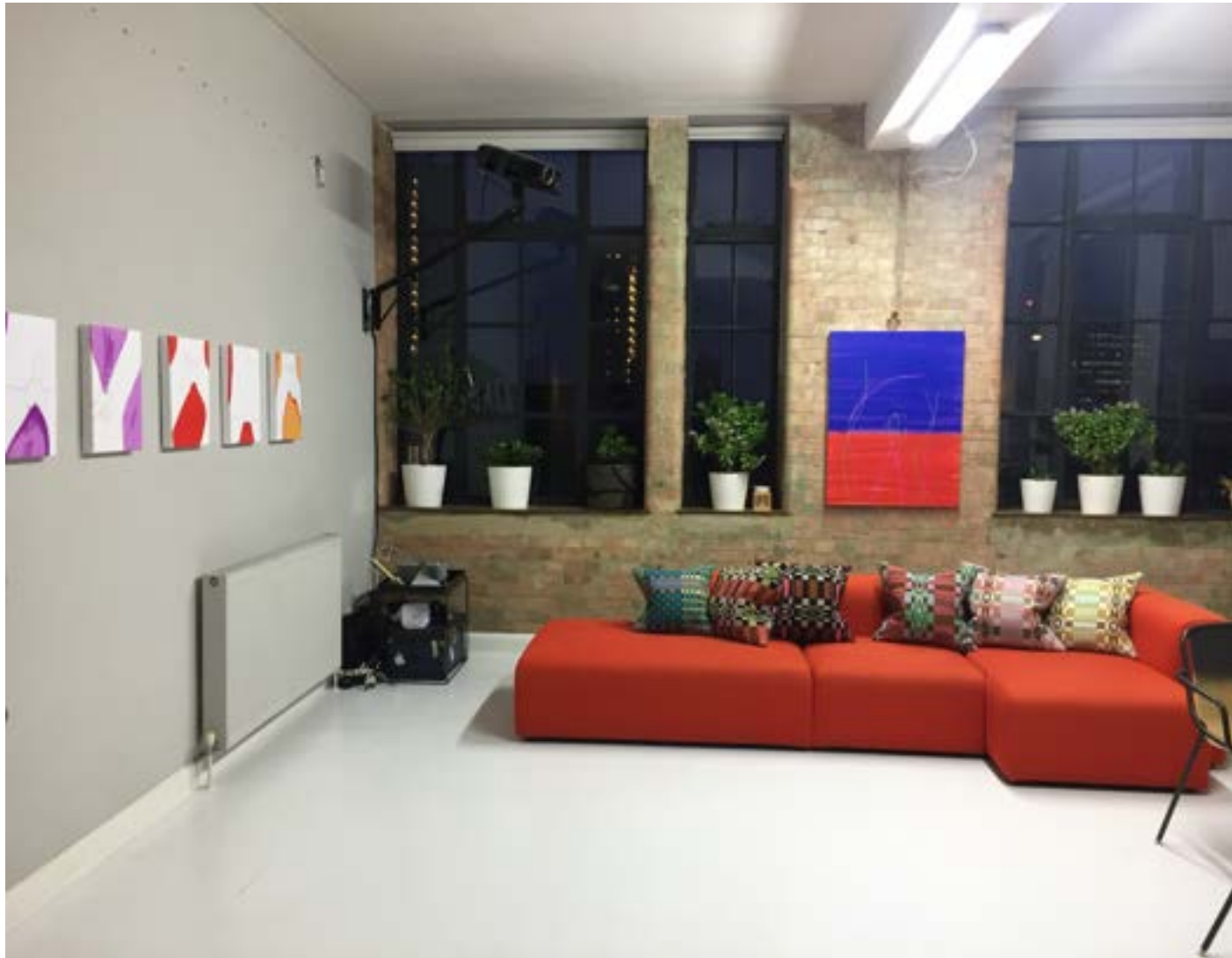












love songs, the greatest hits of celine dion and mark rothko (solo exhibition)
Sexy Frog Biscuit (formerly known as 17five.net), London, England, 9- 20 March 2018 (Screening and Artist Talk 20 March 2018)



Untitled (Lovers), (2017-2018), Digital print on canvas, 40 x 30 in.



love songs, the greatest hits of celine dion and mark rothko, (2017)
Video, sound. Full video 53:23.
Presented as part of "Open Screenings", curated by Gareth Evans,
Whitechapel Gallery, London, England, 8 June 2017



180, (2015), three-channel video installation,
180 minutes of exercise videos
(60 minutes per screen),
Insanity! a collaboration with Josh Wright,
Monster Chetwynd, and Cull,
BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium, 23 April 2017



Art Gym, Week 38/50, a collaboration with Josh Wright, fig-2, curated by Fatos Ustek and Yves Blais, Installation with sculptural elements, video, live art, performance, workshops, and free exercise classes taught by invited trainers and artists including Adham Faramawy, Karimah Ashadu, and Monster Chetwynd. Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, England, 21 - 27 September 2015.
Opening performance choreographed by Sarah Louise Kristiansen on 21 September 2015







LGBTQ NATION



London artist brings together every Pride flag for the first time ever

Michael Jensen, LGBTQ Nation, 19 February 2023

There are many reasons to visit London's Leadenhall Market — the fact that it's one of London's oldest markets, dating back to the 13th century. Or to see it's gorgeous, award-winning architecture.

The market also served as an inspiration for *Harry Potter's* Diagon Alley and was featured in the first movie.

But LGBTQ+ tourists have another reason to visit this wonderful market in the heart of London's financial district: an art installation, symbols, by the artist Guillaume Vandame, which displays thirty different iterations of the Pride flag.

The project, part of the tenth year of London's Sculpture in the City presentation of public art, is arguably the first time all of the different versions of the Pride flag have been shown together.

This is very important to Vandame, a French-American currently based in London, who tells *LGBTQ Nation*, “The rainbow, especially, is a symbol that brings people together. It represents the ultimate paradox: something sublime, bold, and beautiful, and at the same time, it is ordinary, universal, and occurring in the natural world. In other words, it suggests that our gender identity and sexual orientation are as beautiful and normal as a rainbow and part of our everyday life.”

How did an exhibition of **gay pride flags** end up in one of London's most venerable public spaces?

Vandame was already involved with Sculpture in the City through his creation of the artwork Notice Me (LGBTQIA+ Walk), which was an interactive art project that involved walking between different locations. It was as Vandame walked the streets of London for that project that he had the idea for symbols.

“I had this vision in my head of an artwork which could assemble various Pride flags to signify a meeting [place],” Vandame says, “and that was the starting point.”

The very first Pride flag dates to 1977, when gay rights leader Harvey Milk asked LGBTQ+ artist and activist Gilbert Baker to create a symbol around which the burgeoning gay rights movement could rally.

Baker worked with Lynn Segerblom and James McNamara to create the iconic flag that is today a symbol of LGBTQ+ pride around the world.

But as our understanding of queer identity has evolved, so has the flag, which is part of the reason Vandame created symbols.

“I believe all the [different Pride] flags have equal importance,” Vandame says, “even if many of them are relatively new and haven’t had that much visibility in the public eye. It’s one of the reasons why I presented each flag with the same dimensions and materials and at an equal distance from each other.”

Vandame adds that the creation of new flags creates “a sense of narrative, and the order of the flags tells a story. I believe the original Pride flag will always be the ‘blueprint’ for the way we register each subsequent flag, even with the way the colors or design might change over time with new community groups and flags emerging.”

Vandame is especially happy *symbols* is being hosted by Leadenhall Market.

“I think Leadenhall Market is iconic and truly magical,” says Vandame. “The way the light comes through the space is both calming and beautiful as an experience. There are moments of grandeur and moments of intimacy. It makes sense that it would be a site in various movies like *Harry Potter*, and I think that inexplicable quality responds to the importance of the flags in our everyday life, and the way we find love within ourselves, each other, and the beauty of life.”

Since Vandame is an artist, I was curious if he had any ideas for a new Pride flag.

“I love this question and I wish I had a good answer,” he says. “But I have to admit I think they got it right the first time. I believe the original Pride flag and its various iterations will continue to stand the test of time because of its simplicity and universality. One day we might be living in a utopian world with universal peace and equality, and it’s possible we might register the rainbow simply as a rainbow, but until that happens the original Pride flag will always be such a charged symbol and a powerful image of hope, love, and freedom.”

symbols will remain on display at Leadenhall Market through the spring of 2023.

Michael Jensen is an author, editor, and one half of Brent and Michael Are Going Places, a couple of traveling gay digital nomads.

BISHOPSGATE INSTITUTE



The Many Colours of LGBTQ+ Pride

Bishopsgate Institute, 28 February 2022

Every day in February, for LGBTQ+ History Month, on social media we shared some of the flags that represent the different identities in the LGBTQ+ community. Here, we collect them together, as well as speak with artist Guillaume Vandame about his installation, *symbols*, that celebrates their power.

In 1977, artist and activist, Gilbert Baker, designed the rainbow flag as the original symbol for the LGBTQ+ community. Since then, as our understanding of identity has expanded, many more flags have been created to represent the diversity of the community. Not only do these flags represent the spectrum of sexuality, but gender and desire too.

Though some may consider 28 to be a large number of flags, in reality, there are many more flags celebrating different identities than there are days in one month

Take a look at the flags and what they represent here, then be sure to read the interview with [Guillaume Vandame](#) below, as he discusses his installation, *symbols*, inspired by his visit to Bishopsgate Institute.

Artist Guillaume Vandame's flying the flags

As part of the Sculpture in the City, an annual event that transforms urban areas in the City of London into a sculpture park, artist Guillaume Vandame hung 30 pride flags in Leadenhall Market. We asked him about his artwork, what pride flags meant to him, and why they still matter.

Tell us about your installation *symbols* at Leadenhall Market.

symbols is an artwork consisting of thirty flags ranging from gender, sexuality, and desire. I am really happy that *symbols* is featured as part of the 10th edition of Sculpture in the City, City of London, pioneered by Stella Ioannou and Simon Glynn.

The nature of the artwork is a sculptural installation that works on different levels. The installation is site specific, made especially for the Beehive Passage at Leadenhall Market, at the same time, it's conceptual and rootless in the same way gender and sexuality are universal. I feel really proud that the artwork can be presented as part of this incredible programme.

Due to adverse weather and strong wind, symbols is currently deinstalled from Leadenhall Market while the artwork undergoes maintenance. It will be reinstalled in March 2022.

What was the inspiration for *symbols*?

I had the idea when I was developing my artwork *Notice Me* (LGBTQIA+ Walk) for Nocturnal Creatures 2019, an annual arts festival commissioned by Sculpture in the City in partnership with Whitechapel Gallery. As part of my research, I was amazed to come across a cross-section of flags at Bishopsgate Institute, and instantly felt compelled to bring this out into a more public space. At the same time, I was interested in creating a meeting point for people joining us on the walk, and I had this idea to create artwork that would show as many flags together as possible. Leadenhall Market was part of this walk and it felt poetic that *symbols* can be shown here for the first time.

When did you first become aware of the Pride flag and what does it mean to you?

I first learned about the Pride flag as a teenager whilst coming to terms with my own sexuality. I have to admit, I felt a bit alienated or estranged from something that was so loud and out there, which was the opposite of how I felt at the time; I didn't want to draw attention to myself. It was only after coming out that I became more 'acclimated' with the flag and now it's something I firmly stand by and support.

Why do Pride flags still matter?

While I was working on *symbols* for Sculpture in the City, the symbolism and legacy of the Pride flag became the focus of *A Brief History of Rainbows*, an art film I made between 2020 and 2021 as part of my residency at Union Chapel, London. I wanted to re-frame the Pride flag and strip it back, to show that it's not something we can take for granted, no matter how accepting or tolerant our attitudes might appear.

I just learned a few days ago about Sarah Hegazi, an Egyptian activist who was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured for three months after flying a Pride flag at a concert in 2017. They died by suicide in 2020. The story might be extreme or uncomfortable to hear but it helps put things in perspective. On the one hand it is a 'rainbow' and on the other hand it is a 'flag', and these are actually two separate things which together become quite irreverent and iconoclastic.

Most people might also be surprised to know that the Pride flag is frequently vandalised, stolen, and was, under President Trump, banned from being shown at US Embassies. The nature of exhibiting *symbols* then becomes a gesture of solidarity with these individual community groups. It signifies a social responsibility or commitment by an institution to include and represent all these people in public space. I am also aware that one day we might live in a utopian world where our gender, sexuality, and desire are no longer part of this discourse and *symbols* alludes to this idea as well. The joy of the artwork is how it reveals our values, beliefs, and attitudes as a society while paradoxically being a total celebration of love and togetherness.

Why do you think it's important for different identities to have a symbol?

I was talking to a friend recently who was thinking about coming out but was unsure if they were 'bisexual' or 'gay'. It was through this chat that I remembered how important it is that each of these flags exist, because they ground our sense of identity. The experience of being gay might be similar to being bisexual, but they are ultimately different lived experiences. Each person is unique, and that also varies among generations and in different cities and countries. The idea of showing the flags in public space is really interesting as a concept, given how polarising they can be in different cultures and contexts.

As an artist, I feel like there is maybe more freedom than simply showing the flags as something ordinary like at a Pride festival. Even in these contexts, some of the flags represent aspects of identity and desire that are further away from the conceived 'mainstream', like those from the fetish communities. *symbols* acknowledges this tension through the inclusion of eight flags from



There's plenty of sculpture lying around outside in London now: not just the permanent stuff dotted about or combined into routes such as The Line, but also three significant temporary displays: Frieze Sculpture Park (to 31 Oct), Sculpture in the City (to spring next year) and 'On the Other Hand', curated at Canary Wharf by Brooke Benington (to 17 Nov). All are worth strolling around. Here's a pick from each:

Guillaume Vandame: *symbols*, 2019-21 in 'Sculpture in the City'

An installation of 30 different flags associated with the LGBTQ+ community, from the original Pride Flag designed by Gilbert Baker in San Francisco in 1978 to its newest iteration by Daniel Quasar in 2018 and a surprising number of others. Guillaume Vandame captures and celebrates the extent of diversity which has emerged over the last forty years – and the City feels a good place to do this, so making a point to a traditionally conservative community.

Sculpture Outside the Gallery

Paul Carey-Kent, Fad Magazine, 6 October 2021



'symbols' is the short and apt name for an LGBTQ-themed art installation in **London** at the moment. It consists of 30 LGBTQ pride flags hung in the interior of Leadenhall Market.

One of the oldest markets in the UK capital, Leadenhall has a history dating back to the 14th century. The current building dates back to 1881 and features a distinctive ornate roof, painted green, maroon and cream, and cobbled floors (it was used as Diagon Alley in the first *Harry Potter* movie).

'symbols' is by French-American artist Guillaume Vandame. He tells GayCities he specializes in "queer readymade sculptures to homoerotic digital paintings inspired by Rothko and De Kooning."

Vandame assembled 'symbols' over the last couple of years and this is the first time the art piece has been exhibited. It's part of the 10th edition of Sculpture in the City, an annual celebration of modern art that sees sculpture and installations dotted around the district. It will continue to be on display until spring 2022.



30 different pride flags hang together in a stunning celebration of joy and freedom

David Hudson, gaycities.com (LGBTQ Nation), 20 July 2021

Born in 1991, Vandame is based in London. According to his website, this multi-disciplinary artist is “interested in expanding ideas of language and meaning through a conceptual, queer, and socially engaged aesthetic, especially the subjects of representation, intimacy, and post-gay identity.”

‘symbols’ spans the original Pride Flag designed by Gilbert Baker in San Francisco in 1978 to its newest iteration by Daniel Quasar in 2018. Vandame says he was shortlisted to exhibit as part of Sculpture in the City in January 2020, but plans had to be put on hold because of the pandemic. This led to him adding further flags, and a renewed sense of mission to the project.

“I wanted to create something defiant and inclusive of all these different community groups,” he said.

“It felt even more important with the absence of Pride 2020 alongside the deaths of key figures like [Larry Kramer](#) or [Aimee Stephens](#) and everyday people from our community. It was almost anti-climactic after celebrating the 50th anniversary of Stonewall only to be made invisible. There was an urgency to be seen and heard.” Of the flags themselves, Vandame adds, “I think this is the first time all 30 flags have been shown on public display, anywhere in the world.

“Some of the flags feel of our time and the majority have only come about since the 1990s and 2000s. One of the current global issues for our community is the legal recognition and protection of non-binary and trans people and I feel proud to include the associated flags for Non-binary, Trans, Intersex, Demiboy, Demigirl, Genderqueer and Genderfluid people.

“I have also included eight flags from the fetish communities (Leather, BDSM, Puppy, Polyamory, Master/Slave, Rubber/Latex, Bear, Twink) and this feels especially important to me. Even if these community groups are not essentially gay, their inclusion helps normalize the idea that it is okay to explore your desires among consenting adults.” He says that seeing the artwork assembled on-site for the first time was an emotional experience. “I think working on the installation of symbols at Leadenhall Market was one of the spectacular experiences of my life. I worked with a local tailor to help alter all the flags and they were so beautifully clean and perfect when we arrived.

“It was truly incredible to see the artwork assembled onsite. The work is so colorful and vibrant, it practically glows at all hours of the day. I was able to hang the last two flags and it’s a memory I will never forget. “The reception has also been brilliant. It’s one thing to have this idea in your head but to see it come to life and experience the artwork in person is truly remarkable.

“Throughout this entire process, there was an ongoing joke how most people might know only a third of the flags. Immediately once we finished and everyone had gone home, a teenager suddenly showed up with their family and started gleefully rushing through the space explaining to their parents every single flag and what they mean. It was pure joy.”

CREATIVE BOOM

Sculpture in the City, the City of London's programme of public outdoor artworks around some of the capital's most famous spaces, has launched its tenth edition.

Among the 18 contemporary artists showing their work in the Square Mile are Laure Prouvost, Guillaume Vandame, Alice Channer, Eva Rothschild, Mark Handforth, Laura Arminda Kingsley and Rosanne Robertson, and many others.

Spanning St Botolph without Bishopsgate to Fenchurch Street Station Plaza, Leadenhall Market to Mitre Square, the annual event aims to offer audiences easy access to experiencing contemporary art to encourage people to engage with their immediate environment.

Among the highlights of the 2021 edition are Guillaume Vandame's symbols (2019-2021) in Leadenhall Market. The installation consists of 30 unique flags from the LGBT+ community, spanning the original Pride Flag designed by Gilbert Baker in San Francisco in 1978 to the iteration by Daniel Quasar in 2018, which has received mixed feedback – especially among the design community



Sculpture in the City's tenth edition features a history of LGBT+ flags

Emily Gosling, Creative Boom, 21 June 2021

Vandame's work aims to represent the "diversity of gender, sexuality, and desire today" and acts as a nice continuation of his previous Sculpture in the City works: back in 2019, he led Notice Me (LGBT+ Walk), a participatory artwork which took the form of "a peaceful walk among LGBT+ individuals of all ages and backgrounds as well as queer allies seeking to support the cause of equality and free love." Participants were invited to dress in one of the seven colours of the LGBT+ community rainbow, and the walk itself underscored the inherent diversity of the sculptures themselves along the walk's route

Elsewhere in this year's event, Isabella Martin's Keeping Time (2019) by Isabella Martin "describes a perception of time as being inseparable from our environment," using moving water as a unit of measure; while Elisa Artesero's The Garden of Floating Words (2017) remains on show from the 2019 edition of Sculpture in the City in a pedestrianised space outside 70 St Mary Axe. The piece takes the form of a neon poem that "appears to float" in the dark of night.

While they're very much presented in the thick of the urban environment, many of the pieces on show reference nature, both thematically and formally. The contortions of Mark Handforth's Harlequin Four (2019) are said to "recall the wreckage caused by the forces of nature and by humans," for instance.

Meanwhile, Laura Arminda Kingsley's Murmurs of the Deep (2021) "invites viewers to immerse themselves in a freer, wilder pictorial world, in which our communion with the cosmos and nature is unmediated by cultural valuations or static ideas of identity." Her large-scale vinyl artwork was selected from Sculpture in the City's Open Call for a 2D artwork and will be displayed on the underside of the escalators leading up to the Leadenhall Building (better known as The Cheesegrater) in a first for Sculpture in the City.

Next month, Sculpture in the City will reflect on all ten editions, as well as look to the future in an outdoor public exhibition opening on 16 July in Aldgate Square that will celebrate highlights from artworks shown across the past decade. The exhibition will also include the five shortlisted artist proposals for the first Aldgate Square Commission, a new biannual commission to support emerging artists in the UK, which launched last year and which will result in two new public artworks to be exhibited in Aldgate Square in 2022 and 2023 respectively.

ELEPHANT



How Guillaume Vandame Processed Unrequited Love Through Intimate Artworks

Emily Gosling, Elephant, 7 December 2020

The French-American artist's multifarious practice includes participation, video, text and more. Inspired by Rothko's paintings, he has depicted himself and lovers in abstract iPhone drawings.

I first met Guillaume Vandame back in 2015. He was sporting gym shorts and a sweatband, shouting things like "I love you! I believe in you! Sweat!" and "Consult your physician!" at me. I've come to realise that with Vandame, this sort of hi-NRG opener really isn't that surprising. These missives were part of a piece he and regular art partner Josh Wright were orchestrating with Monster Chetwynd, an "Insanity Workout" for the ICA's fig-2 programme. This formidable trio proved to be the instigators of what's been, hands down, the most joyful art experience I've ever had.

Vandame is largely self-taught in the technicalities of art, having focused his studies on art history, which might explain his work's conceptual core and its frequent textual leanings. People are an equally crucial thread throughout his myriad practice. The works always have a sense of communion and connection; outside of the collaborative Wright & Vandame duo, his independent projects frequently render the viewer an accomplice of sorts, whether through literal participation, or the less demonstrative act of peeling back various layers of narrative and suggestion.

Recurring motifs of language and meaning, interrogating heteronormative histories, social engagement, desire, intimacy and queer identity unite Vandame's work. Recent projects have included a series of vividly hued canvas prints bearing gestural, expressive representations of his lovers; a series of works and accompanying public exhibition programme inspired by the poet Thom Gunn; a walk through the City of London in which participants became human sculptures in an ambulatory LGBTQI+ flag; and a series of works created with Franks Red Hot Sauce and Durex Lubricant ("a new style of art I am calling non-representational gay art," says Vandame).

He credits his Long Island upbringing with his ongoing love affair with Abstract Expressionism (and his occasional insistence on being the First Openly Gay Abstract Expressionist). That area was once the site for the studios of De Kooning, Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock; and their influence is redolent in Vandame's approach to colour, conceptual rigour and experimental processes.

“Discrimination and hatred towards gay and queer people has not disappeared, it’s just taken a new form”

Your art feels like it always has “you” in it, whether it’s a performance where you’re physically involved, or because of the way you talk through your images with such detail and openness. How do you approach the relationship between you as a person, and the person making the art?

I’ve always tried to have a very holistic vision with the exhibitions I do: it’s not just about experiencing the art within the space, but how to activate that through public programming or something experiential. In the walk I did for Sculpture in the City, I was almost a stand-in for the person who might feel disenfranchised, disconnected, or who lacks a sense of belonging; definitely in the queer community, but also in the world in general. I do think it’s a heightened thing for LGBTQIA+ people, and something codified in our society. There is a sense of disconnect because it’s not completely conventional.

When I began doing projects independently, I started thinking about how to do that within a queer context as maybe more of a personal agenda. There’s an ongoing conversation now around how exhibitions and public programming will change moving forward [in the wake of Covid-19], but simultaneously, the issues related to queer identity are still valid. Things like access to preventative treatments for HIV/Aids or Black Trans Lives Matter haven’t disappeared just because of the pandemic. Discrimination and hatred towards gay and queer people has not disappeared, it’s just taken a new form.

You work across writing, printmaking, drawing, video, text and more. How do you describe what you do, especially in terms of the queer identity that's at the heart of so much of your work?

I think of myself almost as a gay Pop artist in a way, because some of the issues I'm dealing with as an artist could be seen as archetypally gay. I'm trying to interpret those issues in a way that's accessible while still maintaining something that's nuanced and tasteful, or that has the execution of high art. I like thinking about language and meaning: how a symbol, image or cultural artefact changes over time.

On one hand queer culture is debased, or degraded, or "less than". There's the sense that it's abject; it's the same reason why certain words in gay culture can still be so potent and charged. But being gay is also aspirational. How do you deal with these two conflicting ideas? Someone has described my practice as a form of visual activism, and I would embrace or accept that as well.

Do you feel artists have a responsibility to explore politicised ideas?

I think of "queer art" nowadays as two different strands: one is the act of institutional critique, but then at the same time, maybe queer art is just the presence of queer artists in a space, even if it's not charged. Being queer will always be an act of resistance: a museum presenting queer art is a very political act, even if the subject matter isn't, because it's an act of solidarity for those marginalised identities or individuals.

For the same reason, I don't think I will ever make something that's conventionally understood as a painting or a sculpture because it will always be marked by a certain kind of otherness. Some people who are queer artists might even say that this is a non-issue, and that they have been able to divorce it successfully. But because I know that there's so much social injustice in the world, far beyond the Western world's attitude towards gay people, we still have a mission as a society to protect and defend those rights. It will never be something that we can take as a given.

“Being queer will always be an act of resistance: a museum presenting queer art is a very political act, even if the subject matter isn’t”

At your recent SET exhibition, Nightsweats, you were showing some pretty personal works depicting lovers, which you drew on your phone. What’s the story behind those?

When I started doing the drawings in the spring of 2017, it was a process of trial and error. At the time, I was working on an experimental video essay called love songs, the greatest hits of Celine Dion and Mark Rothko, which consists of a series of video studies of paintings from the Rothko room at Tate Modern juxtaposed with Celine Dion’s music. In between going to and from Tate Modern on the tube, I began making drawings on my phone responding to Rothko. He was able to create seemingly infinite layers of colour through paint, and I realised I could essentially do the same thing on my phone, just adding layers and layers of colour digitally. Originally, the drawings were more abstract, but then I had this eureka moment one day where I thought, “What would happen if I disrupted the colour field with two people? Not just two people, but two men having sex?” The result was instantly gratifying.

I didn’t think I was ever going to publicly show the drawings; they felt almost too intimate. Printing them on canvas as unique artworks felt like a poetic gesture and materialising them in a way that was lost through video. Canvas would be a way of maintaining that sort of quality while also querying it: it would no longer strictly be a colour field, as it would have this queer subject matter. I describe the works as if Mark Rothko and De Kooning had a gay child with an iPhone! More recently, I realised that Rothko also made paintings of people on the subway. A lot of the drawings I was making were on the underground, when I was going from Tate Modern, or from a guy’s house to somewhere else. I always made them afterwards.

I’m guessing it’s quite emotional to look back on those more personal works. How have your feelings towards them changed over time?

When I look at the works, sometimes I can place a memory or person in the situation. Obviously, I was having sex before I started making the works, so there are other people that were in my mind, but the main guy who inspired the paintings never knew about them. He was a muse but he was also like an anti-muse. I think he would have been dismissive but loved the adoration. There were times when I was completely obsessed with him, and of course, it was completely unrequited. I was so beholden to him, and although if I take a step back I could say “If he’s treating me like this, why would I even bother to engage with him, just stop seeing him,” or whatever, the truth is that it’s so hard to let go. Maybe being slightly secretive about it, or at least not sharing it with him, was a way of trying to cultivate that agency.



THE ART NEWSPAPER



Artist to create giant collaborative work from discarded NHS rainbows

Louisa Buck, The Art Newspaper, 10 August 2020. Photo: Thibaut Vandame

Guillaume Vandame is calling on members of the public to submit their NHS rainbows for a giant collaborative work

Is the NHS rainbow you put up at the beginning of lockdown starting to look a little faded? Now that we are not clapping every Thursday, and government policy becomes infinitely more erratic than the weather, the rainbows are starting to come down from the nation's windows even though our gratitude to the NHS remains undiminished. But rather than chuck them out, the French-American artist Guillaume Vandame is asking the British public to send him their discarded rainbow art so that they can become part of a collective work that he is putting together to mark this most strange of years.

Love is lighter than air will combine all the rainbows that Vandame receives into one big work, devoted to this symbol of hope that, pre-Covid, was synonymous with the LGBTQIA+ community. The open submission for everyone's rainbows will run until the end of December, after which they will be united and put on display. "They will all be equally important—there are no hierarchies" promises Vandame, who up until this April was one half of the Kettles Yard Open House 2019-20 artist-in-residence programme, working with the fellow artist Josh Wright and the local community on a range of projects predominantly centred around individual wellbeing.

Vandame also has a track record with rainbows and mass participation. Last year as part of Nocturnal Creatures, the Whitechapel Gallery's free late night contemporary art festival, he led a parade of individuals from throughout the LGBTQIA+ community who took to the streets dressed in the colours of the rainbow flag (plus pink) in support of equality and free love. "As a queer artist I now want to open up what the rainbow means to different people," he says.

The search is currently on for a location for *Love is Lighter than Air* which, unlike the Victoria and Albert Museum's call for rainbows, will take an analogue rather than a digital form. "It will be a living artwork, very present and also an archive, a cultural artefact from the time we are living in now," declares Vandame. And as for what form the ultimate piece will take, this will be determined by the number of works that are sent in. "What's really exciting about this project is that it is limitless and indeterminate—just like a rainbow."

Submissions can be sent to: PO Box 75559, London SE4 9EF

It is not emptying your mind. The instructor explains to the class,

Meditation has got nothing to do with blanking your mind. My favourite quote on yoga is "If you want your mind to go blank, get your best friend to give you a healthy blow on the head."

Oh God, but my mind is blank. Should it not be? Think about things. Concentrate. I mean, meditate. So it's not just emptying your mind then?

You wouldn't want to encourage your mind to be blank, because your mind is designed in a way that is supposed to connect you with the world around you. So why would you ask your heart to stop beating, why would you ask your digestive system to stop working?

Didn't Houdini slow his heart down or his breathing so he could escape from padlocks under water? No matter. Some gentle stretches. She asks us to move our hands in front of us, and to project an imaginary ball of light in our hands. Oh wow! I can see it, right there in my hands, a big imaginary ball of love or cosmic libido. My body and I are one! Meditating is pretty far out.

We are going to be practicing slow movement, controlled movement, to match our breath, so that our awareness can follow.



Week 38 – Josh Wright and Guillaume Vandame – 21-27 September

AJ Dehany, 6 October 2015

I like the stretches and the breathing and the ball of light, and the lying down. I could lie down all day, all night even, just breathing. She tells us to touch one nostril with your thumb and the other with your finger and breathe in through the left nostril and out through the right. But I can't. I can't breathe through my nose. This is agony. This is excruciating. I have never been so frustrated. This is not relaxing. Meditation is sheer hell.

What we are trying to achieve through meditation, a sense of stillness, a sense of peace, tap into that sense of stillness and peace within us, something that you carry with you all the time wherever you go.

Seriously, how do they get away with it, the Bedroom Tax and the Welfare Bill, the death of Bobby Sands, and parking tickets. I definitely did not ask to be born. This is cruel. My body has dissolved into feelings. At that moment I notice that the ball of light in my hands is a horrendous flaming ball of pure hate.

We are not looking for achieving something unattainable, we are tapping into something that is within – sense of stillness, sense of peace, sense that everything is well.

Everything is not well. The meditation session was not cathartic. After it's over the guy next to me says, with a bovine docility, that he found it peaceful. In my mind a menagerie of Boschian monsters commit grave acts of bestial cruelty to each other in a landscape of flames and death.

In case you came here with the expectation of blanking your mind, it is not what we are looking for.

In Week 38 of Fig-2 Josh Wright and Guillaume Vandame turned the ICA studio space into a participatory art gym. The idea was to invite artists as well as exercise instructors, and encourage people to try new things and to promote healthy living as opposed to the impossible ideals of body image, with a social platform to discuss issues inspired by Marjolijn Dijkman's Salon sessions held in Week 22 of Fig-2 which used the space as an open forum for discussion.

During the week there were sessions of Pilates, Zumba, Chi Kung, meditation, and eight types of yoga- Ashtanga, Vinyasa, Hatha, Meditation, Yin, Dru, as well as the mysterious "Everlasting Yoga" sessions run by artist Karimah Ashadu, the movement and meditation session that so severely stressed me out, and VOGA, an ungodly but logical mashup of Yoga and Voguing, the 'strike a pose' semi-static dance style that Madonna stole off the New York gay scene; logical because yoga is also a kind of semi-static dance of held poses, and ungodly because oh God just Madonna.

Vandame and Wright are strongly influenced by [Vanessa Beecroft](#), and their week was in a sense an application of her sculptural use of actual human bodies. The participants in the classes become part of the human sculpture, as well as integral to what are in effect participatory performances. Guillaume says “the classes work within this framework about body image, gender, sexuality, etc. but are also much about chance encounters and possibility — what can happen in these situations and questioning expectations of both performance art and traditional exercise classes.”

In the sessions from three invited artists, the idea of a performance and exercise class as participatory performance were mixed up so an exercise class that is instructive becomes a participatory art event. Visitors are in a sense objectified, becoming sculptures within the installation. Objectification is a dangerous subject, beginning with how people are perceived and then defined and then repressed according to single objectified aspects of their sex, gender, race, culture. Tellingly, the doors to the space stayed open, to foreground the aim of inclusivity. So the show's repurposing of objectification takes issues or representation of the female body as a starting point and extends it to issues of race, sexuality, and so on through the whole list of '[Tory low priorities](#)'. It addresses perceived alienating effects of performance art (and indeed exercise) by inviting people into the performance.

[Zing Tsjeng](#) has written in [Vice](#) about “This is insanity!” the class/art performance led by Turner nominee Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, giving such a vivid and amazing account that it made me wonder if I was even at the same event.

[INSANITY®](#) is a provocatively competitive workout – *the hardest ever!* says the promo material. Chetwynd explained the hideous beast and took the class through some of its moves. It involves high-intensity one-minute bursts of strenuous activity (we did thirty seconds) followed by relative chill. This I guess means the body can't become adjusted to either, which makes it work harder. It's obviously stupid, but I suppose some idiots want to give themselves heart attacks.

Adham Faramawy's “Post Rave Sweat Fatigue Workshop” was a high-intensity session combining the dance moves of rave with standard aerobics. I enjoyed this very much, but it's hard to dance. An hour of rave anthems was pretty tiring. How the hell did we do this all night long in the nineties? Oh, drugs. Drugs were pretty good, right? I'm glad we got those tattoos.

High-intensity exercise is one thing, but nothing compared to what artists and bodybuilders have put themselves through. [Francesca Steele](#) is a kind of case study for pushing the limits of body modification as both an art and personal project. She was featured in the [Superhuman exhibition](#) at the Wellcome Collection, a show about body modification, and in the first salon discussion session at Fig-2 she spoke about her lifestyle and being a bodybuilder as an art project she did in 2008, physically changing her body and how that changed her identity, particularly regarding gender. Her diet was so rigorous and extreme, full of eggs and spinach and drugs, that upon being invited to dinner with art legend Marina Abramovic she declined because she didn't want to deviate from her diet. It caused such a personal strain to the extent that she ended up divorced from her husband.

The yoga session on Sunday morning was a classic straight-man funny-man double act with Josh (literally straight) performing standard yoga moves, while Guillaume (literally funny) plugged into his iPod and singing along to a playlist of pop songs themed around breathing. The Daniel Johnston-like tuneless strangling of Taylor Swift and Sting was a disruptive art intervention into yoga. It actually made it easier *for me* to concentrate on the yoga; a sort of focusing distraction. I'm the sort of ADHD guy who generally has two TVs and a radio on while I'm writing while I'm driving while I'm on the tube while I'm on the phone, masturbating and making charcoal sketches.

The session was nothing like my previous yoga session. It definitely felt like art, art as sustained wind-up, the neo-Dadaism of Fluxus and Naim June Paik. One of the other participants was sustainedly wound up and began ignoring Josh and performing her own yoga shapes, before finally leaving the room for a few minutes, then returning, resuming her own thing, and finally getting so frustrated with Guillaume's off-key singing that she exploded "*Shut up!*"

In the process of turning the studio space into an 'art gym' one of the interesting references that came up in the salons was to Marc Augé's concept of 'non-places', those liminal spaces that are both or neither somewhere or nowhere – airports, shopping malls, motorways, supermarkets – and, why not, the gym. "The art of supermarkets, convenience stores, and so on have been explored," Guillaume says, "but no one's really explored the art of going to the gym. There have been references to the body throughout modern art and art history, but this context especially is unique."

In *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* Marc Augé draws a distinction between "anthropological places" formed by social bonds and collective history, and "non-places" of atomized, individual travel and consumption: "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place." (p63).

"Clearly the word 'non-place' designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces [...] As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality. Try to imagine a Durkheimian analysis of a transit lounge at Roissy!" (p76)

It is not that the gym does not have a culture or that it's not concerned with identity. For many the gym is active in the development and expression of their identity. It's a hot-house for growing bodies. However, that phrase "solitary contractuality" crashes down upon it. Most people in the gym are alone. Nobody talks to each other, or exchanges are limited to a few technical reflections on abs or nutrition. It's like being on the tube, another arena within which one is profoundly solitary not least because one is crammed into a tin with countless other people, none of whom you may interact with, not in conversation, not even making eye contact.

Gyms can be sterile, dehumanized environments that can be alienating or estranging, fuelling the suspicion of the exercise shy that it's not for us, or that it's for someone else, a body of people from which we are excluded just as 'homeless spikes' are not intended to promote a nicer society. "The non-place is the opposite of Utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society." (p90).

Solitary contractuality even extends to communal activities: exercise classes such as yoga or aerobics. Everyone is performing the same acts together, but all mediated through the class leader and each without reference to any other person in the room. It's not a band, where if the drums stop you'll notice, it's not even like an orchestra where you could afford to have a few viola players pass out before anyone noticed anything was up. In these classes you are completely interchangeable, not even a cog in a machine for generating exercise, and if the gym is a non-place, then in the gym class you're a non-person.

I was surprised but not surprised to learn that Zumba® is a registered trademark. So is INSANITY®. I have kind of respect for the holistic integrity of Kundalini Yoga but you do have to wonder if the highly invented and marketed Zumba – never mentioned without its ® – isn't blatantly like the Scientology of exercise regimes. It's a huge turnoff, that ®, a reminder of the strongly capitalistic impetus of exercise regimes. That your body is a product that you sell to make you a better machine to generate revenue for the capitalist machine.

By reclaiming the gym in an art context, Vandame and Wright perhaps suggested some ways in which we can go beyond the depressing eighties elements of exercise culture and really grow ourselves.

What I'd like to see is more of these free outdoor gyms. I walk past one in Anerley several times a week, and always think *that's bloody brilliant that is*. Obviously I'm too lazy to actually use it, but I'd like to see these things everywhere, because proper gyms are expensive and terrifying. There is a massive moral panic about the burgeoning obesity crisis, so why don't we build public gyms? Healthy living shouldn't just be the preserve of the middle classes and the rich.

It's Nice That



I did an 'insanity workout' led by a Turner Prize nominated artist and good god, I loved it

Emily Gosling, It's Nice That, 25 September 2015

I'm being shouted at. "I love you! I believe in you! Sweat!" I'm jumping up and down, counting my reps, a little breathless, laughing harder than I think I ever have in a gallery. And I'm a person prone to gallery giggles. This, if it is art, is by far the most enjoyable art I've ever encountered.

The "work" is that of artist duo Wright & Vandame, a young London-based pair currently showing their first solo exhibition at the [ICA](#) as part of its *fig-2* 50 week programme. For their week, the space is being reimagined as a working gym, with a programme of different classes led by different artists. These include yoga (yes, vogueing and yoga), hip-based mum-friendly workout Zumba, dance and aerobics, but tonight it's the time of the "Insanity workout", rather fittingly being led by Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, the Turner Prize nominated performance artist.

She's in a rather gorgeous unitard, and surrounded by a rag tag bunch of other performers – one with a blued-up face, one in a leopard print lycra all-in-one, others decorated with the artist's deliberately amateurish costume style in what appear to be gold curtain tassels and white sportswear. The room is sparsely peppered with Wright & Vandame's artworks – videos looping more than three hours of found exercise footage, hollow gym balls cast in concrete ("like a big Lindor chocolate," as Guillaume Vandame helpfully points out), and tools like hammers and saws hung on the wall, each clad in garish lycra.

As Marvin explains why she chose Insanity for her class (something to do with a yoga documentary she saw on Al Jazeera TV, and the odd online community of the Insanity franchise) and we begin a rather intense warm up, the participants (myself included) are confused. There's a lot of "is this art, or exercise" whispering. Some people are here because they're fans of Marvin, others through press or ICA connections, the lovely middle aged gentleman in a tie-dye T-shirt next to me knew one of the performers through his "clown class". The girl on my left is the sister of the beatboxer. Oh yeah, all the club music that you'd swear was off a NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL HIGH ENERGY 4 1999 CD was all made by one bafflingly talented Irish beatboxer. It's all very surreal.

The class begins, Marvin seems baffled, Wright & Vandame are sweating and everyone's yelling things that range from the Insanity doctrine ("JACK IT OUT") to ironic facsimiles of the instructor packs ("CONSULT YOUR PHYSICIAN") and it's all utterly adorable. According to the artists, the project is about "coding a space for physical activity within a site for art," with the performance drawing on ideas and works including "Claes Oldenburg's soft hard sculptures as well as Carl Andre's minimal aesthetic and Christo and Jeanne-Claude's collaborative, environmental and site specific approach." There's obviously a huge smattering of Allan Kaprow Happenings here too, and – I'm going out on a limb here – Mr Motivator, circa 1992, around the time Wright & Vandame were born.

Within moments of hurling myself around the gallery-cum-gym I don't give a fuck if this is art or not, this is one of the best Thursday evenings I've ever had. And I'm doing jumping jacks. If doing them in an art gallery makes them fun, and elevates them beyond a workout, and makes you question how people relate to their bodies and to each other, then maybe that is art after all. Reappropriating the everyday, fostering new ideas and thoughts, staging moments that are so fleeting and brilliant you swear it could have all been a dream. Art can be a lot of things – technically skilled, challenging, thought-provoking, interactive – and it's about time we stopped being so reticent to the idea that it can be silly and fun too.

Wright & Vandame are at the ICA as part of the fig 2 programme until Sunday 27 September.



I am so hungover it feels like my soul is about to leave my body. I repeat this to myself as I descend the steps to the ICA in London, also known as the Institute of Contemporary Arts. My soul. It's about to leave my body. I have spent all night drinking supermarket tequila in a Vietnamese restaurant, and my internal organs feel like a scrunched-up wad of paper that a small child is now stamping on, repeatedly. And now, I am going to exercise.



Fig-2 is the ancestor of fig-1, a “radical exhibitions program” that first showed Tracey Emin, Grayson Perry, and other seminal *enfants terribles* of the English art scene. Now, 15 years later, it’s back, with 50 weeks of artist-curated shows set up in the ICA’s white-walled studio space. One artist has exhibited Mexican-influenced rugs; another has created an installation inspired by a lichen-covered branch. Instead of these lovely, soothingly tactile-sounding options, I have ended up attending the show where audiences are made to attend gym classes. Insanity workouts, to be precise.

What Happens When a Turner Prize–Nominated Artist Leads an Insanity Workout

Zing Tsjeng, Broadly (Vice), 25 September 2015

“The art of supermarkets, convenience stores, and so on have been explored,” Guillaume Vandame, the co-curator of the week, says, “but no one’s really explored the art of going to the gym. There have been references to the body throughout modern art and art history, but this context especially is unique.”

Vandame and his collaborator, Josh Wright, invite artists and gym instructors to reinterpret fitness trends for an art-going audience. The Turner Prize-nominated artist Marvin Gaye Chetwynd—who is a woman and was formerly known as Spartacus Chetwynd—is in charge of tonight's class, which will reinterpret an Insanity workout. If you are already finding this hard to keep up with, consider doing it on the worst hangover of your life.

Insanity (or **INSANITY®**, as it's described on its website) is a workout regime, £99.99 DVD boxset, and lifestyle rolled into one. In its promotional video, astounded men and women cry, "You'd have to be INSANE to do this!" "Oh my God," says one man, looking down in delight at his ripped abs, "This is INSANE." There are Reddit threads in which Insanity aficionados ask each other, "Vomit-y feeling after working out... What does that mean and how bad is it?"

"It's the most popular class by far!" Angelica, the PR for fig-2, informs me at the entrance of the ICA. "There will be an open door in case you need to leave suddenly," she adds helpfully.

Wright & Vandame, as they call themselves, radiate good health and cheer as people nervously enter the ICA studio. The two curators look like the kind of people you encounter at Burning Man; they are people with playa names like Sparklepony and Moonshine. Vandame is wearing very small, silver American Apparel gym shorts and looking alarmingly alert. Chetwynd has brought a crew of sinewy performance artist friends, who are dressed in all-white rave fitness gear and are warming up with deep lunges. There is a beatboxer making drum machine sounds through a mic. A DJ is standing behind a laptop playing loud, generic house.

The strip-lit room is very, very bright.

"Are you crying?" our photographer asks, concerned.

Some visitors have come prepared in exercise leggings and sneakers. I am in a T-shirt that has a tomato sauce stain from my breakfast sausage sandwich. As we unroll our yoga mats, I wistfully remember the time I left a gym class halfway through to drink a can of Coke and then hid in the bathroom until I was sure the instructor had finished the ab workout.

"Good evening, and welcome to our gym!" Vandame shouts. "We are the artists for the 38th week of fig-2. Everything you see around you is a gym *and* art piece." He points to a fitness ball on the floor, which on closer inspection turns out to be made of concrete. "Marvin's workout will transcend your body. By the end of tonight you will not be the same person."

Chetwynd, who is dressed in a bodysuit printed with rainbows, ambles onto her mat. “I want to tell you about an Al Jazeera documentary I watched,” she says. I immediately flash back to the last Al Jazeera article I read, which was about waterboarding. “It’s called Who Owns Yoga.”

She paces up and down her yoga mat. “Yoga’s had a really strange journey,” she says, describing how the exercise form has mutated from its original roots in India into clubbing yoga (yoga with dance music) and voga (yoga with voguing poses). “The sun salutation is only a hundred years old and has input from Swedish fitness and British military drills!” Chetwynd turns to us, solemnly. “Keep those ideas in your head.”

The class launches into an easy warm-up, rolling our shoulders and arms back and rotating our ankles. I remain suspicious. “Natalie wants to do something,” says Chetwynd, wheeling around to a petite goth girl with pale skin and shaved eyebrows. Goth Natalie giggles loudly and demonstrates a move that looks like a dog paddling vigorously through water. It involves about twice as many limbs as I currently feel capable of moving. I hate Goth Natalie.

“Everyone OK?” Chetwynd asks. We now move into the actual INSANITY® part of the workout: the Fit Test. According to Chetwynd, all Insanity devotees must complete the Fit Test before they start truly attaining INSANITY®. We are told to do as many reps as we can of each exercise and record it on paper. The beatboxer launches into a rhythm from an M.I.A. song. I feel a headache approaching.

“These are called Power Jacks,” Chetwynd shouts, consulting the DVD liner notes from the Insanity boxset. “Go!” The room explodes into star jumps and hollering. At the front of the room, Wright & Vandame scream motivational slogans and INSANITY® mottos. “You’re beautiful! I love you!” Vandame screeches over “Bucky Done Gun.” “DON’T STOP WHEN YOU’RE TIRED, STOP WHEN YOU’RE DONE!” Wright howls.

“You could not be more perfect or amazing!” shrieks one of Chetwynd’s friends, a girl in gold Nike trainers. She leans so far into a jump squat that she almost falls over onto my mat.

“My feet smell,” someone whimpers in the back of the class. “SMELLY BUT GORGEOUS!” Vandame bellows. The beatboxer has now moved past early-2000s indie dance and gone straight into psy-trance beats. Now we are doing Globe Jumps, which look exactly like Power Jacks but are ten times more painful, because we have already done the Power Jacks.

“I love you,” Vandame says to the room, utterly sincere. “I believe in you.” (Later on, he tells me, “People my whole life ask me if I’m taking something. I’m just a naturally energetic person.”)

By the time we steamroll through five of the exercises, I am laughing hysterically and smiling so hard that my face hurts. A girl wearing what appears to be a fringed lampshade on her head has backward-rolled into someone. There is a 70-something-year-old man in a rainbow tie-dye T-shirt who looks like he may be having the time of his life, or going into cardiac arrest. “STOP IF YOU FEEL PAIN,” a woman with braids screams at me.

“I feel like that’s enough of a workout,” Chetwynd says. The whole studio smells like the inside of a dead person’s sneakers. “Or do you want to continue until you die?” She looks like she has been dragged through a hedge backwards, and her homemade jumpsuit looks like it is about to split apart at the seams. I feel, miraculously, OK. I feel more than OK. I feel great.

As people filter out of the room, ecstatic but sweaty, I tell Chetwynd about my hangover—it seems to have miraculously evaporated. “Did you join in? That’s a really good result!” she replies. The *White Review* once described Chetwynd as a “legend among South East London’s art community,” where she lived in a nudist art commune and made alternatively hilarious and insightful theatrical pieces, including a puppet show that reimagined Jabba the Hutt as a silver-tongued Lothario and *The Walk to Dover*, in which Chetwynd and her friends embarked on seven-day walk to the coast of England while dressed as Dickensian orphans. All of Chetwynd’s art has the manner of a hammy improvisation piece about to go horribly wrong.

In a weird way I make art by running down a hill, and it seems to work.

“[Insanity] was totally spontaneous,” Chetwynd says, explaining that she first saw the workout while watching the *Shopping Channel*. “I opened the [DVD] box yesterday at 3 PM, I watched the documentaries on Al Jazeera yesterday evening, and I looked at the notes on the plane coming down. In a weird way I make art by running down a hill, and it seems to work—it stops you from overworking things.”

“I just was really excited by [Insanity]; it’s got some weird self-irony within it,” she adds. “The title shows that they are conscious that it’s a step too far... I’m attracted to the over-ambitious. Insanity is insane. It’s perfect!”

I start feeling sick as soon as I leave the ICA.

Wright & Vandame’s run at the fig-2 finishes this Sunday. Fig-2 continues at the ICA until the end of the year. For more information, visit the ICA website [here](#).



Art in London is awesome this autumn - old masters, new galleries, blockbuster shows and a colourful mist - here's our pick of the 15 highlights

2. Artists are going crazy for workouts

The ICA is turning one of its galleries into a fitness studio with the help of Wright & Vandame, whose 'Art Gym' will host alternative exercise classes. Artists will lead zumba, pilates and yoga sessions with a creative twist (keep an eye on **Fig-2** for the class schedule). We're already rolling out our yoga mats for Marvin Gaye Chetwynd's 'insanity workout'. The Turner Prize-nominated artist known for her wonderfully absurd performances will no doubt come up with a ludicrous session. Can't promise fitness, but utter foolishness is guaranteed.

'**Art Gym**', ICA Sep 22 to Sep 27.



15 reasons to get excited about art in London this autumn

Time Out London, 15 September 2015