

**WE WILL KEEP EACH OTHER COMPANY
WHEN IT GROWS DARK**

✱ J.F. ... Espai 13

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ENS ACOON

Exhibition series curated by Irina Mutt

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NO COMMENT

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DANIELLE BRATHWAITE-SHIRLEY

FAO FOSCO

19/07 - 20/10/2024

Upcoming exhibition of the series:

HELENA VINENT 31/10/2024 - 19/01/2025

No Comment by Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley is the third exhibition in this year's series at Espai 13, titled *We Will Keep Each Other Company When It Grows Dark* and curated by Irina Mutt. This is the British artist's first solo show in Barcelona.

In many of her projects, Brathwaite-Shirley starts from her interest in creating archives to document and remember Black and trans lives. These archives, fictions or memories are often activated and formalised as video games, while also featuring other formats, such as installations, texts and performance.

Rather than organising information or creating taxonomies, the archives created by the artist are meant to catch our attention and to confront us. In accessing them we are led to reformulate questions about who we are, what intentions we have or what we value. In her projects we are asked to interpret any situation that might arise and make decisions based on how we position ourselves when faced with what emerges from the stories that all archives tell.

The work of Brathwaite-Shirley does not announce or specify what we should do or how we should think. Rather, it reflects our image and gives it back to us,

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leaving us space so we can be the ones to make decisions and deal with their consequences. The artist does not deploy a pedagogy intended to offer responses or to awaken empathy. What is offered instead is a questioning of who we are and what we are capable of doing.

When entering the exhibition, the first thing we are required to do is to accept its terms and conditions. The space created by the artist is centred on Black and trans lives. *No Comment* stages a fictional narrative about a world that has been scorched by fire to the point that hardly anything is left intact. In this world of ashes, each visitor has the choice to move through and interact with the remains of those who lived there. We can listen to their stories to remember and share them, while having the option to keep them as memories or to forget them.

Using video games as tools to explain interactive stories, *No Comment* deals with questions of how narratives about the violence experienced by others are received and shared. What do we need to feel empathy? Are there certain identities we identify with

over others, that we would be more willing to help and even save? What lives do we remember and celebrate? Which bodies do we claim justice for, and which bodies are forgotten? These are some of the questions we are asked to reformulate when moving through the narrative proposed by Brathwaite-Shirley.

The video game poses questions about our ability to act attentively and in solidarity when it comes to listening and giving support to others. Each of our ways of listening or accompanying have an impact on how these stories unfold. A chain of cause and effect unravels, but at no time does the artist judge or provide directions to guide us. We are not told how we are supposed to behave and react. Each of us shapes the meaning and the answers that emerge according to our experiences or ideas.

However, the stories explained through this video game are not limited merely to its interface. Its images and memories further expand into the paintings and sculptures found in the installation. In the same way that we experience the work of Brathwaite-Shirley, these images and memories affect us and stay with us long after we leave the gallery space.

Credits — Coding assistance by Florian Bruckner; Voice actors: Chloe Filani and Eburn Sodipo; Animation assistance by Hildegard Oehler and Valerie-Malin Schmid

London, 1995. Based between London and Berlin. She works predominantly in animation, sound, performance and video game development. Her practice focuses on intertwining lived experience with fiction to imaginatively retell the stories of Black trans people.

She received a BA from the Slade School of Fine Art (London, 2019). Her work has been recently

DANIELLE BRATHWAITE-SHIRLEY

presented in international institutions such as LAS Art Foundation (Berlin, 2024), Studio Voltaire (London, 2024), Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève (Geneva, 2024), SCAD (Savannah, 2023), Art Night (Dundee, 2023), Villa Arson (Nice, 2023), Julia Stoschek

Foundation (Berlin, 2022), Foundation of Art and Creative Technology (Liverpool, 2022), David Kordansky (Los Angeles, 2022), Project Arts Centre (Dublin, 2022), Skånes konstförening (Malmö, 2022), Arebyte Gallery (London, 2021), QUAD Derby (Derby, England, 2021), and Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, 2021).

Ens acompanyarem quan es faci fosc (*We Will Keep Each Other Company When It Grows Dark*) is the title of the Espai 13 exhibition programme for 2024, curated by Irina Mutt.

Mutt's curatorial project stems from a desire to situate interdependence, to explain it and share it by means of four solo exhibitions in which each artist will look at their way of being in the world, of managing and negotiating spaces.

According to Mutt, interdependence speaks to us of our relationship with the world, of how we inhabit it, about our limits and vulnerabilities. To think in terms of interdependence requires us to challenge the fiction of autonomy and to recognise how interlinked our bodies and lives are with other bodies and lives. We are all part of everything, and we exist in relation to other beings, structures, and phenomena. Nothing presents itself, functions or operates in isolation.

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Accordingly, the opportunities for agency, presence and access do not consist so much of individual triumphs or failures as of a collective and shared responsibility. Not every space feels as inviting or can be occupied in the same way by everyone. Not all voices fill up the same amount of space, nor do all stories endure the same across time. This programme offers a few notes, indications, and actions about different ways of occupying and being in space, of lasting in time.

The title of the programme alludes to a «we», to gestures, rather than to a discourse: how we place ourselves next to someone else, walk alongside them, even if only for a short stretch of the way, for a short amount of time. It provides an opportunity to assume our responsibility despite knowing we will not always be effective. This will be our gesture: to

place ourselves close by. In discourses against discrimination, reference is usually made to the idea of safe and accessible spaces,

but oftentimes a safe space does not mean a space free of conflict, nor does complying with the rules guarantee accessibility. Assuming responsibility for and being aware of our privileges can on occasion be wounding. At times it means surrendering, and to surrender is to lose power. But there are more important things than power, aren't there?

Over the course of this programme, a narrative will gradually generate itself in an elastic, non-essentialist, non-linear manner. The embodied and the material, as planes of truth, will have the capacity to deploy the political and activate it. In this narrative, fragility and power will not be binary opposites but relational phenomena that are exchanged and which overlap.

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