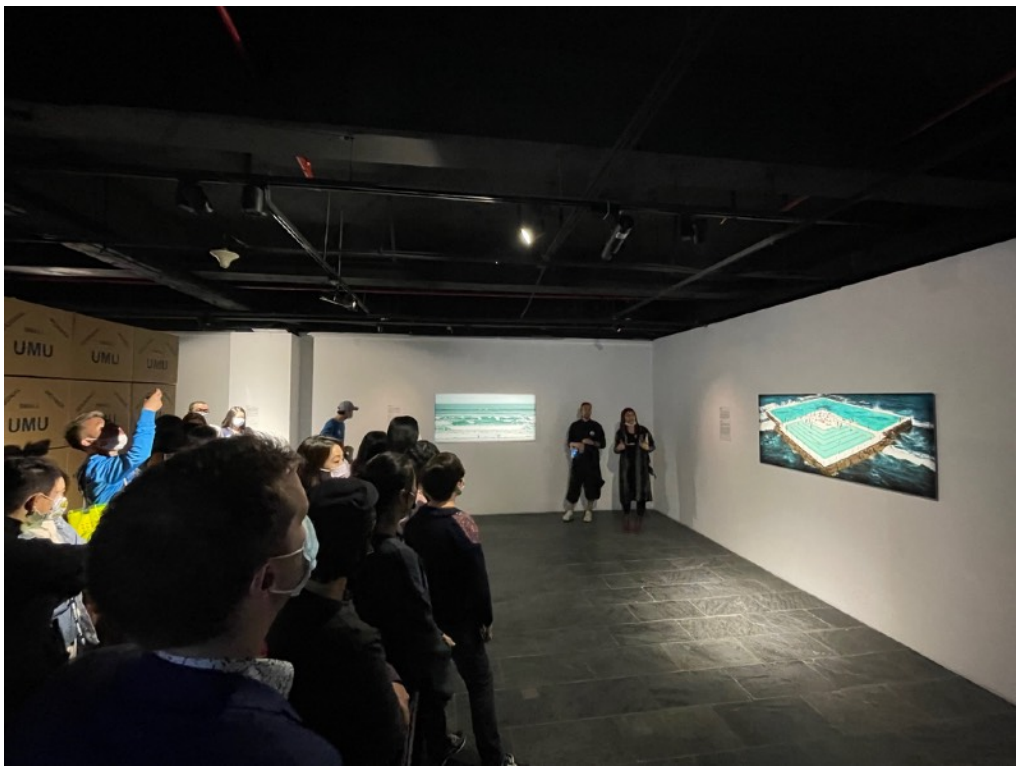
FOUR LETTERS FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE

On International Art Centres and the Return of Business as Usual

Hutch Wilco, Ioana Gordon-Smith, Ron Hanson, Phillida Reid
May 13 2022

GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS, the world over, are trying to get their groove back. The Covid-19 pandemic is far from over, but as lockdowns, border restrictions, and mandates loosen from country to country—with some very notable exceptions—it seems that we, at a government policy level at least, are over it. If the first two years of the pandemic were shaped by a sense of insularity, the third already feels like the year of opening back up, and back out. International travel, international exhibitions, and the return of a once-familiar idea of what an international art world looks like: an events-based order of mass-gatherings and networked interactions. There might be no better sign of this resurgence than last month's opening of the 59th Venice Biennale—the central tentpole of international art continuity.

While this return to order is a relief for many, it's a bitter pill for those who hoped the radical shifts in access and offerings necessitated by the early months of pandemic life might herald long-lasting, structural changes in the ways we think about, and participate in, an art world. ArtNow Essays has invited four New Zealand writers, based in or recently returned from international art centres, to take the temperature of their artistic surroundings and offer insight into what has changed in the wake of Covid-19, and what's stayed exactly the same.



Installation view, Almost Paradise: Mis/perceptions of Leisure and Labor in the Asia-Pacific, Duolun Museum of Modern Art, 2021. Image by Cathy Carter

Good Luck, Shanghai: A Letter to the Arts from a Formerly Post-Pandemic Future

Hutch Wilco

WHEN SHANGHAI REOPENED in March 2020—the same day that Aotearoa went into lockdown—I, and many other residents, slowly began to talk in post-pandemic terms. Shanghai had never gone into a full lockdown, and while people changed up their hours or worked from home, museums and galleries closed, and crowds thinned, a total shutdown the likes of which Wuhan experienced was unthinkable.

That was until March 1, 2022, when the city's first local case in over a year was discovered. Since then, we have seen targeted closures followed by a city-wide "hard lockdown", supply chain failures, food shortages, daily testing, the symptomatic and asymptomatic alike forced into unsanitary quarantine facilities, hospitals closed, emergency services strained to breaking, forceable relocation of citizens, pets needlessly killed, and mass protests on the streets. My Shanghai, previously a model for post-pandemic life, is now unrecognizable. Yet thinking back to the halcyon days before the lockdown began, there are still lessons to be learned for societies managing an endemic if still potent virus, as well as for artists and arts institutions.

It is important to note that much of the digital infrastructure associated with pandemic living was in place in Shanghai before Covid-19 arrived. Already a contactless payment culture, literally anything can be purchased in-app using WeChat and, by 2021, one billion people were making ¥290 trillion worth of transactions using mobile apps—buying anything from groceries to contemporary art.

In the arts, we followed our favourite galleries through WeChat subscriptions, received information about upcoming exhibitions on WeChat channels, saw their installation photos and artist interviews in WeChat Moments, booked advance tickets to shows and events on their WeChat page. Staying in-app, we could catch a rideshare or take a share bike, order food from nearby restaurants and pick it up on the way. Arriving at the museum, we scanned our ticket and health code, and downloaded the exhibition guide to our phones. You could travel from home to exhibition and back, without any physical interaction with another person.

Come the arrival of the pandemic, payment apps—already ubiquitous—became our covid tracers. With WeChat as digital wallet and health tracker, if someone who tested positive had purchased a ticket for an exhibition, everyone who attended within the same hour would see their health code turn yellow—the sign to self-isolate. Museums and galleries were freed from setting up their own sign-in systems, instead it was all managed in the existing *appmosphere*.

Museum collections swiftly moved in-app and online, not through the efforts of individual institutions, but through a government initiative: an online collections database where any registered museum could upload their assets. Overnight, hundreds of thousands of images and object descriptions were accessible, and museum budgets unencumbered by the financial burden of developing their own online portals.

While attendance numbers were limited, the business of managing attendance—app-based, contactless—was much the same as before. Aside from the early months of 2020—when spaces closed and exhibitions shuttered—what institutions offered in Shanghai seemed little affected. While more talks and events were live-streamed than before, it felt like a matter of doing more than doing different. Post-pandemic looked much the same as pre-pandemic—a success for continuity, but a disappointing outcome for those hoping for a paradigmatic shift in how we produce and view art.

You could travel from home to exhibition and back, without any physical interaction with another person.

PERHAPS THE GREATEST impact on exhibition programmes was the initial delay, and eventual cancellation, of incoming touring exhibitions. The early impact on touring reverberated throughout the rest of the year. No international exhibitions were held in Shanghai until November 2020, when I opened *Southern Transmissions: Contemporary Video Art from Oceania* at the Duolun Museum of Modern Art.

Southern Transmissions was a response to pandemic conditions in several ways. A presentation of video art made sense in the circumstances, given there was no opportunity for artists to travel, and shipping was 4-5 times more expensive

than in 2019. Also, the directors of Duolun and I felt that the public, after so many months of introspection, would be hungry to look outwards. I was especially keen to show contemporary video of Māori, Pasifika, and Australian artists, as Chinese audiences are generally not familiar with or exposed to modern practices from the region.

The public response, while somewhat anticipated, was nevertheless overwhelmingly positive. Duolun Museum commissioned a sequel for one year later when, as we all thought, the world would be back to rights. While our predictions about the state of the world were woefully optimistic, we did open the sequel, *Almost Paradise: Mis/perceptions of Leisure and Labor in the Asia-Pacific*, on October 30, 2021. That exhibition took as its starting point the colonial history of the Asia Pacific, the perceptions of the Pacific as an idyll, and Asia as the world's factory, and their continued impacts today.

While international enterprises are fraught with complications, which the pandemic has only exacerbated, the near-complete halt on international projects and gallery developments has some positive impacts. Since 2020, more than a dozen alternative spaces and artist-run initiatives have opened across the city, inhabiting shuttered restaurants, retail spaces, and basements in suburban neighbourhoods. Such unofficial, ad hoc spaces were virtually unheard of in China before, with a few notable exceptions in Beijing in the 1980s and Shanghai at the turn of the new century. A new generation of young artists, fresh from universities overseas, digitally literate, and apolitical are recreating the arts infrastructure in the margins, and were flourishing until the current lockdown hit.

This nascent movement is another area where our experience in Aotearoa served as a model. At a recent conference on alternative spaces, I was invited to give a talk, where I gave a brief history of New Zealand's scene, from *Teststrip* to *Enjoy*, which was met with great interest. Quite how Shanghai's previously robust arts network will survive and develop as the city emerges from a brutal lockdown remains to be seen. One thing that is clear, however, is that there still exists ample opportunity for knowledge sharing and dialogue between our arts practitioners, were the right policy and funding frameworks developed to support it.

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From Auckland, Hutch Wilco is a curator, writer, artist and project manager who has lived and worked in Shanghai since 2016. Previously, Wilco was a project manager with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and has worked on several projects for the Venice Biennale since 2013. He moved to Shanghai to take up the directorship of Cospace, a commercial gallery with a focus on modern and contemporary Chinese art, and has written about exhibitions and artists for *Art Asia Pacific Magazine* and *Ocula*, as well as for numerous gallery publications. In 2018, Wilco started an exhibition development company, Monumental Culture Company, to create and tour exhibitions across China, and has developed projects for organizations such as the Hubei Museum of Art, Duolun Museum of Modern Art Shanghai, Epoch Art Museum Wenzhou, and the Being Art Museum Shanghai.

Installation view, Yuki Kihara, *Paradise Camp*, New Zealand Pavillion at the 59th Venice Biennale. Image by Luke Walker, courtesy of NZatVenice

When We Meet Again

Ioana Gordon-Smith

IN MAY 2020, La Biennale di Venezia announced that the 59th Venice Biennale would be postponed. Originally scheduled to open as per the Biennale's two-year cycle in May 2021, the Biennale was deferred until April 2022.

I was working as Assistant Curator Pasifika for Yuki Kihara's exhibition, *Paradise Camp*, New Zealand's presentation at the upcoming Venice Biennale. Kihara, *Paradise Camp* curator, Natalie King, and I continued to work over Zoom on the publication across Australia, New Zealand, and Sāmoa, but for a while it was uncertain if the Biennale would go ahead at all. Italy was ground zero for much of the European Covid-19 outbreak. We watched as the first wave hit the world, followed by Delta, and then Omicron. Borders were closed. Plans were put on hold indefinitely, if not entirely placed in jeopardy. Once we were certain that the Biennale would go ahead, the question became whether travel was sufficiently safe.

In mid-March 2022, Creative New Zealand approved the core team's travel to the Biennale. New Zealand's participation looks slightly different this year around. In the past, New Zealand has supported attendants from New Zealand to travel to Venice to mind the pavilion. This Biennale, the New Zealand pavilion is staffed by an Italian invigilator, and supported by an interactive app. Knowing that New Zealand's contingent might not be as large, it was frankly amazing to arrive in Venice and see so many New Zealanders there. In addition to the team travelling with the pavilion, fellow New Zealanders were participating in a collateral event, with others also speaking in aabaakwad, a

global Indigenous conference timed for the Biennale vernissage. Only a few weeks prior, travel to Venice felt impossible. Suddenly, everyone was confirming their plans to be there. The influx of visitors from across the globe confirmed that people were gagging to gather. Art can be an isolating practice; covid exacerbated that condition.

With so much anticipation for this year's Biennale, the question remained as to whether this iteration would be different in the pandemic's wake. In a May 2020 interview, Cecelia Alemani, curator of the Biennale's main exhibition, *The Milk of Dreams*, stated that she wasn't 'interested in being remembered for doing "the coronavirus biennial."'. Instead, her exhibition took inspiration from the title of a book by Italian surrealist, Leonora Carrington, to revisit conceptions of "human" in relation to non-human actors. Notably, approximately 90% of the exhibiting artists were women or non-gender conforming. Covid may have deferred the Biennale, but its organisers were determined to not let that deter this Biennale's artistic agenda.

The Venice Biennale is often lauded as the most important international art event. For New Zealand artists, the Biennale offers a budget and support system that surpasses even the closest comparative opportunity. Significantly, the Biennale comes with career-defining global institutional and critical attention. It also sets the tone for international perceptions of domestic art scenes. If international practice is important to you, then the Biennale is where introductions are made.

Being on the ground during the vernissage period confirmed just how many people are actively moving about. Curators, directors, and press alike scoured through the exhibitions hunting out the best of the best. Lines formed outside pavilions and coffee carts, and throngs of photographers followed artists around the canals to capture their location shots. There was also a smorgasbord of exhibition offerings: aside from the numerous national pavilions, there is the curated show, official collateral events, independent exhibitions timed to leverage Biennale crowds, and Venice's own museums and art galleries. On my second to last day, I passed a poster advertising a group show curated by Nicolas Bourriaud. What would have been a huge deal to me in Wellington was, in Venice, a fringe-of-a fringe event.

With so much anticipation for this year's Biennale, the question remained as to whether this iteration would be different in the pandemic's wake.

AS SOMEONE WHO has never attended the Venice Biennale before, I can't say how this experience compares to previous Biennales–apparently there were fewer lavish dinner parties. But beyond that, and the mandatory N95 masks, the Biennale felt less like a 'new normal' and more like a return to a normal that was hugely missed.

When the pandemic first hit, the precarity of arts work became more obvious than ever. Creative New Zealand diverted funding programmes towards supporting artists to supplement lost income while Manatū Taonga announced a new Arts

and Culture Covid Recovery Programme. As galleries and museums closed, institutions turned their attention to digital offerings. In articles and offline discussion, arts professionals pondered if the pandemic offered an opportunity to do things differently: to slow down programming, to look at sustaining local artistic communities rather than importing shows. The Venice Biennale has, surprisingly, not been the focus of many of the discussions. For sure, the relevance of the Venice Biennale has been challenged plenty pre-Covid. The prohibitive costs of participation throws into light the the ethics of financial support and the parallel function of the Biennale as an arts market. As the the Biennale's artistic discourses increasingly centre on decolonisation, climate crisis, and the pitfalls of capitalism, the Biennale's huge gathering in Europe, on a sinking archipelago no less, is arguably complicit in the very problems it critiques.

And yet, with the risk that the Biennale might not occur, or at least not attract the same numbers, its appeal became clearer. Beyond amassing the "best" art from across the globe, the Biennale also brings far-flung people en masse into close proximity. These international connections can be a lifeline. When artists struggle to find space or conversation in their own homes, kinship across borders can sustain and amplify their inquiries. Kihara, whose exhibition *Paradise Camp* centres Fa'afafine (Sāmoan third-gender) critques of 'Paradise', has previously noted that it's only through the Biennale's enormous coverage that she might possibly be able to stage her exhibition in Sāmoa, where homosexuality is still illegal.

Realistically, the Venice Biennale is less of a single, global worldview than it is a series of standalone offerings all being staged simultaneously in the same place. Being there offers access to identify and create narratives or through-lines amongst the chaos of people and exhibitions clamouring for attention. The US, Great Britain, French, Canada, Sámi, New Zealand, and many other pavilions, for example, echoed similar concerns regarding Indigenous negotiations of colonial national borders, the fictions of media, and the underrepresentation of migrant, female and third-gender artists. Indigenous-and POC-led panels and symposia furthered the possibility of reframing international networks. While we work in conditions of isolation, often arising from antagonistic positions within our various institutions, in this brief moment, we could gather and regalvanise.

The spotlight on under-represented artists across pavilions and events results from the work of various actors already operating in and attached to the Biennale, rather than from the impacts of Covid itself. In asking what role the Biennale could play amidst Covid, Alemani notes that 'the simplest, most sincere answer I could find is that the Biennale sums up all the things we have so sorely missed in the last two years: the freedom to meet people from all over the world, the possibility of travel, the joy of spending time together'. If the pandemic has proved anything about the Biennale, it's that we still have a stake in the narratives that emerge from conversation and comparison. Some of these debates are public, others happen over a few lazy spritzes at the local corner bar. Either way, that they can happen at all in this moment feels extraordinary. This Biennale might not have answered every critic's concerns, but it has proved that we still want to meet, we still want to see art, and we still want to be involved in the stories the Biennale reveals about ourselves.

Ioana Gordon-Smith is a Sāmoan/Pākehā arts writer and curator living in Aotearoa. Across her work is a commitment to Moana arts practices and their histories. She has held roles at Artspace Aotearoa, Objectspace, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery and Pātaka Art + Museum. Ioana is the Assistant Curator of Yuki Kihara, Aotearoa New Zealand at the 59th Venice Biennale 2022 and co-curator of the international Indigenous triennial, *Naadohbii: To Draw Water* in Canada. Ioana is also the co-founder and co-editor of *Marinade: Aotearoa Journal of Moana Art* and a trustee for Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Wellington. As well as writing for art journals, magazines and exhibition catalogues, Ioana has contributed to publications produced by Thames & Hudson, Routledge, ARP Books, and Te Papa Press.

Installation view, Ting-Tong Chang, Hsien-Yu Cheng and Dino Taipei Robot Man 2.0: Infodemic, TheCube Project Space, Taipei, 2020. Image by Chu Chun-Teng

Negotiating the Plague Years — Taipei's TheCube during Covid-19

Ron Hanson

EXHIBITIONS IN Taiwan have gone on largely uninterrupted during the pandemic, with the exception of the Alpha outbreak of May 2021 when Taiwan entered its Level Three 'soft lockdown' for around 70 days. As I write, Taiwan is fast approaching the peak of its Omicron outbreak, with cases skyrocketing and the death toll sadly mounting. As perhaps the last country in the world to experience its first major Omicron surge, the phenomenon is something people here have observed only from afar until now. In Taiwan, the current transition from 'zero Covid' into 'living with Covid' is rapid and at times chaotic. Looking at the fortunes of a single gallery can show something of what life for the arts in Taiwain has been like in the pandemic.

Taipei's TheCube Project Space is a central hub in the city's contemporary art scene. But locating the gallery for the first-time visitor is not the simplest of tasks. Housed in a former hotel within the bustling Gonguan District, gallery-goers navigate night market stalls and a winding alleyway to find the space. There, one encounters an unassuming entranceway below an old neon sign advertising 'green stinky tofu'. It's not much to look at from the outside, but TheCube's lowkey appearance belies its outsized cultural influence in Taiwan.

Founded in 2010 by Amy Cheng and Jeph Lo, the project space combines their interests in contemporary art and subterranean music cultures. Cheng is a well-known independent curator and art critic who has curated major exhibitions including *Heard and the Unheard: Soundscape Taiwan*, representing the country in 2011 at the 54th Venice Biennale. Lo wrote about music in the 1990s for Taiwan periodicals and has created online archives mapping the idiosyncratic development of Taiwanese music and sound. In 2002, he translated into Chinese the best-selling 1997 book by Matthew Collin, *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*.

Since its inception, TheCube has held more than 50 exhibitions including *Escape From North Korea* (2012) and *A Journal of the Plague Year. Fear, Ghosts, Rebels, SARS, Leslie and the Hong Kong Story* (curated by Para Site, 2014). Contributing to the vibrancy of the Taipei art scene, the space has also played host to more than 100 performances, talks, and workshops, while simultaneously pursuing a vigorous publishing program. Typically, these activities are characterized by an archival impulse and a desire to stimulate discussion around social issues and concepts of the local.

Despite its small team and limited resources, TheCube collaborates with a wide array of artists, researchers, and cultural activists as well as medium- and large-scale institutions in Taiwan and abroad. It has produced exhibitions with the Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of National Taipei University of Education, the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, the Casino Luxembourg—Forum d'art contemporain, Independent Curators International (New York), and the Total Museum of Contemporary Art (Seoul). TheCube serves as a key connecting point between Taiwan and the international art community. Any artists, curators, or writers visiting Taipei are likely to walk through its doors. Beyond the tangible output of its production, its contribution is notable for the relationships and networks it generates and sustains.

In Taiwan, the current transition from 'zero Covid' into 'living with Covid' is rapid and at times chaotic.

SO HOW HAS TheCube fared during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how is the project space currently being impacted? 'Only a week earlier we had opened Wu Chi-Yu's solo exhibition, Atlas of Closed Worlds,' Cheng and Lo told me of the Alpha lockdown. 'We had to shut down the gallery, but the artist quickly put together an online 3D version of the exhibition. He was able to organize an online artist talk and guided tour of the exhibition.' They say that after Taiwan exited Level 3 in late July, there was a huge increase in exhibition attendance in Taipei, as people, unable to travel

abroad, fulfilled a hunger that had built up under the earlier restrictions. ‘As Taiwan’s handling of the pandemic has been pretty good, TheCube’s local audience hasn’t been adversely affected, but the international audience has been greatly reduced. As facilitating international exchanges is one of TheCube’s primary missions, the border closure and loss of opportunities have been a regretful situation.’

Cheng and Lo say the recent outbreak has reduced the audience to some extent, but not too severely. There is a desire, they say, to resume some degree of normalcy and TheCube is pushing ahead with its programme. Notably, its new exhibition of sound works by the collective, Confluence Experience, *Objet Sonore Deformation*, will be accompanied by events—some of which will take place in the virtual realm. The new works created for the exhibition will combine early tape-recording technology and modern digital streaming, to ‘trace a path from the generation of sound, its recording, and its audio playback directly into the listener’s present time and space.’

In Taiwan, the need to reconnect with the outside world has a wider significance. The soft power of cultural exchange plays an important role in circumventing the nation’s diplomatic isolation. Entering March 2022, Taiwan and China were the only two remaining countries pursuing a zero Covid approach. As Taiwan exits the strategy, the two are exchanging barbs. Recently, Taiwan’s Central Epidemic Command Center announced that the border could potentially be reopened to non-residents in July. Taiwanese, and those with resident permits, have been free to come and go as they please throughout the pandemic, but the cost of quarantine has been prohibitive for most.

‘We are looking forward to reopening,’ Lo says of the new exhibition. ‘After all, we need to communicate with the world. In addition to anticipating foreign artists and audiences coming to Taiwan, we also need to go abroad. The current situation of isolation makes the cost of going abroad and returning to Taiwan very high. The pace of reopening has been slow, but we also understand that this is a necessary measure that the government must take.’

Cheng reflects: ‘I think that more than two years of isolation has, to some extent, slowed down the production of contemporary art. After all, the core spirit of contemporary art lies in the connections between people, the communication and exchanges across borders. However, we should use this time to reflect on our living situation, think about the meaning of art production in the era of crisis, and rethink the future that we will face. This may be called the arrival of the “post-globalization era”. Regarding “living”, there are many things that we can't take for granted.’

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Ron Hanson is the founding editor of the arts magazine *White Fungus*. Hanson founded the publication in 2004 with his brother Mark in Wellington, New Zealand. Since 2009, it has been based in Taiwan. Hanson has written for publications including *Rhizome*, *Afterall Online*, *Obieg* (Warsaw), *Contemporary Hum*, *Spinoff*, *the New Zealand Listener*, and the *New Zealand Herald*. Hanson's 2011 interview with Carolee Schneemann was featured in the monograph *Carolee*

Schneemann: Unforgivable (2015) by Black Dog Publishing. Hanson has a Master's in Art History from Victoria University of Wellington.

Installation view, Joanna Piotrowska in *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th Venice Biennale. Image by Roberto Marossi, courtesy of Joanna Piotrowska and La Biennale di Venezia.

Phillida Reid

AS AT ANY moment during the intense conditions of the last couple of years, to slice in to the *now*, even though entirely subjective, feels incredibly challenging to me. Even if we are emerging from the pandemic—arguably, and at different paces—the layers of heightened and warped awareness carried over from that experience are huge. There have been all of the confronting aspects of mortality, of vulnerabilities directly and indirectly related to the virus and its threat, of dealing with the unknown, disruption, and loss in many forms. It has exaggerated circumstances—personally, societally, globally—for all people and politics. An awareness of structural problems, micro and macro, has been sharpened to intense levels of acuity.

Spring in London, 2022, and there is a more decisive shift from a Covid-dominated reality than at any point since the beginning of the pandemic—despite prior flashes of 'freedom' or flexing due to Covid fatigue. The shift feels very stark, almost shocking if one pauses to reflect, though it seems to me there is also a wilful amnesia, or desire not to look back. It's bewildering, time feels fuzzy, the two years have stretched out and now so much has passed. At the same time, the phrase 'things still feel weird' is a constant. We're living with a residue of unease, not only from Covid but an unjust and brutal war in Europe, cost of living crises, environmental crises, the disruptive reach of technology, and ever-more distinct inequities.

In thinking of this through the prism of art, absorbent and reflective as it is, the ecosystem of artists, museums, and commercial galleries contains great contradictions, as it ever has. Contradictions which have been exaggerated, laid further bare by the last couple of years, like everything else. There is a continuing, ever-cementing relationship with commodification and the corporatisation of art in some corners, while a commitment to resistance and freedom from this trend flourishes in others. Much of the financial structure and foundations underpinning the art world, as well as its physical patterns of behaviour—an events-based culture with its attendant freight of artworks and people—were generated by older generations, shaped by and responding to a different time. These flows of behaviour, or at least their scale, are no longer so straight forwardly certain. Though, for the moment, the reach of the international order is still valued, even if it may be evolving to meet new contexts. Art Basel Hong Kong, for example, is now offering a satellite booth option, installed to gallery instruction, attended by an informed assistant who engages with visitors and passes enquiries on to the gallery.

The shift feels very stark, almost shocking if one pauses to reflect, though it seems to me there is also a wilful amnesia, or desire not to look back.

HERE IN LONDON, the passage of time has allowed for grassroots responses to the initial lockdown to grow into formalised initiatives. A WhatsApp group, started by Vanessa Carlos and Sadie Coles in the early days of the pandemic as a collegial messaging forum for London gallerists, has become IGA–International Galleries Alliance—a global network of commercial galleries and unifying body for the industry. IGA will be a useful forum for defining systems and protocols as the digital sphere evolves further and, to my mind, can help us foster educational programmes utilising the specialism of gallery spaces to serve our communities alongside the artists, institutions, and collectors that already create the work and audience respectively. An appreciation of localism, something very directly underscored by the pandemic everywhere, has led to initiatives such as London Gallery Weekend which proved immediately popular. In national terms, Brexit has made the movement of art in and out of the UK far more expensive and difficult. This is just one reason that Paris+, Art Basel's new positioning in Paris, feels significant in opposition to a relative UK isolation.

In terms of *right now*, the Venice Biennale well-illustrates the position of our times, poised between the past and an as yet undefined future. Its relative sobriety is telling: a recognition of the darkness of global politics, fewer international visitors due to an unwillingness to travel, a curatorial correction to the white-patriarchal norm of its foundation: 90% of the artists in *The Milk of Dreams* exhibition identify as female or gender nonconforming, as do the majority of the artists representing national pavilions. Its decision-making and mood felt appropriate: welcome and promising, if unsettled and questioning, with no assurance as to how and at what speed this will all evolve. Documenta, artistically directed by the Jakarta-based collective, ruangrupa, will open in Kassel next month. This feels timely, too, continuing the theme of emergence and opening up, in so many senses.

Relationships continue to be the cornerstone. Artists to their environments / communities / the world. The relationships between artists, curators, galleries, collectors, and audiences. How to uphold these relationships and enable them to grow meaningfully remains at the centre—to continue to diversify systems, create more access, create and maintain sustainable practices. Spaces and services that aid in this task may have a great deal to offer to the future, to move flows of communication beyond what can often be an echo chamber. In my experience, the pandemic solidified many existing relationships to create an even deeper sense of shared understanding. This has laid the foundations for moving forward with a new gallery space, an enhanced sense of independence, a broad increase in collegial respect, and the dismissal of some engrained patterns—held over from different times.

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Phillida Reid is from Auckland, and co-founded the commercial gallery Southard Reid, in London, in 2010, which she has solely owned and operated since 2019. She was a Director of Waddington Galleries, having started out at Anthony d'Offay Gallery in London, and has an MA from the Coutauld Instiute of Art and a BA from Auckland University. Southard Reid represents a broad range of international artists, whose work has been the subject of shows at institutions including Tate London, ICA London, Kunsthalle Basel, Kunstverein Hamburg, as well as Gwangju, Berlin, Lyon and Venice Biennales, and is held in the permanent collections of the Arts Council and Government Art Collection, UK, Tate, National Museum of Wales, Centre Pompidou, Zacheta National Museum of Art, Poland, Te Papa Tongarewa Aotearoa, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, LACMA, The Whitney Museum of American Art, MoMA New York, amongst others. She will open a new gallery space in Grape Street, Bloomsbury, in July 2022, with a show by the New York-based sculpture and video artist, Lea Cetera. Joanna Piotrowska's work can currently be seen in The Milk of Dreams, at the Venice Biennale 2022

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Commisioned by the Aotearoa Public Gallery Directors' Network (APGDN) and published on ArtNow.NZ with support from Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa New Zealand and member galleries of the network. For more information about Essays click here.