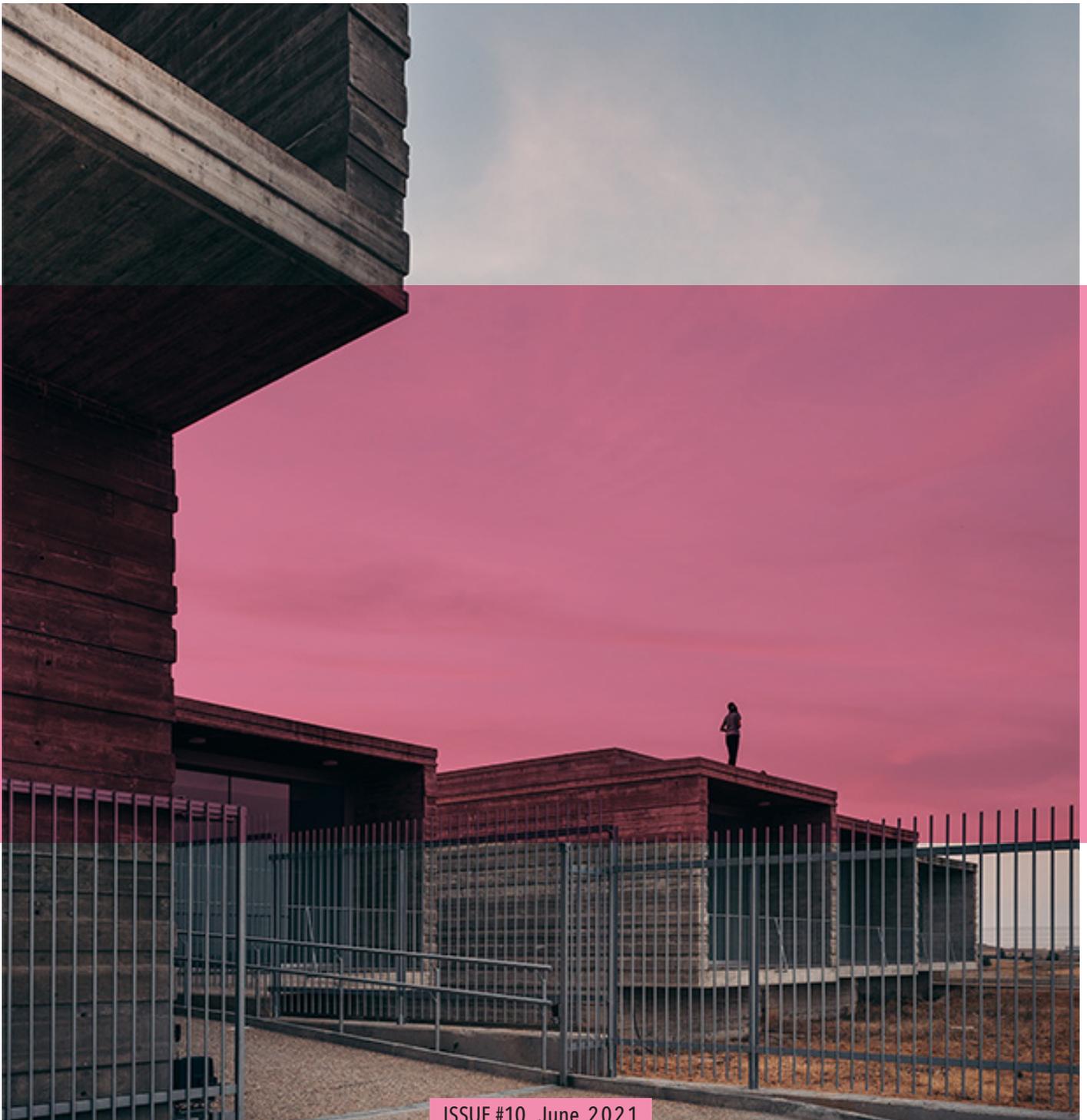


CONTEMPORARY IDENTITIES

International Art Magazine

Oreoluwa Ahmeed | Catalina Aranguren | Ham Babaei | Lamya Gargash | Anne-Julie Hynes
István Nádler | Lucia Pol | Zuzanna Skiba | Jerome Symons | Roeki Symons | StudioVRA



ISSUE #10 June 2021

Art is longing. You never arrive,
but you keep going in the hope that you will.

Anselm Kiefer



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For further information please email us at:
info@contemporaryidentities.com

Art piece: Soheil Hosseini

CONTRIBUTORS

Art Writers:

Lenka Bardová
Izmer Bin Ahmad
Sophie Kazan
Aurelia Nicolosi
Zoltán Somhegyi

Editors:

Sara Berti
Elham Shafaei

Art Director:

Soheil Hosseini
tehranstudio.com

Layout:

Fariba Rahdar

Front Cover:

StudioVRA (Rubén García Rubio & Sonsoles Vela), Day Care Center for People with Alzheimer's Disease in Benavente, Zamora, Spain

Media Consultant:

Emad Pournasiri



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EDITORS' NOTE

Summer has arrived at the time when still some travel plans are affected by Covid-19 pandemic. The 10th Issue of ContemporaryIdentities is offered as an art adventure in your summer plans to overview aesthetics from different angles. ContemporaryIdentities tries to add insights and wonder to your mind through art.

Issue 10 features an interview with Rubén García Rubio & Sonsoles Vela Navarro the Founders of studioVRA. StudioVRA is an architectural practice that works at the intersection between architecture and urbanism. Their work has been internationally awarded several distinctions by institutions like The Chicago Athenaeum (USA) or the Castile and Leon East Institute of Architects (Spain), architectural publications like The Plan Magazine (Italy) or Dezeen (UK), and architectural events like the Spanish Biennial of Architecture and Urbanism (Spain) or the Quito Pan-American Biennial of Architecture (Ecuador). Also, their work has been published in professional publications such as Arquitectura Viva, Arquine, Arketipo, de Architect, or ERA21. We had a chance to interview them for their Day Care Center for People with Alzheimer's Disease project in Benavente, Zamora, Spain.

We would like to appreciate the participation of our artists and art writers. In addition to our board members, we also had the pleasure of working with international guest writers such as Lenka Bardová (Czech Republic), Sophie Kazan (UK) and Aurelia Nicolosi (Italy).

We are also thankful to our joined design team sponsored by Studio Tehran for their hard work and effort.

Take care everyone
Sara Berti & Elham Shafaei

Oreoluwa Ahmeed

UK Sophie Kazan



2 m is too far I want a cuddle, 2020, Mixed media, 48.3x39.2 cm



Who said they could close for business?, 2020 Mixed media, 48.3x39.2 cm

Oreoluwa Ahmeed is a multidisciplinary artist who works with painting, printing, video and writing. Her artwork presents a critical and vivacious narrative as she evaluates the human condition and daily struggles during the recent pandemic in her work. "I am consistently reflecting," she says of her lively paintings, which are densely packed with figures, shapes and phrases. "Different ideas pop up throughout my daily life trying to ... express my thoughts or questions through Art." "2M is Too Far I want a Cuddle" explores the isolation and simple joys of human contact. The painting includes a chicken, which Ahmeed has included as a comical, visual reminder of the Covid conspiracy theories. Her love of drawing and painting grew out of her discovery of Picasso, while she was still at school. The cartoon-like tableau, "Guernica" was a discovery for the young Ahmeed: "I was taken back as to how someone could use their drawings to express themselves, their thoughts and feelings in such a powerful way." Though still attending Falmouth University in England, the strength and colour of her images, mean that her work has already been offered numerous exhibitions at prestigious galleries around the UK.

Catalina Aranguren

Colombia-
Venezuela-USA
Lenka
Bardová



Bathroom window, 2021, Photography, 30.48x30.48 cm

Catalina Aranguren's photographs document the world around her. She frames everyday life – nature, people, streets & buildings – in square format composition (4x4 inches or 3x3 foot). The photographs present the world in new light and from different angles. This is achieved by utilizing other surfaces (framing through clear glass or employing reflections) and juxtaposing foregrounds thoughtfully with their surrounds. Her photographs examine faces of local people, inspect city streets and highlight fine details of buildings and flora. Aranguren feels that to understand her photographs fully, viewers must either step closer to explore the details, or step back to consider the full picture.



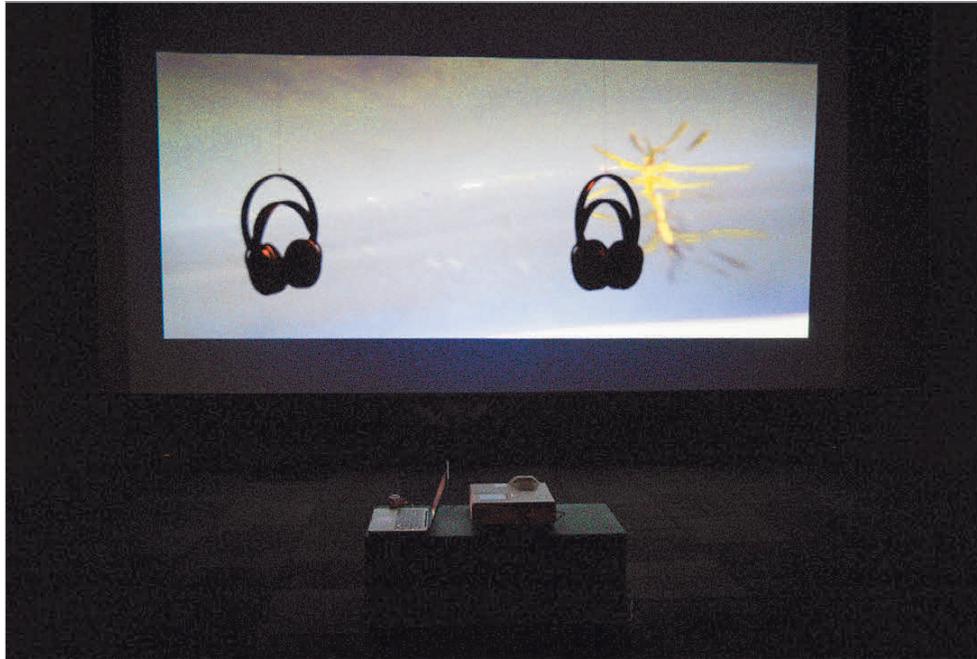
Mary, 2015, Photography, 91.44x91.44 cm



In my living room, 2020, Photography, 91.44x91.44 cm

Ham Babaei

Iran-Germany | Izmer
Bin Ahmad



Dead room, 2018, Performance, Darbast Platform, Tehran, Iran

Dead Room is a concert that features silence as the focus of musical experience. It presents the theatricality of music, with the musicians reciting their artistry onstage complete with video projection to enhance the synesthetic aspects of live musical performance. The music itself, however, can only be listened through 2 pairs of headphones at intervals of ~2minutes at a time. The sound that are being continuously performed by the musicians thus reaches only 2 individuals at a time while the rest of the audience are locked in the visual and theatrical silence of the concert, each waiting for his/her turn to listen through the headphones. *Dead Room* is indeed a homage that extends and critiques John Cage's famous musical thought on silence. While Cage removes sound by not playing his instrument, Baramant meditates on silence through extensive performativity by placing the audience at the crossroad of making and presenting organized sound and silence that we call music.



Dead room, 2018, Performance, Darbast Platform, Tehran, Iran



Dead room, 2018, Performance, Darbast Platform, Tehran, Iran

Lamyra Gargash

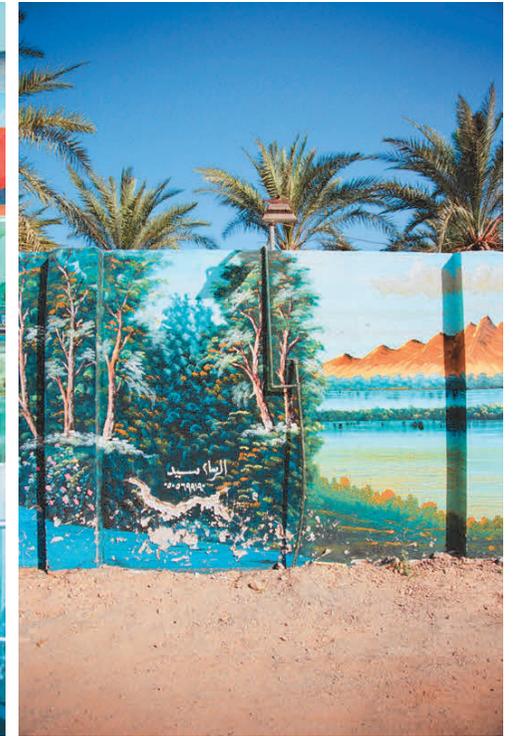
UAE Sophie
Kazan



Red Door, from The Dubai Series, Deira, Dubai, UAE, 2014, C-Type print, Courtesy of Lamyra Gargash & The Third Line Gallery



Dukkan, Fujairah, UAE, 2021, C - Type print, 21x29 cm, Courtesy of Lamyra Gargash & The Third Line Gallery



The Artist Sayed, Fujairah, UAE, 2021, C - Type print, 21x29 cm, Courtesy of Lamyra Gargash & The Third Line Gallery

Lamyra Gargash burst onto the international art scene as the first artist from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to show their work at the UAE Pavilion when it became the first Gulf country to attend the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. Familial Spaces photographic series offered a rare glimpse of the garish, low-income accommodation of low-income visitors to the UAE. Gargash offered clues as to the inhabitants of the room, their aspirations and hopes in the city.

Since Venice, Gargash has had international group and solo exhibitions, exploring interior spaces and exposing social and economic contradictions.

Recently, however, Gargash's photographs have shifted outdoors. "My interest is really about documentation of a country and city and finding a narrative that is not just appealing visually and aesthetically but one that triggers emotions and perhaps curiosity."

"The simplest way to sum up my work is it is a visual diary ... driven by nostalgia."

Anne-Julie Hynes

Canada
Lenka
Bardová

Anne-Julie Hynes, a Canadian visual artist, works with different mediums: painting, photography, sculpture & collage. Her artworks draw inspiration from landscape and nature, in contrast to everyday life, which is primarily spent indoors. Due to her world-wide experience, she considers herself a nomadic artist – she has exhibited, lived and worked in many different countries (e.g., China, Poland, Germany, Hungary & Tahiti). Changes of studio location have a profound impact on her artwork because the environment is, for her, a powerful muse. The two common themes in her visual art are repetitive motifs (collections: Ireland, Hungary & Iceland) and contrast (inside vs. outside; buildings vs. nature; colorless vs. colorful).



Geographical buttonhole, 2021, Photo on paper, 20x13 cm



Mother and her three daughters, 2021, Photo on paper, 13x10 cm



Always on my mind, 2021, Photo on paper, 15x10 cm

István Nádler

Hungary

Zoltán
Somhegyi



Spiral, 2014, Acrylic on canvas, 200x150 cm

In István Nádler's powerful works the lure of non-material dimensions is investigated. The possibility of getting connected with what is beyond our mere everyday experience is highlighted in the paintings, the vertical direction is also accentuated by stronger pictorial means like massive upright monochrome blocks and gestural surfaces, sometimes accompanied by thin white or red lines



Spiral, 2014, Acrylic on canvas, 200x150 cm



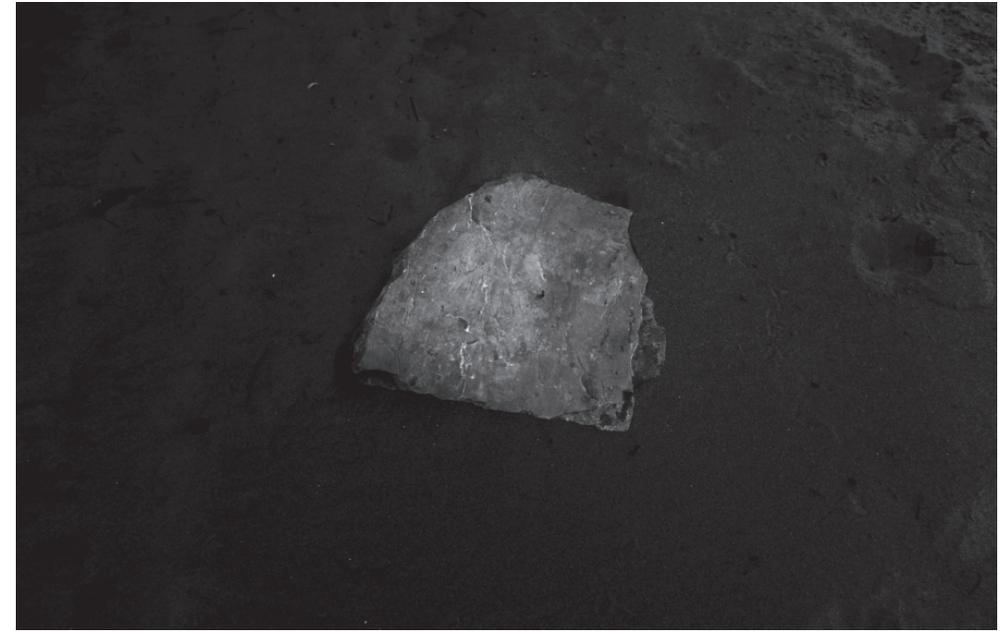
Spiral, 2014, Acrylic on canvas, 200x150 cm

too. The vivid spiral, as the key motif on the pieces, emphasise the working and effect of an energetic spiritual research, in this way the paintings are not only appealing invitations but particularly capturing reminders of our constant desire of moving forward – and upwards.



Fiction, 2020, Digital photography, 60x90 cm

The mystery and the suspension. The infinite that disturbs and urges man continuously. It is as if "somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known" (Carl Sagan). The gaze stops, analyzes, but goes even further ... The rock becomes a monolith that catalyzes all energies and stimulates important questions about the condition of our existence and the future that awaits us. A door of time and in time that opens a dialogue with Nature and its multiple manifestations.



Fiction, 2020, Digital photography, 60x90 cm



Fiction, 2020, Digital photography, 60x90 cm

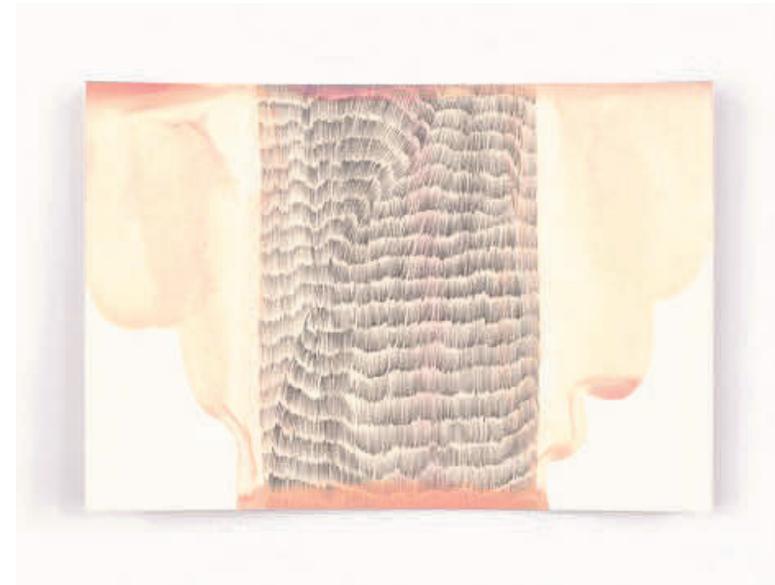


Wings series, 2020, Pencil, gouache on paper, 30x40 cm

The line is not just the line that delimits the shape, but the sign that evokes multiple suggestions related to the natural environment. It is as if scales, barks, shells are enlarged under the microscope, to talk about sensations, emotions, linked to the intimate observation of the surrounding world. Aristotle said that in all things of nature there is something wonderful. Zuzanna teaches us to look beyond and to share the weft and warp of the world, transforming them into an eternal visual poem, with nuanced and delicate tones.



Wings series, 2020, Pencil, gouache on paper, 30x40 cm



Wings series, 2020, Pencil, gouache on carton, 35x48 cm

Jerome Symons

Netherlands | Izmer
Bin Ahmad

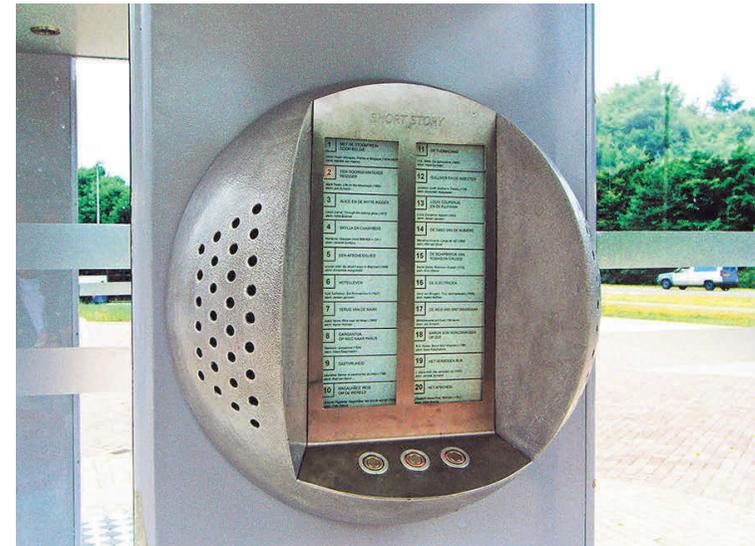


Short Story, 2007-2022, Functioning bus stop in American Diner style with a jukebox that plays 20 short stories, especially written for the project. Each year 20 different stories. Located in Garderen, Netherlands.

Jerome Symons is known for his public sculptures that encompass both more traditional techniques as well as installation-based form. The works featured here are those of the latter, two evocative public installations that clearly incite the audience participation to activate the artworks. Short Story is a bus-shelter designed the artists in the form of American diners typically found remotely along the highways in the USA. Inside the shelter is a juke box containing short stories that travelers may listen to while waiting for the bus. Likewise, Supervision relies on the spectator's presence and participation. A solitary accordion sits on a platform, activated by the viewer's presence through a sensor, causing it to jump and breath its last note under the surveillance of 73 heads of secret services from around the world. The meaning, relevance and authority of these works are relocated and placed by the artist to the bodies of the audience.



Supervision, 2016, Installation, Portraits of 74 heads of secret services from all over the world are observing a platform with an accordion. The musician has fled but his instrument, triggered by a sensor on approach, is greeting the visitor with a last sigh.



Jukebox with 20 short stories placed inside the bus stop diner

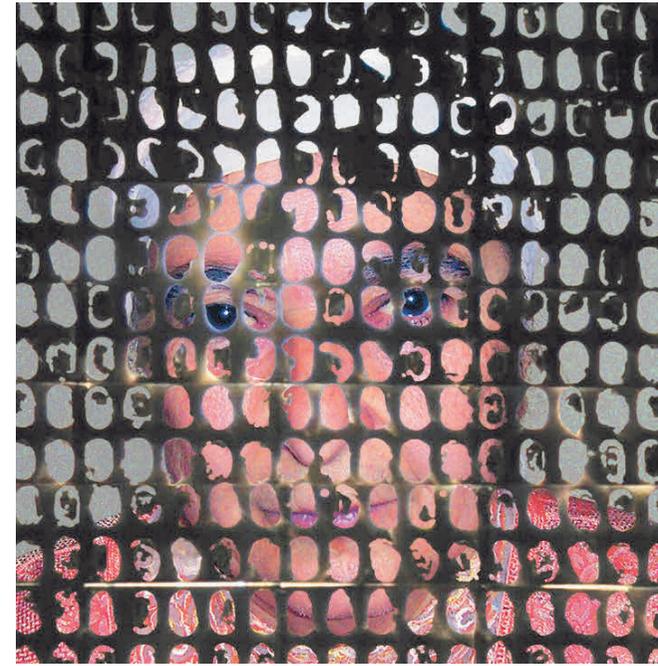
Roeki Symons

Netherlands | Zoltán Somhegyi



View from my Room, 2010, Digital print, alubond/plexiglass, 100x100 cm

The installations by Roeki Symons, imitating the high-rise buildings of a downtown, are made of medicine blister packs. Besides the formal analogy between the steel and glass skyscrapers and the features of the packaging however one can further think of the artworks' ability of making us ruminate on many unnatural aspects of both modern condensed city life and massive medicine consumption. The investigations in the originally 2010 work got revisited through a novel actuality in the 2020 piece where a portrait is shown fragmented, seen through the holes of the medical package.



Madame en Quarantine, 2020



Madame en Quarantine, 2020, Installation, Digital print on vinyl, 400x465 cm



CI: Tell us about your early influences.

RR & SV: studioVRA is an architectural practice led by Sonsoles Vela Navarro and Ruben Garcia Rubio that works at the intersection between architecture and urbanism. Their work has been internationally awarded several distinctions by institutions like The Chicago Athenaeum (USA) or the Castile and Leon East Institute of Architects (Spain), architectural publications like The Plan Magazine (Italy) or Dezeen (UK), and architectural events like the Spanish

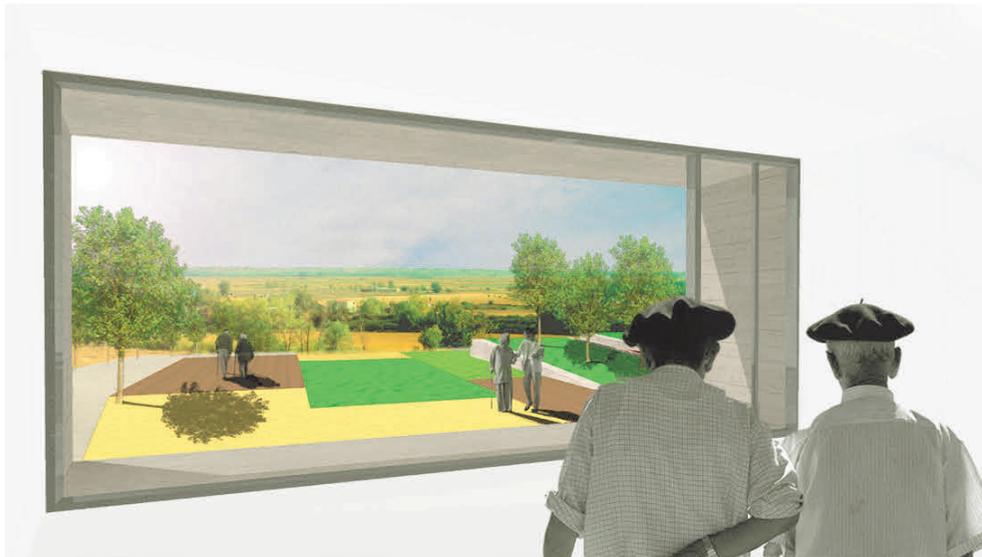


Biennial of Architecture and Urbanism (Spain) or the Quito Pan-American Biennial of Architecture (Ecuador). Also, their work has been published in professional publications such as *Arquitectura Viva*, *Arquine*, *Arketipo*, *de Architect*, or *ERA21*. Both combine professional practice with teaching and research. They have taught in several schools of architecture in Spain, Italy and the Middle East and, currently, they teach in the School of Architecture at Tulane University (New Orleans, USA).



CI: Tell us about your early influences.

RR & SV: We remember many and varied influences, but none in particular or above the others. Among them, we recall several Master of Modern Architecture such as Le Corbusier, Kahn, or Mies van der Rohe but also other contemporary architects, especially Spanish, Portuguese, Swiss and Dutch.

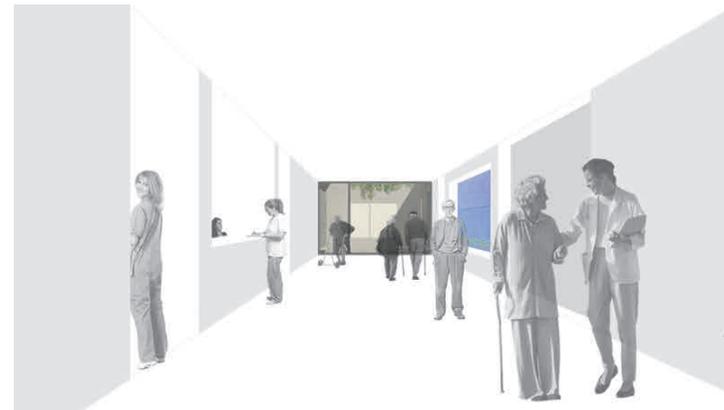


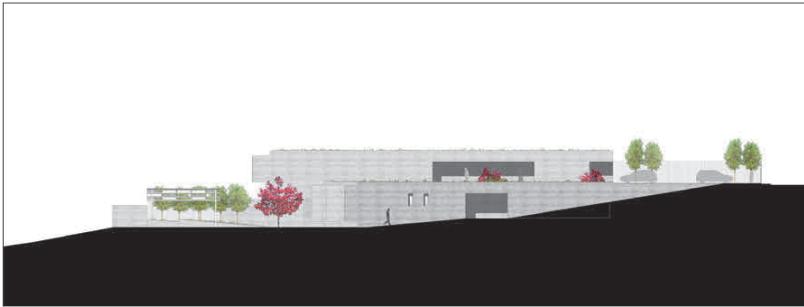
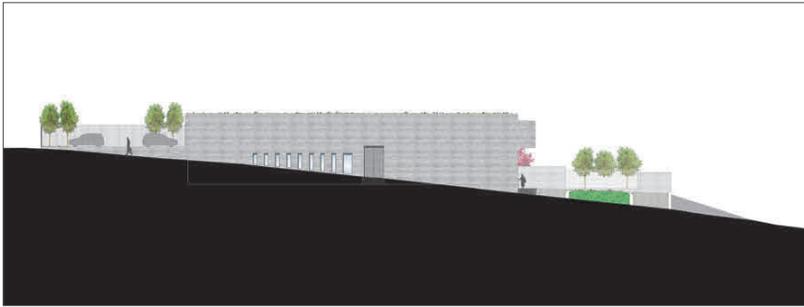
CI: Tell us about your current practice.

RR & SV: Currently, our practice is very interested in some specific themes: environment, organization, and construction. We study the environment at different scales and from different points of view, searching for those elements that serve to insert the design into its environment, into its place, culture and time.

Also, we analyze the program to understand the implicit relationships between the different elements and between them and the external spaces in order to find a balance between flexibility and specificity of its organization and typology.

Plus, we propose an idea of materiality and tectonics that uses both craftsman and industrial solutions to crystalize our answer to the environment and the program in a sustainable manner.





CI: We are very much interested to your latest project: the day care center with a focus on Architecture for people with Alzheimer's Disease in Spain. Can you explain more about this work?

RR & SV: The building arises from the aging of the region's population. When designed, there was no proven scheme for this typology, despite the growth of the disease in recent years in some regions of the country. Hence, the initial program only specified the inclusion of spaces for cognitive and physical stimulation activities, with a dining and rest area for fifty users. Therefore, our first task was to understand the logic of this typology and crystallize it into an architectural scheme.



Another important starting point was the location of the Center within a double boundary situation (territorial and urban). On the one hand, the town is located on the periphery of the great Spanish Castilian plateau, so it is endowed with a particular topography -between hills, valleys and plains- and a historical condition of crossing roads -some of the main arterial roads of the country. On the other hand, the plot is also located within a municipal boundary area, on a hill with a steep slope between an expansion area and farmland. This situation emphasizes the conjunction of landscapes in the building.

These ideas -place and program- motivated the positioning of the building in the upper part of the plot to facilitate a stratum of it to rotate and tear the slope to create a new plain area. Then, in a second movement, part of that stratum rises another level vertically to protect the building on its urban front. Thus, a new line of the horizon is created, the main subject of the building, which symbolizes the community's synergy in the face of this disease and dialogues with the landscape.





CI: Can you tell us about your interest in selection of the materials?

RR & SV: There were two main reasons behind the selection of materials: consistency with the general idea and maintenance of the building.

As the building was semi-buried, the concrete retaining walls played a fundamental role in the design. For this reason, we proposed extending these walls to configure the entire Center both in terms of space and visual character. Specifically, the building uses two different types of concrete finishing depending on the wall, although both use wood for the texture. On the outside, the walls have been built with a formwork of boards of different sizes, both height and thickness, in order to create a texture with variable depth. This texture of recesses and projections solves (by protecting and hiding) the horizontal joints of the concrete walls while providing the facades with a changing texture due to the variability of the shadows during the day. While the second texture, used on the interior side of the walls, has been made with boards following the same

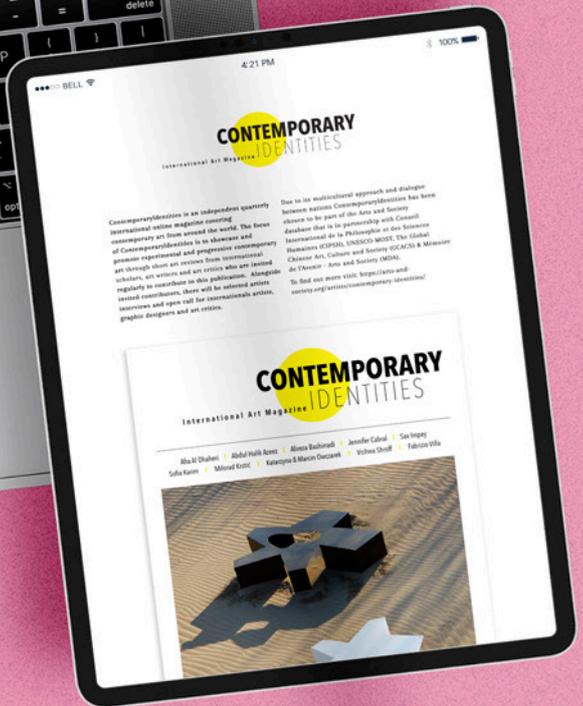


heights as the exterior ones. Although, unlike the previous case, the boards have the same thickness and the wood grain has been stressed. In this way, a flat finish -but rich in nuances- is achieved, which texture and scale connect it to the exterior image.

The building also uses concrete extensively in the pavements. Once again, there is a difference between the interior and exterior surfaces. On the one hand, polished and devastated concrete is used to achieve a "terrazzo" type finish in the interior spaces. On the other hand, the concrete is washed to achieve a rough texture with the edges in the exterior areas.

While the second reason behind the selection of materials was (a future) low maintenance. It must be explained that various public administrations have financed the building. Still, a non-profit association will carry the maintenance as will manage the Day Care Center. For this reason, materials such as glass, channel glass, aluminum or wood have been added to the short palette of materials selected.





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