



**Xpace
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recurrence, curated by Maandeeq Mohamed

Kim Ninkuru, Fallon Simard, Kamika Peters, Adrienne Crossman, Alli Logout

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recurrence explores the strategies we use to confront both current and inherited historical violence. How do small acts of resistance make for queer wiggle room within the constraints of existing power structures? Collectively, the works in the exhibition offer playful takes on everyday queer life, femme intimacies, camp aesthetics, rewritten colonial archives, and black trans refusal.

In trans and queer life, the party is generative, the site where (especially for black bodies) “in the back of the club, yeah we feeling alright” (Mykki Blanco).¹ It is curious then, that Kim Ninkuru picks *Dodo Night Club* as the title for her two-channel video installation. The videos feature intimate recordings of the artist dancing in her bedroom. On the title, Ninkuru notes that, “*dodo nightclub*” is “ a phrase used in Burundi for when you’re not planning on going out that night. For example, if someone asks you “where [are] you going tonight?” you’d reply, “dodo night club” (*dodo* meaning to nap, or sleep).”² It suggests a playful refusal of the nightclub-- the gay party’s imagining of a queer future fails in many ways, cannot escape anti-blackness and transmisogyny. By refusing the nightclub (and there is power too in this refusal’s playfulness, its nonchalance-

¹ Blanco, Mykki. “Wavvy.” *Cosmic Angel: The Illuminati Prince/ss*, UNO, 2012.

² Ninkuru, Kim. Personal correspondence with artist. 27 Jan 2017.

why protest the function, when one could be staying in, or sleeping?), the piece instead poses a more important alternative: getting free could be found in a moment as simple as rejecting the gay club as never enough. More fun can be had while twerking in your bedroom.

Dodo Night Club's brief interrupting of normative limits on gender and sexuality, is especially urgent in light of how such limits form an integral part of colonial regimes. To the white settler state, black and indigenous bodies were made necessarily queer, containing the gendered and sexual differences through which whiteness was able to define itself. How are we to reckon with this historical violence that we have inherited? Kamika Peters takes up this question in *Brackish Waters*, a mixed-media work featuring a ceramic sculpture of a ship, accompanied by a pair of abstract paintings. In black diasporic imaginaries, the ship is a loaded image, bringing to mind the Middle Passage. While the ship in *Brackish Waters* certainly invokes this traumatic history, it also poses the ship as a site of generative possibility, suggesting that, as Edouard Glissant writes, "the boat is a womb, a womb abyss."³ For water (brackish or otherwise), can also be a radically stateless space, challenging the nation state's imposed borders via the queer and slippery routes we have taken to survive legacies of settler colonialism and slavery.

More specifically, legacies of ongoing settler colonialism are further examined by Fallon Simard. Playing with meme cultures and low-resolution images, Simard's multimedia installation features a looping video of a colour-manipulated landscape titled *TerraNullius5000*, alongside a large-scale meme where the text, "just a little dissociated" is juxtaposed against an image of a McDonald's meal. It is notable that the landscape depicted in *TerraNullius5000*, consists of a low-resolution image. Commenting on the political significance of digital (and especially low-resolution) images, Hito Steyerl writes, "The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited. It transforms quality into accessibility...the image is liberated from the vaults of

³ Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance.”⁴ What does it mean when colonial tropes in so-called Canada’s art canon- such as the landscape painting, which rests on the idea that indigenous land is infinitely available to settlers- is re-imagined as a “poor image”?

TerraNullius5000 manipulates, and reworks the colonial archive to the point where any idea of indigenous land as ‘empty,’ or to be ‘discovered,’ is thoroughly unsettled.

Simard notes that the placement of the “just a little dissociated” meme alongside *TerraNullius5000*, highlights “the linkage between mental health and profound disconnections from land as a direct result of genocide and colonialism.”⁵ Unsettling the archive, as Peters and Simard do with colonial and racist tropes, introduces other ways of engaging with the foundational violence of the state. We can ask, for example: what strategies do we have to live with these inherited historical traumas? Certainly, an important one would be the ways in which queer and trans folks have, despite everything, still managed to navigate everyday life- right down to our most mundane, ordinary tasks (in other words, as Martine Syms notes, “the most likely future is one in which we only have ourselves and this planet”).⁶ In a lot of activist work, there is so much waiting and so much desiring for a future that may never be realized in our lifetime. Alli Logout’s short film, *Lucid Noon Sunset Blush*, explores what we are to do in the meantime, while we wait for better futures. The film beautifully depicts a constellation of femmes of colour in the U.S. south, as they navigate everyday life: sex work, collective and personal traumas, baby gay years, femme intimacies, and all those moments that contribute to our survival.

Adrienne Crossman’s *Queer Still Life Part 1* also looks towards the mundane and everyday as a queer survival strategy. The piece features 3D printed Furby sculptures on plexiglass shelves surrounding a video displaying a stack of

⁴ Steyerl, Hito. “In Defense of the Poor Image.” *E-flux*, Nov 2009.

⁵ Simard, Fallon. Personal correspondence with artist. 22 May 2017.

⁶ Syms, Martine. “The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto.” *Rhizome*, 17 Dec 2013.

canonical queer theory texts, alongside a Tamagotchi quoting Audre Lorde's now-iconic phrase, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."⁷ In Crossman's piece, something as ubiquitous as a Furby is made uncanny, with campy bright colours interrupting routine by finding queerness in the mundane (invoking Sarah Ahmed's work on queer phenomenology).⁸ In light of overwhelming power structures, these small acts of resistance can make for very queer and very odd wiggle room within the constraints of existing power structures.

The small confrontations collectively posed by the exhibited works do not necessarily change immediate political realities for queer, trans and racialized bodies. Rather, the forms of resistance taken up could best be described as productive interruptions, introducing minor, queer breaks and pauses from colonial regimes, all towards a momentary utopic feeling. Sometimes, that's enough.

-Maandeeq Mohamed

⁷ Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Crown, 2007.

⁸ Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

List of Works

Kim Ninkuru, *Dodo Night Club*, 2017

Two channel video

Endless loop, 00: 15 seconds

Endless loop, 00: 34 seconds

Fallon Simard, *TerraNullius5000*, 2016

Video, endless loop, 1920x1080p, h.264/mp4, 1:07 min.

Fallon Simard, *Dissociated*, 2016

Meme, 38x50", print.

Kamika Peters, *Brackish Waters*, 2017

Ceramic sculpture, oil on wood panel

Adrienne Crossman, *Queer Still Life Part 1*, 2016-2017

3D printed sculptures on plexiglass shelves, marble vinyl wallpaper (2017)

Video, endless loop, 1:30 min. (2016)

Alli Logout, *Lucid Noon Sunset Blush*, 2015

Short film, endless loop, 32:11 min.