

## **Art Exhibition: Let's get in touch. Art in the context of social responsibility**

**Introduction // Curators Speech from the Vernissage** (Dr. Beatrice Miersch, 29.08.2023, 7 p.m.)

Art improves health - it is now even medically prescribed in Scandinavian countries, Canada, and is brand new in the UK this year. Health ministries are working hand in hand with arts organizations to develop options that can effectively improve patients' health.

As research from the "International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health" shows, art can heal, decrease anxiety and worries, and enhance overall quality of life. When we engage with art and let it affect us, we become more creative in our minds and more attuned to our bodies. This leads to lower levels of stress hormones and blood pressure, as well as increased happiness.

For those who are truly captivated by art, the brain even enters a different mode. Brain researchers from the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics described in "Arts & Health" that the same brain regions are active as when daydreaming or making grand plans for the future. Singing, making music, dancing, designing, visual arts, and visiting exhibitions, museums, and concerts have all been proven to have a positive effect on well-being. This conclusion is also supported by a recent report published by the World Health Organization. More and more people are recognizing the benefits of bringing the arts and healthcare closer together. In France, the Musée du Louvre even equips hospitals with replicas of their art and sculptures for that reason.

So, Ratepay is in an environment conducive to powerful and empowering social and cultural engagement.

Being healthy - and becoming healthier - of course also concerns what we consume in the broadest sense: food, things we eat, hear, see, and do daily, and our interactions with others. How we talk to others, build relationships, take on responsibilities, and care for ourselves. So, becoming healthier involves our bodies, minds, and hearts. In this exhibition, we explore becoming healthier by getting in touch with ourselves and others in our own universe, as well as within the society in which we live.

For some, it's easier and more joyful to support others, to care for them and make the world a more thoughtful and loving space. Others are able to reflect upon their role within society, as represented by their actions and relationships with others.

This exhibition explores both approaches.

I suggested Noé Borst and Ira Brana to the Sustainability Team and CEOs for this Exhibition at Ratepay. Not only because they work with recycled materials and found objects, or as a support for newcomers - because they need all the support they can get - but also because they have a fantastic eye for our society and can express it in a way that allows interaction with their art on a daily basis. Your perception can change, the art will change, and you may even start to feel how you change too. Art can remind you to do so.

For me, that was important - thinking about the fact that you can see them daily in the office - or at home.

Born in 1990, Ira Brana had to leave her home country due to war and is currently based in Armenia. She has been involved in photography for almost 13 years. At the moment, she utilizes the kitchen in her rented apartment in Yerevan as her studio where she actually sets up all her still lifes and photographs them.

Noé Borst, born in 1994 in Paris, has just graduated in Painting from the Kunsthochschule Weißensee and also works as a graphic designer, producer, and animator for music videos and films - something which is strongly reflected in his paintings. His works were recently selected to be presented in a group exhibition called "Big City Baby, Young Art from Berlin" at the Center for Contemporary Art.

Both artists are fluent in English and also speak a bit of German – so they look forward to hearing from you too. Ira was not able to come, but I am sure Noé is open for conversations and questions - especially after his performance.

With Noé Borst, we look at other people - individually and en masse - observing how we perceive them, how it feels to be around people - specific people, random people, or a lot of people - on a daily basis. While commuting, being in the office, or during the hours we spend with our loved ones.

The project that forms the foundation of the works presented in this exhibition was born during the year of the pandemic in 2021, and it is a study revolving around the crowd as a collective entity. The painting in the next room serves as the amazing starting point.

The technical foundation for this is drawing using an uninterrupted line, a method that is reflected in all of Noé's works in this exhibition. This approach compels us to delve into the core of the object. When you stick to certain things, habits, routines, you get closer to what you really want to achieve, do, or feel. With Noé, this initial gesture - the never-ending line and the urge to get in touch - remains visible until the picture is complete. You can see it in the other painting on your way to the famous coffee machine.

And when you look at Noé's people - or those around you in this very moment - how does it feel to merge with them, standing close? Are you inside or outside of a group? What is the person next to you feeling? How does the person look at you? Where do you position yourself in the room with the other people? Sometimes it's unconscious how we decide or feel about all that - art can help bring that closer to you.

It's also the question of how do you want to be? Maybe even where do you want to be? Literally - maybe in the front row next time? Or metaphorically. In a mega city like Berlin, we meet new people daily and get the chance to be different, to act different. To be the cool kid or the nice and caring one, looking at sustainable aspects even more. It's not about trying hard for others or pretending to be someone else - it's about giving yourself the opportunity to start anew every day - even in the tiniest things.

And sometimes, it's nice to see people regularly - even on a daily basis like here in the office. They start to get to know your working self, maybe even little personal things and the way you act in the office - how you care about your work or the coffee.

With Ira Brana, we learn how to look at our daily lives through the representation of objects. Sometimes we recognize objects from our lives, sometimes we grasp their metaphorical meaning - their playful attitude or conceptual usage. Ira Brana's unique artistic language is a blend of experimentation and conceptual stylistic linearity while utilizing various colors and textures.

Ira Brana thinks and acts within her community and feels a deep connection with her environment - physically, mentally, and emotionally - while collecting objects and metaphors.

Within Ira's works, it's about the objects and also about textures, colors, materials - it's a wonderful, light, and playful merge between deep meaning as reflections of our society, daily routines, occasional finds in the street, or beloved objects from our homes or brought back from vacations. She loves to play, bringing joy and humor within these compositions.

So, the question arises: With which objects do we surround ourselves - what are we confronted with, in special places or here at the office?

What do we consume? Everything turns into representative objects after closer examination - a result of both us and our society.

You could also treat it as a study - observe your objects. What do they say about you? What do you want to communicate with them? Observe your objects and those of the people around you in society. On an actual level, but also as reminders of their

value, past, or current attitude. You could even make it an exercise later - choose three objects from your pockets or bags and tell a person you want to get to know better about them and what they stand for.

Afterward, you can also look together at Ira's still-life compositions.

Healing is, therefore, about our relationships - with ourselves and others. Art, like that of Noé Borst and Ira Brana, is an exciting, interesting, and wonderful way to feel happy and be mindful at the same time. It encourages us to think about social responsibility and our daily habits.

Well, we might not be in the Louvre or, thankfully, at a hospital, but I believe we all need some form of healing. That's why we've chosen to organize another exhibition at Ratepay. Here, I extend my special thanks to the art lovers and super supporters for art and the aspect of social responsibility: Nina Pütz and Sabrina Flunkert, Robert Stemmer, and especially Leon Fischer from the Sustainability Team.

All artworks are available for ownership – even those with a red dot next to their names. If you're lucky, there may still be availability in the small edition. The paintings - on wood and canvases - are unique, so you'll need to act fast if you've fallen in love. Just get in touch with @beatrice\_miersch or the Ratepay Sustainability Team. Even though the exhibition runs until February, you'll receive your artwork directly after purchase.

With this curated selection of artworks, we aim to support each of you on your journey to becoming happier, more socially engaged, to spark your curiosity, and to unleash your own inner creativity within your daily life.

Thank you to the amazing Ratepay team and the great artists!