

Ana Paz and Ninnie Yeo
to whom I direct my longing
Skånes konstförening
Sept 23–Oct 23

ENGLISH

Artist Talk: Sept 24, 13:00–14:00

Curatorial Statement

This exhibition grew from a prompt given to artists Ana Paz and Ninnie Yeo during this year's Third Space Residency at Skånes konstförening. Each artist-in-residence was asked to create a video artwork based on a literary passage from Akwaeke Emezi's novel *Freshwater* (2018):

Honestly, Yshwa, I just want to rest. Let me find a place where even if I'm alone, I can sit on my veranda and look at a mango tree and we can just talk. You will be the words in my mouth and the ones that fall from my fingers; you will be the one to whom I direct my longing.

Though various themes stick out in this passage—replenishment, dreaming, longing, kinship—Ninnie and Ana have examined the concept of rest in relation to loss, connection, and communities of color. The exhibition title, pulled from Emezi's own words, brings to mind both the care associated with longing and the occasional directionlessness or namelessness of it. We can long for versions of ourselves, other people, specific goals, or places that don't even exist anymore.

Ninnie's installation, *All that is solid melts into air*, focuses on the inner world and attempts to project it outward—literally. Intended for 4 visitors at a time, this work begins with an antechamber populated by little glowing benches. In this liminal space visitors may sit to remove their shoe, offering a moment of stillness before moving on to the adjoining room.

On the other side of a sheer curtain, is a wide, two-channel projection of an abstracted sky. Warped and full of whorls, the joined videos expand across this fully white room to a carefully constructed soundscape of modulated cicada calls. This decelerated, reconfigured soundscape of cicadas—a classic symbol of rebirth in Chinese art—is set to the rhythm of human breathing.

All that is solid melts into air examines rest amid chaos and holding space for things that appear disjointed. Individually, the unreal clouds in the sky appear distorted beyond recognition. The sky itself bends through a corner, contorting with the curtains as cicadas sing in rhythm and altered frequency—but as a whole, they create a hypnotic space. Drawing on the idea of rebirth, Ninnie reflects on the small ways in which we die all the time (metaphorically), and how these deaths can become stages of growth or preparation for connection.

In Ana's sprawling three-part installation, *ALMA*, she explores how we carve out spaces of rest as children of immigrants through connection—and whether we can envision or even reclaim rest as a priority in our everyday lives. She looks into active rest through physical activity and passive rest through slower, stiller pursuits. The whole artwork is bathed in blue from part one, the large projected video of the sea, as well as textiles and painted wood. A large blue A-frame concludes part two of the installation, featuring videos cycling through moments of connection and gestures of affection, enjoyment, and even a moment of quiet comedy.

Using videos across multiple screens and a large projection, she conveys detailed sequences of the body at play, the mind at rest, repetitive motions and actions of kinship. Ana pairs her visuals with multiple soundscapes, one of which is reinterpreted notes from the berimbau, an instrument that is said to "cry" as it is played. With roots in Sub-Saharan Africa, the berimbau developed in Brazil with the transatlantic slave trade. Part three, an audio installation told in Portuguese by capoeirista Rilene de Sousa, walks visitors through the poetic origin story of this crying sound.

The berimbau itself appears visually throughout part two of the installation: in the space, suspended above a chair, and in the video set inside a large blue circle on the wall. This particular section of part two follows a reflection on the artist's own relationship with the Brazilian art form of capoeira, its history, and the moments of rest that occur. Jogo de Capoeira (the capoeira game) is practiced within a circle (roda), and now lives in the space within a circle of its own.

A multi-track soundscape presides over the whole installation. Created in collaboration with Julian Benavides and Pezão Angola, this audio component guides visitors through a cycle of varied rests. *ALMA* invites visitors to navigate a space between dream and reality, joy and stillness, connection and solitude—a world where loss exists just at the edges.

While the artists have each taken a different approach, certain commonalities have arisen. Both artworks use soundscapes that draw from symbolism and traditions rooted in the global south—specifically: Brazil, China, and Southeast Asia—to create layered, immersive experiences. The color blue wends its way through the different installations of both artists, playing with the many associations with blue: a myriad of religious traditions, superstitions, sadness, soothing, or even death. The artists use this space to reflect on rest as something active, or as something that morphs with context.

C. Grace Chang, Curator



About the Third Space Residency

to whom i direct my longing is the exhibition for our Third Space Residency this year, which focuses on QTBIPOC artists in Skåne. Though participants can have arts degrees, we choose not to focus on formal backgrounds. Instead, we select based on ideas, talent, and drive. The residency's overall aims are to create community and opportunity, and to nurture local talent.

The term “third space” is used by a few disciplines. Postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha uses it to describe the social and cultural in-betweenness that follows colonization. We use “third space” to reflect on the ways in which marginalized people form spaces where they are not only the ones being talked about—they're also the ones doing the talking.

Third Space Residency was created by Skånes konstförening's curator C. Grace Chang

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