

Intro text

By Fadwa Naamna, curator of Offspring 2021: Always Hallways

Always Hallways brings together multiple artworks created by ten emerging artists from different geographies and cultural backgrounds. During their two-year period, the working process was accompanied by weekly studio visits by both regular and guest tutors, who assisted the participants in cultivating their ideas and artistic outcomes.

The Offspring show this year unfolds a diversity of mediums including painting, sculpture, performance, video, sound, and mixed media installations as well as site-specific interventions. Despite the abundance of thematics, the different works seem to share a common ground; Hovering within the realms of the between and betwixt to propose, directly or elusively, nonbinary critical outlooks upon socio-political, cultural, ecological or intersectional issues derived from and responding to our surroundings.

Spanning the interior and exterior spaces of the De Ateliers building, the in-between corridors of its maze-like layout, materialise the allegory simulating the thematic threads shared between the different presented projects. In architecture, hallways and corridors are the liminal arenas that symbolise the 'inbetweenness'. They link the outside with the inside, like the laser beams in Brianna Leatherbury's project 'Incoming' interjecting the walls of the De Ateliers and creating socio-urban connections between the participants and their neighbours in the adjacent building. Hallways act as a nexus between the public and private realms - two contrasts that come in conversation in Nolwenn Vuillier's 'Philters' in which she places organic fertiliser sculptures inside the exhibition space, thus creating an olfactory effect that draws the viewers' attention to the outside. Differently tackling these public-private inbetween relations, Kokou Ferdinand Makouvia has been working during the last year in the open space of Kunstfort bij Vijfhuizen. During this process, he has been utilising 'objets trouvés' and oscillating in a conceptual and contextual dialogue between outside and inside studio practice, complementing his work with new meanings.

In anthropology, the concept of liminality was first coined by Arnold van Gennep and later further developed by Victor Witter Turner in their works on the 'Les rites de passage' (Rite of passage). It marks the ambiguities and disorientation that occur in the middle stage of a rite of passage, when one transforms, transits or transcends from one state into another, leaving their foregoing status behind. "Hallways" is a metaphor for this metamorphosis, where things, people and occurrences fall in a state of "trans" and undulation. And like every process of conversion, it posits challenges, such as the ones in the transgender transformative struggle divulged about in the works of the PHILTH HAUS collective. When in this rite, one stands on a liminal edge - at a threshold between their previous way of structuring their identity, time, or community, while a new status is established as the rite is completed. New establishments as such are quite crucial for any structure to evolve as a heterogeneous setup, which is well-articulated through text, drawing and sound in Sarah Naqvi's 'Rite of passage'. Figuratively portraying liminality, van Gennep uses the metaphor, "as a kind of house divided into rooms and

corridors"; A passage occurs when an individual leaves one domain to step into another, an action simulated through the allegory of changing rooms.

During liminal phases of all kinds, social hierarchies may be dissolved, traditions may become uncertain, and future outcomes once taken for granted may be thrown into doubt. Exemplified through Pedram Sazesh's 'Epilogue to the Aerodynamic-Monument', the opacity of liminality repels the risk of tokenizing or reducing singularities of socio-cultural variation by comprehension. Liminality as obscurity oftentimes conveys absurdity as in the work of Emiel Zeno in which he invites viewers to interact with a shower booth, a microwave oven, and a mussels' cooking session. His invitation expresses a conflict between a tendency to seek ingrained values and meanings in art objects or life in general, and the inability to find these with any certainty.

Not only do hallways link chambers and physical spaces, they can also link between dimensions and contradictions - such as between life and death, and light and darkness. They thus are sort of transitory spaces between reality and the realms of imagination, between the tangible and the occult territories of existence. Resembling the conversion in Rinella Alfonso's paintings from distorted symbols to abstract expressionist modes of visualization, a passage can thus function as a fantasy portal or a gateway of transcendence.

Where hierarchies dissolve and people encounter each other on eye level, informal and alternative scenarios are often brought to life. This, for instance, is visible in the relationship between Yitschak Spiegl and Vita Soul Wilmering - a protagonist and a filmmaker who travel together to Austria searching for traces of Yitschak's former life. Here, the hallways depict a safe zone, a meeting area, and a ground where art, conversations and emotions are generated.

The works in this exhibition take a critical approach that challenges rigid polarised positions and allow multiple narratives to simultaneously and fluidly co-exist. Hallways are fertile grounds for mingling and chit-chatting, and that makes them perfect alternative vessels for storytelling and polyperspectivity. They might be the least loved places in a building as they are intended merely for passage rather than lingering for a stretched period of time. In that, they resemble the uncherished, repressed or overlooked stories. Such narratives, as latent in the erotic tentacles by Shophie Soobramanien amongst other works, bring to the foreground unconventional and nonlinear knowledges that challenge the conceptions of mainstream cultures.

Furthermore, employing the word hallways as a metaphor for the betweenness is stimulated by the ambiance of the 2019-2021 working period at De Ateliers and the relationships between the artists themselves and between them, their tutors, and the institution - which have had both explicit and indirect influences on the artistic outcomes. With the pandemic reality, lockdowns and social isolation, the participants found themselves physically disconnected from the external world, and accordingly nestled together more than in previous years. This fact has impacted the interactions between them as they became closer both on the personal and professional levels. Manifesting in different shapes and spaces, this social proximity has been especially sensed in the hallways of the building, where the artists

could run into each other, connect, and get inspiration. Hallways are about constant movement and the dynamics of communication within the building, being both separate and together as a group.

Last but not least, in its temporariness, the De Ateliers art working period also functions as a sort of a conceptual hallway that aids artistic practices in flourishing in an anchored development. This framework thus acts like a transitional station, a threshold or even an estuary through which young artists take a step further into the art world.

The title “ALWAYS HALLWAYS” is inspired by the 2019-2021 Offspring website’s name designed and named by Yara Veloso, Raoul Audouin, and Mijia Wang - students of the Werkplaats Typografie Master's programme in graphic design at the ArtEZ University of the Arts in Arnhem.