ALEXANDRIA'S GENESIS

Dian Joy

Proposal

OVERVIEW

Exhibition Brief

Alexandria's Genesis will explore themes of race and gender by examining the profound impact of (dis)information networks on the construction of embodied selfhood and its broader social implications.

Taking its name from a widely circulated fan-fiction *cum* copypasta of the same name written in 1998, this exhibition delves into the myth of Alexandria's Genesis. The digital lore proposes the existence of a genetic anomaly that codes for an Aryan-adjacent archetype, characterised by traits such as paleness, purple eyes, no bodily waste, no vellus or terminal hair growth (except that on the head, eyebrows, and eyelashes), extended lifespan, and a supercharged immune system, among other attributes. The text was so widely circulated on the internet that it has since been debunked by multiple medical journals in the wake of a growing hysteria among young people that they secretly harboured this rare genetic code. Nevertheless, it continues to circulate in jest on platforms such as TikTok. As such, Alexandria's Genesis has

played a significant role in shaping and normalising ideologies that continue to support underlying legacies of racial superiority in the deep vernacular web.

Through an interdisciplinary approach encompassing film, art, and cultural analysis, this exhibition traces the myth's contribution to the landscape of digital culture and its enduring impact. The exhibition's spatial design is crafted to foster public engagement, drawing viewers into a heterotopic exploration of media, memetics, and folklore. It prompts reflection on the contemporary digital landscape, where the body is relentlessly scrutinised, and the mind pre-reflexively disciplined.

Despite the highly specific nature of the subject matter, at its core, this exhibition grapples with a universal theme: the human longing for irrefutable exceptionalism, epitomised by the Alexandria's Genesis phenomenon. This desire, deeply rooted in the logic of Western post-enlightenment philosophy, underscores the need to validate one's existence unequivocally. By grounding

this instinct within a contemporary, literary, and art historical framework, this exhibition aims to show how this desire is weaponised within the context of modern media, demonstrating that within our daily relationship with images, the integrity of the mind, body, and soul is truly at stake.

The research underpinning this proposal draws from the insights of the following thinkers whose theories serve as a guide to navigating the complexities of digital culture and identity formation:

Stuart Hall
Nina Aurbach
Kimberle Crenshaw
Jasbir Puar
Richard Dawkins
Jean Baudrillard
Michel Foucault
Judith Butler

OVERVIEW

Audience Journey

The audience's journey is curated to guide visitors through an exploration of the themes presented. Utilising circulation lighting as a subtle guide, visitors will navigate through these key spaces within the exhibition, with each space or moment serving as a touch point in the visitors arc of exploration and reflection. By carefully orchestrating the audience journey, the exhibition aims to foster critical engagement and dialogue surrounding the wider themes of the show, inviting visitors to reflect on their own perceptions and experiences.

Look and Feel

The look and feel of the exhibition design brings together a combination of sleek materials as well as more rough and ready materials, selected for their ability to heighten the overall aesthetic of the show while remaining minimally invasive. Combinations of sprayed metals with smooth surfaces and woods, papers, and scaffolding draws parallels between the ideas and perspectives that take place throughout the exhibition. The dominant purple colour running throughout the design reflects the key characteristic of Alexandria's Genesis itself, the purple eyes, and serves to tie the work together.

Visitor Journey
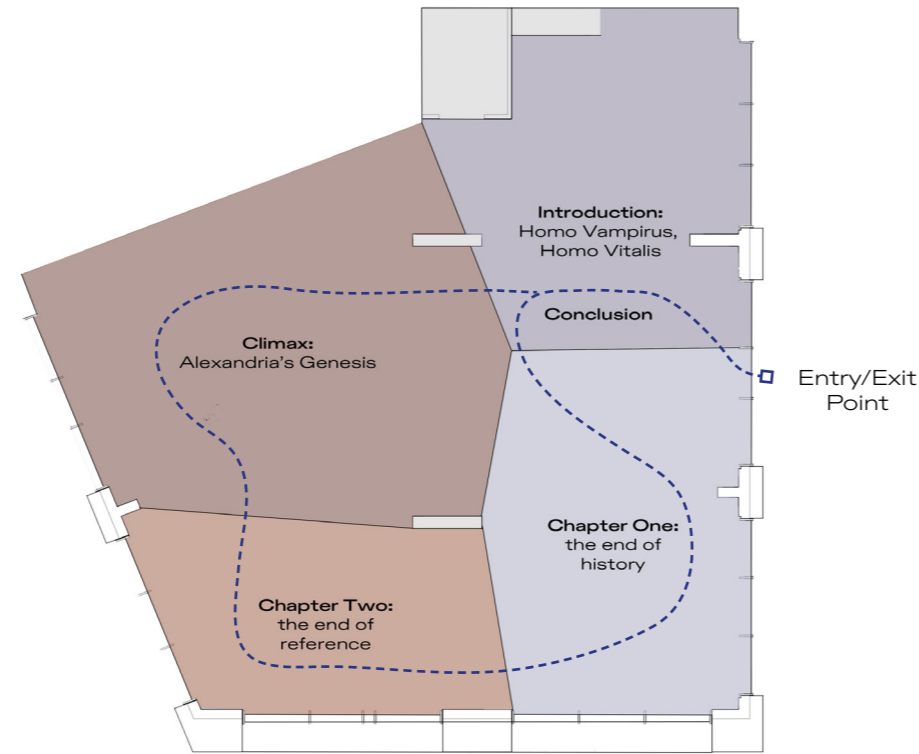
Material Intentions
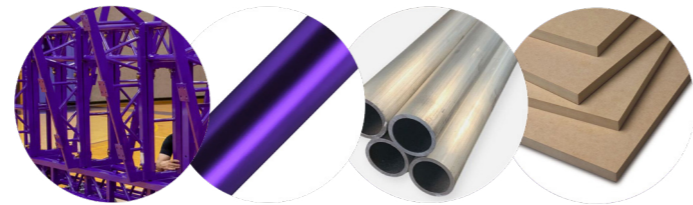
ARTWORKS

Homo Vampirus, Homo Vitalis

Homo Vampirus, Homo Vitalis, installation view.

The exhibition's introduction lays a robust theoretical foundation for the rest of the show. The first work, "Homo vampirus, Homo vitalis'' is influenced both by the vampiric attributes associated with Alexandria's Genesis and by one of the most iconic vampire portrayals of the last decade, Twilight's Edward Cullen. This sculpture stands larger-than-life as a PLA 3D print within a steel circle and square, evoking the Vitruvian Man.

Post-feminism intersects heavily with consumerism, promoting the consumption of merchandise by young people learning to perform their romantic and sexual desires for the first time. The Twilight franchise capitalised on this trend, advertently creating an iconic portrayal of heterosexuality for this demographic. Similarly, Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, has been heralded as "among the all-time iconic images of Western civilization". The drawing, a projection of "ideal body proportions", has also been heavily commercialised. This interplay between the human body, commerce, and mass culture prompts critical examination of societal ideals and the commodification of desire, central to the exhibition's thematic exploration of race, gender, and identity.

Furthermore, the connection between Alexandria's Genesis and vampires is ubiquitous. If Bram Stoker's Dracula symbolised fears of reverse colonialism during Britain's decline as a global power, then by the 1980s vampires in the 'Lost Boys' era had come to reflect a worn-out population, casualties of the conservative era, Regan's war on Drugs, and the AIDs epidemic. Post-Cold War, in tandem with the US emerging as the world's sole superpower, a new, empathetic portrayal of vampires emerges: the ability to see the "man in the monster". This trope becomes such an important part of contemporary vampire stories that it is vital to ask what this recognition signifies for our time. If every generation creates the monster it needs, what is the significance of the fact that the monsters we now create look like all American–and notably caucasian–heroes?

Chapter One, titled *the end of history*, invites viewers into an ambivalent space—a meticulously arranged heterotopia that contrasts with the chaotic reality it reflects: the conjuncture of capital and the body. The installation features two vertical projection screens resembling billboards. The front of the screens showcases a loop depicting a brown-skinned femme figure against a sterile, morphing white background, accompanied by minimal sounds. As viewers move through the space, the reverse side of one becomes visible, wooden, propped up by scaffolding, and plastered with poster-style images of female figures crudely derived from iconic works of Western art history.

These appropriated artworks hold cultural and historical significance, depicting female figures in varying states of undress inspired by classical mythology. They embody Eurocentric ideals of feminine allure and desirability, characterised by pale, flawless skin, small features, and "graceful proportions". These images are juxtaposed with an equally as

unrealistic CGI female figure, made from Daz Studio's ever evolving base model, the aptly titled Genesis Female. By creating this curious link between the past and the present, this work challenges the authority of whiteness and the history of representational practices in shaping standards of desirability.

The fragmented, multiscreen setup creates a surreal virtual environment, prompting viewers to contemplate their visibility in relation to the body's representation on screen. Drawing from Stuart Hall's concept of conjuncture, the installation invites reflection on the historical context of the present moment and the symbolic and material resources that construct and sustain identities, and therefore embed them within structures of power.

Top: *the end of history, installation view.*

Bottom: *the end of history, installation view.*

Appropriation of Grande Odalisque.

Chapter Two, or the end of reference, marks a pivotal shift in the exhibition's tone, introducing themes of vernacular authority and internet-driven disinformation. It was important for me to provide a new perspective or new material on Alexandria's Genesis, which in many ways is already so rife with source material. As such, I have been collaborating with the author of the original fan-fiction text, Cameron Aubernon. In this work, we hear the author's voice from a recent interview I undertook with her, capturing her firsthand account of creating the piece in the late 90s and discovering its widespread circulation. The author, a v-tube enthusiast, will appear in the incarnation of her v-tube model, rendered, once again, in the form of a Daz Genesis Female. While I will mocap puppet the model, her voice will remain her own. I anticipate that the work will have an approximate duration of 6 minutes.

[The proof of concept sketch can be viewed here](#)

In this work, the audience gains insight

into the unintended consequences of digital culture's weaponisation of desire. By presenting the creator's personal narrative, we complicate the preceding themes. The internet's memetic mutations and virality are portrayed as unpredictable forces deserving caution. As the author talks, the interview will be supplemented with picture-in-picture pop-ups featuring images and videos that bolster her narrative. The culmination of these three sections of the exhibition provides the audience with an ample framework with which to appreciate the final work in the show.
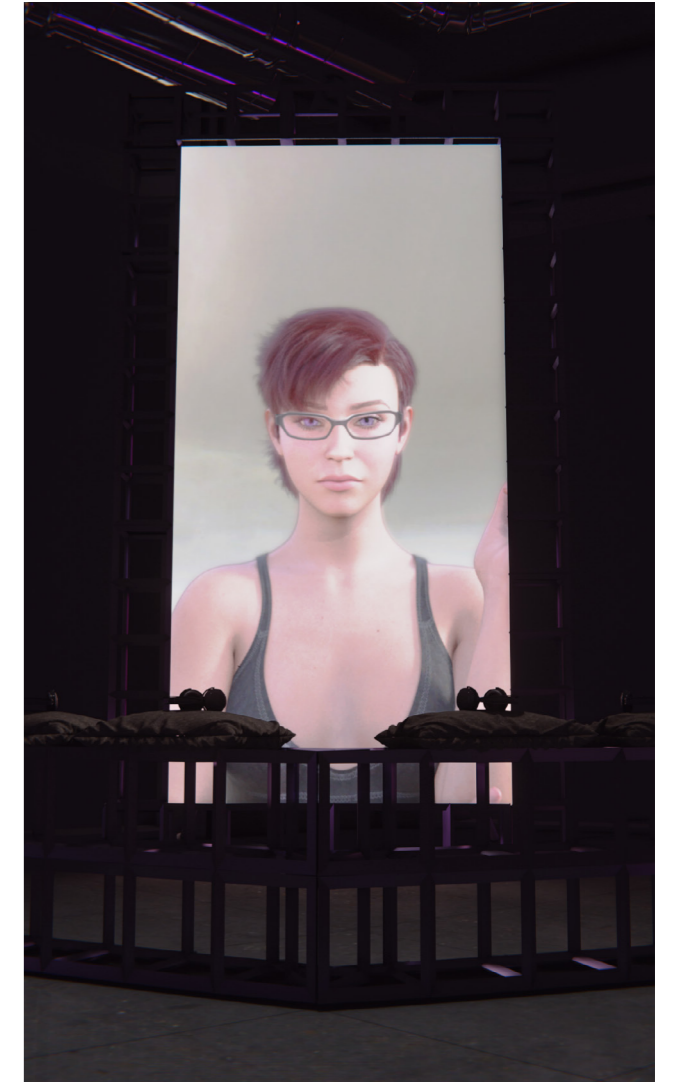
the end of reference, installation view.

Alexandria's Genesis

The climax of the show is the central film, Alexandria's Genesis, which unfolds through its screening. This part of the show delineates the timeline of the myth, situating it within its specific historical and literary context. Narrated from the viewpoints of two principal characters, Mary-Sue and Anti-Sue, the film provides visitors with a firsthand perspective to the themes.

The film explores the evolution of this digital lore over nearly two decades, compressing its timeline to create a self-superimposed history. It delves into the relationship between folklore, oral tradition, and social anxieties, examining how these elements are reproduced in a digital context and impact real life.

With the advent of web 2.0, society transitions from passive media consumers to active participants, leading to new forms of expression and divergent practices of community-building, with memes being a huge part of this. Drawing from Dawkins' theory of memetics, the film examines how these units of cultural transmission "spread and reinforce ideas, paint the political landscape, impact language, shape humour, and drive cultural connection and distinction", producing tradition on a computer screen.
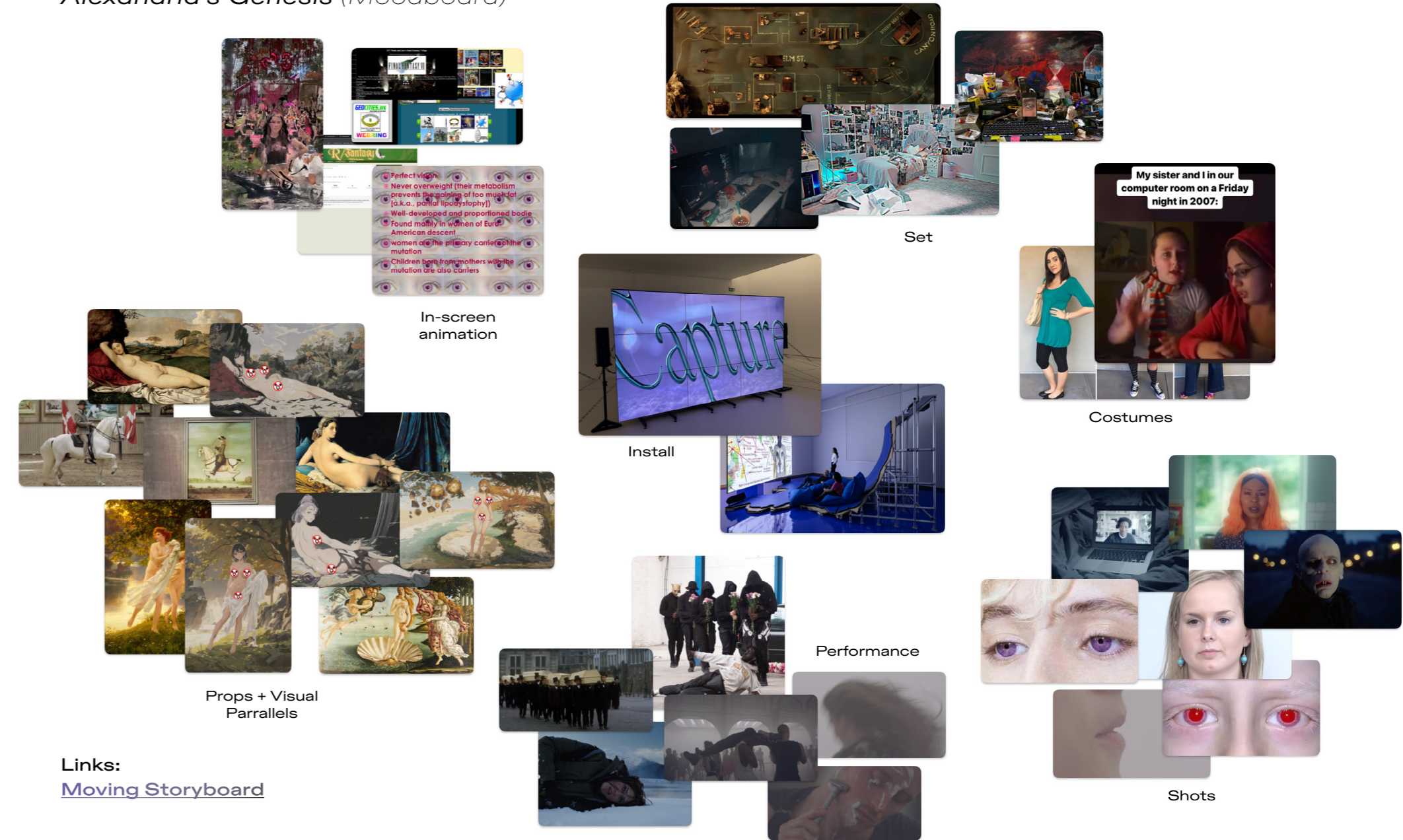

Alexandria's Genesis, installation view.

Alexandria's Genesis, installation view.

Alexandria's Genesis (Moodboard)

In-screen animation

Set

Costumes

Install

Props + Visual Parrallels

Performance

Shots

Links:
Moving Storyboard

ARTWORKS

Alexandria's Genesis (Worldbuilding + Characters)

The film centres around the characters Mary-Sue and Anti-Sue, representing classic archetypes from juvenile literature. A Mary-Sue represents an idealised figure often inserted by authors as wish fulfilment, while an Anti-Sue acts as a corrective balance, burdened by weaknesses. Given that the original Alexandria's Genesis document aimed to embellish a Mary-Sue-like character, this narrative choice feels fitting for the film's thematic. The dialogue in the script draws heavily from real comments sourced from online forums, which are then transformed into fully realised characters within the narrative. This approach lends authenticity to the interactions, grounding the story in the reality of online discourse.

In terms of design intention for the installation, the film as a pivotal moment is emphasised spatially as the largest work in the show. The 3m wide LED screen and seating ramp–reminiscent of a quarter-pipe–serves to immerse viewers in the deep drama of adolescence, enhancing the film's contextual impact. Furthermore, the posters adorning the characters' bedroom walls in the film mirror those covering the backs of the projection screens and the seating ramp. This visual consistency reinforces thematic

motifs and underscores the worldbuilding throughout the show.

The target duration for the film is 30 minutes maximum. Regarding further development: 1) The characters are working as mouth pieces for my research, I hope to focus more on their individual motivations, cutting down dialogue and interrrogating how they inhabit space and what that reveals; 2) Integrate Cameron Aubernon's interview into it; 3) Rework how core information is revealed to the audience, specifically the myth itself.

Curatorial Programme - Events

I plan to invite Cameron Aubernon for a live VTuber fanfiction writing workshop in the gallery. Her live stream will replace her pre-recorded virtual self on the *end of reference* projection screen. Additionally, performers from the film will activate the space during the opening by performing movement phrases from the film, highlighting the theme of virality and mimetics by blurring the lines between virtual and real-world space.

Alexandria's Genesis, Seating Detail.

CLOSING REMARKS

Bio

Dian Joy is a British-Nigerian interdisciplinary artist and educator. Their work spans a variety of mediums, including video, installation, and extended reality. Dian's work often explores the messy encounters between biological and technological assemblages. While conceptually rooted in the practices of Cultural Analysis, they remain deeply grounded in the physicality to which the experience of otherness is bound. Never indebted to a darkening horizon, the artist faces the potential between personal experiences, political realities and community building as a way of offering alternative modes of inhabiting the social world.

Having graduated with first-class honours in Cultural Analysis and Film from the University of Amsterdam, and in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins, their investigation into various strategies of emancipation and exaltation has led them to exhibit internationally, both as a solo artist and as a member of the transnational art collective, BLUE, which they co-founded during their time in Amsterdam (active from 2017 to 2020). Dian has been appointed an artist-in-residence at Mediale, and has showcased their work in venues such as Tate Britain Lates, the British Film Institute, Shijiazhuang Art Museum (CN),

Galleri Q (DK), Juliette Jongma Gallery (NL), and HOTEL AMAZONAS (IT), among others. Currently, they hold a tutor position at Art Academy London.

Aknowledgements

I'd like to thank my mentor Rebecca Edwards for her openness, enthusiasm, and honesty throughout this process, and the Arebyte team in general for giving me the opportunity to develop this work.

For lending their advice, expertise, and insight in shaping this project, I would like to thank Adam Muscat, Alexandre Tarek, Brian Yue, Jacob Phil-Ebosie, Juliette Motamed, and Patrick Goddard.

Lastly, I would like to thank the jury for their time and consideration in assessing this proposal, I hope it proves as enjoyable to read as it was to make.

Contact:
info.dianjoy@gmail.com
IG: @dian__joy
www.dianjoy.me