

Networks for Connecting

Tsitra PARK & Shawn NAYAR

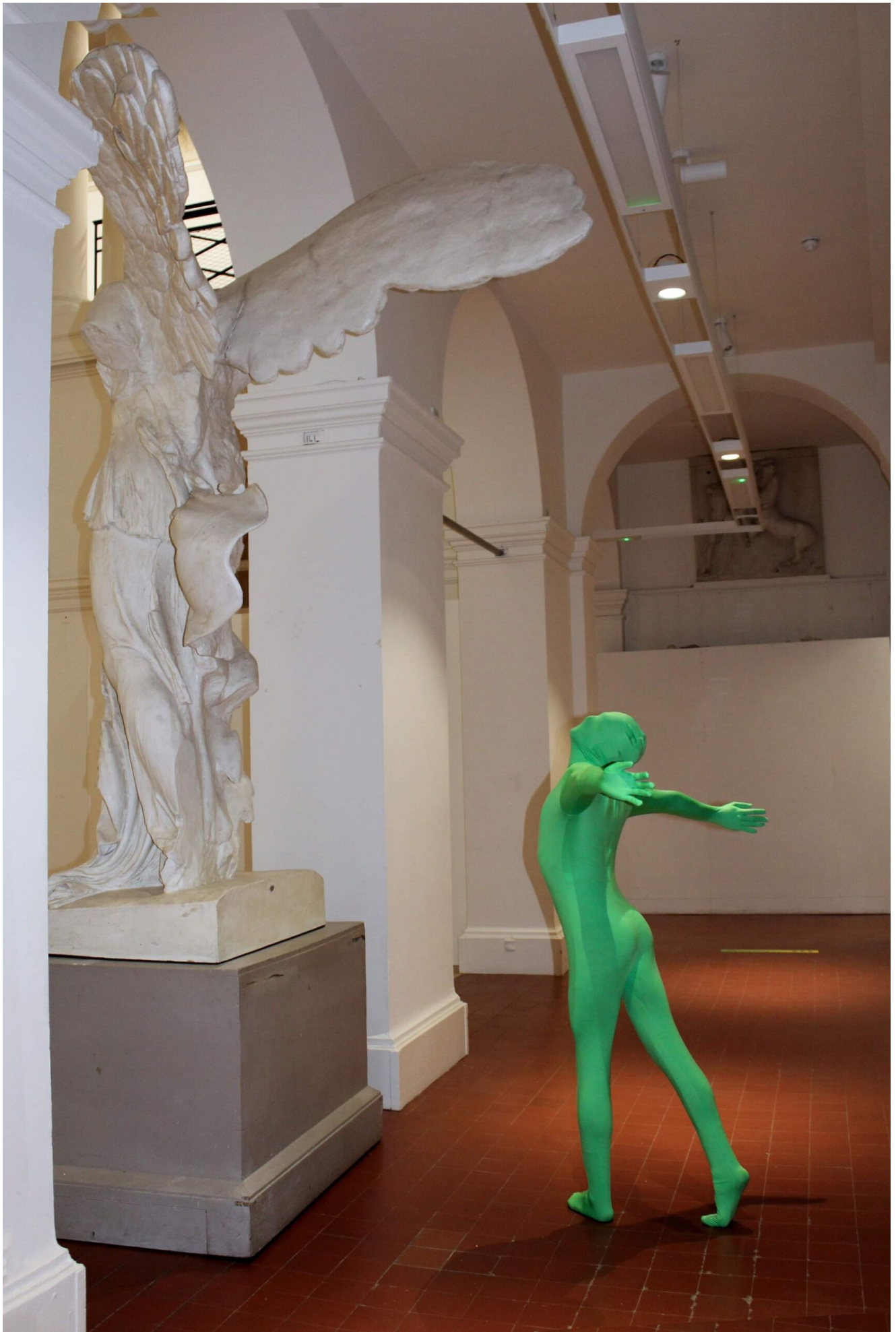
Shawn: “without the whirlwind of energy around me, I had to look inwards to find a way to drive me forward, and to translate that into an artwork that was accessible in this day and age. So transform all my work into digital work.”

Tsitra: “the biggest change to adapt to was making work internally, there was a lot of insular thinking, as opposed to being a part of something bigger. We are probably creating the most interesting dialogue in the every day, there are constant pivots and we are constantly aware of them.”

With a combined interest in communication and digital aesthetics, Tsitra Park and Shawn Nayar’s curatorial venture [INSERT ART HERE] develops emerging ideas and methods of making art to create an intimate and engaging experience in a time of isolation.

[INSERT ART HERE]





Curated by Shawn Nayar and Tsitra Park

Featuring: Claire Bath, Amelia Clark, Emmanuelle Garcia, Fiona Gordon, Ellie Home, Tabi Hull, Jesse Klassen, Roibí O’Rua, Katherine Stanley, Saffy Stott, and Rowan Walker.

[INSERT ART HERE] is an online exhibition hosted on Zoom. Between the 12th and the 14th of March, the event featured 13 artists across Europe and North America, each combining a green morph suit with Zoom green-screen technology to embody their work in new ways.

[INSERT ART HERE] website with more information that you can access here:

<https://insertarthere.cargo.site/>

Biography

Shawn Nayar is a practising artist and curator from India who is currently based in Newcastle upon Tyne. His practice traverses digital platforms and media to explore queer and erotic club culture. Amalgamating personal experiences from the club scene with a deeper exploration into the role of POC within the gay community, Shawn creates work to depict and engage a community isolated due to lockdown.

Tsitra Park negotiates dialogues of privacy and identity in the realm of social media, with work that interrogates the role of the individual and art-making in the digital context. Based in Edinburgh, they use their curatorial and art practice as a means by which to engage and unpack new contexts as art and artists adapt to an evolving world.

Shawn Nayar (Tyne) (Newcastle) (Queer) (erotic club)

Tsitra Park

Interview

Interviewer: Hello everyone, and welcome to R-Lab and our interviews. My name is Velia Cavallini and I'm here with Tsitra Park and Shawn Nayar, and I'll let them introduce themselves.

Interviewer: R-Lab Velia Cavallini Tsitra Park Shawn Nayar

Tsitra: Hi, I'm Tsitra Park, I'm currently based in Edinburgh, I am an artist and curator and I work with ideas of dialogue between social media and the public sphere at the moment. Together with Shawn Nayar we created [INSERT ART HERE].

Tsitra: Tsitra Park, Shawn Nayar [INSERT ART HERE]

Shawn: My name is Shawn Nayar. I am an artist from India who is currently based in Newcastle upon Tyne in England and my practice is really interested in queer culture, particularly in queer club culture. And I look and research and explore the place that people of colour have within the gay community and within this really vibrant culture. And yes, together with Tsitra we've worked really hard to create [INSERT ART HERE]

Shawn: Shawn Nayar. [INSERT ART HERE]
[INSERT ART HERE]
[INSERT ART HERE] [INSERT ART HERE]

I: For the first few minutes we're going to focus on your lives as and then we're going to go into discussing your artwork. So, how did you organize your life and your work during this pandemic?

I: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

S: I guess during this pandemic it was a lot about trying to find the artwork that drove me. Before I was surrounded in this really lovely chaos of the art world, there was um inspiration everywhere from art galleries to people around you and suddenly just being isolated and alone without all of this whirlwind of energy to keep driving you forward you have to have to look inwards to find a way to drive me forward. So it was a lot about studying myself and finding a way to translate that into artwork that was accessible in this isolated age so transforming my work into digital work.

S: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

T: I found that it took a little time to get used to work in the pandemic and I think my immediate response was to develop a sort of routine and just to do something, to create work and not necessarily think about what I was making, or what I was trying to make, and just doing. And that developed then into ideas.

T: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I: And what do you think is the biggest change that you had to go through, or the biggest change that you have found yourself stumbling into?

I: [REDACTED]?

T: I'd say that the biggest change has been the lack of everyday communication that you never really planned with people, the kind of the interactions when you'd just be in the studio and someone would walk past, or just on your daily

I: [REDACTED]?

S: Honestly, [INSERT ART HERE], and for me personally another project that I'm doing, Freaky Deeks. For both of them it's less about the work – the work is still amazing and I love what I've got out there – but what has really drawn me into it has been the audience, and the artist networks that we've created, so the places where artists can talk together, create work together, collaborate, talk. And even audiences, using platforms to see our work but to also talk amongst each other. So, I think that's what I'm most proud of, creating the networks between audiences and artists, for sure.

S: [REDACTED][INSERT ART HERE], [REDACTED]Freaky Deeks[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

T: I think that would stand for both of us. [INSERT ART HERE] has been a big part of both of our works this year, it has kind of transformed the way that our own individual practices work, but also the way that we interact with others. And I feel like the idea has caused others to kind of have a bounce point as well and to reconsider their own practice. And we've had a lot of feedback from that which has felt really great. So, I'd say that's what we're both most proud of, hence why we wanted to put forwards for R-Lab.

T: [REDACTED] [INSERT ART HERE] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]"[REDACTED]"[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]R-Lab[REDACTED]

I: Thank you for that! So, you talked about [INSERT ART HERE]. When did you start working on it? And if you could just describe the project to me.

I: [REDACTED]! [REDACTED] [INSERT ART HERE] [REDACTED]? [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

T: We started it and it was kind of an idea that originated back November (2020). We were just thinking, what can we do with this new space? I was so frustrated about this constant thing 'well it's not real exhibition space though' and 'oh you know when we get back to the whatever'. And it was just like, we knew we'd be in it for a while so, what can we do to create that sort of atmosphere that feels like it's a one-time only thing, that used to be there but whatever. And also, I was playing with this idea of the artist compared to the artwork and that relationship. So Shawn and I had a walk and we were brainstorming this idea, about what if we used like the green morph-suits and the Zoom technology – because we've been using Zoom so much – to kind of get the artist to embody their own work, so they become their own exhibition space. Because it felt like the artists will see their work anyway but it was interesting to play with that relationship, and then bring it to an audience on Zoom, which almost feels like an intimate platform as well, that doesn't replace or stand in for the physical exhibition space but it's something of its own accord.

T: 2020年11月...? ...“...”“...”... Shawn... — ... — ... Zoom...

S: Yeah, and I think as soon as Tsitra brought up these ideas, especially using Zoom in an unconventional way to bring audience and artists together, my mind instantly just went forward and I was like 'okay, this is such a great idea, it's so visually striking'. So, what really got me invested in the project were these really strong visuals and I was like 'I know how to take this forward, and how to reach our audiences'. So in my mind I was instantly thinking about crazy posters, with these green morph-suits, paired with high art,

or just our features in the green. So, what really sold me on the project was really the visual medium that we would use to bring our audience together. That was instantly what got me interested, and I guess it was like a snowball going down the hill. Tsitra just had this idea of using Zoom and I was like 'let's do this on social media!'. And these crazy ideas were just building and building and building until finally just became this big fascinating project that we just had to do something with!

S: [unclear]Tsitra[unclear]Zoom[unclear]
[unclear]"[unclear]"

[unclear]'[unclear]' [unclear]
[unclear]
[unclear]Tsitra[unclear]Zoom[unclear]
'[unclear]!'. [unclear]!

I: And you worked with quite a few artists, right?

I: [unclear]?

T: Yeah! We worked with 13 artists between Europe and North America, it was was great experience being able to meet new people in that way, and share ideas.

T: [unclear]! [unclear]13 [unclear]

I: Did you all know each other before or did you just collect new artists along the way?

I: [unclear]?

S: It was a lovely mix of both. We had an open call which we distributed amongst our university, but also on Instagram and Facebook. So, we had people that we knew applying and we also had people who we had no idea about applying from Brussels and from North America, and we were so fascinated by this response. It was a really interesting mix of people that we knew but also people we had no idea about. And no matter what

level we knew them at, being able to relate to this idea of wanting to create art really helped to create this awesome starting point to build a really interesting dialogue with them.

S: Instagram Facebook

I: And how did you coordinate with them? Did you have set instructions or was it just 'okay, it's going to be green screen technology' and then you left artistic freedom to all of them?

I: " " "

T: We gave them a lot of freedom; they developed the idea with us really. We kind of started the project wanting it to be a collaboration, we had this idea to embody your own artwork, but immediately you put it out to people and you get ideas that you didn't have before. People wanted to use green paint, green clothes, and we thought as long as it's your body so that you're still embodying it and not taking it away from that, then beyond that people really went a bit wild. And that's why you've got such a range of artworks in it, which is really great. It was so exciting to see where people would take it.

T: ;

S: Yeah, because I think as soon as we started getting applications in from the open call, and people with their really interesting ideas beyond just the morph-suits, like as Tsitra said green paints green clothes and different ways of embodying their artwork through performance, through digital paintings, I think we just didn't realize that this could be

so much more. So, we did everything we could to really help the artists to reach their own vision, we did a whole bunch of research as to how we can use Zoom, we looked into webinars, we looked into green screen, the best way to people for up to upload their work, to record their work. Essentially we aimed to provide as much support to our artists as we could, showing them all the options available and discussing their work with them and being and then find out 'this will work best with your work', and then watching them take it forward. So it was just a really interesting back and forth to seeing the artist's ideas and then talking about the platform and how to take it forward, to seeing the work really grow.

S: Tsitra Zoom

I: That's fantastic. So, of course this as an artwork, as a project is strictly connected to the pandemic because we have the technology we've been using, and it's all online. Do you think that something similar could have come up in a non-pandemic situation? In an alternative timeline, basically. Or do you think that – of course it would have been different but – would you have had the original thought if not for this global situation?

I:

T: I think it could have emerged, but I don't know if it would have. There's a great connection of this kind of green suit to digital, and I just know personally, I knew Shawn was using kind of digital platform so it's definitely something that I was perhaps progressing into, but the pandemic shot me into thinking this is actually maybe the most useful thing to be

doing rather than faffing about with other mediums. So I don't know, I think it may have emerged but perhaps a little bit later.

T: [REDACTED]

S: I think definitely, at least from my personal perspective about creating artworks. At least for me it was a lot about creating our artworks for a space. So knowing that we've got this physical space, how do we fill this, how do I put my digital arts into the space? For [INSERT ART HERE] if not for the pandemic we definitely would have considered a physical space like 'okay so we've got this green screen technology, how do we translate this to a gallery space? Do we show our screen on the wall?' So it definitely would have been this digital idea, but rooted in the physical. And [with] the pandemic we decided to just do away with all of that, because especially for this idea it was a lot about the digital. So we did away with one extra step and allowed us to focus on what we really want to get across.

S: [REDACTED] [INSERT ART HERE] [REDACTED]

I: Have your feelings about art changed since your first encounter with it? And has it changed with the pandemic?

I: [REDACTED]?

S: I've definitely been exploring new mediums, even though before the pandemic I was exploring digital art it was more about all right how do I transform this, how do I put this into a gallery space. But now because of the pandemic we've had to use new platforms rather than the gallery space to show

our work. From there my work has been a lot about using platforms, and then transforming platforms as well, so using a platform as a medium, manipulating it to become an artwork.

I think definitely the pandemic has really encouraged me to look at new mediums, especially digital mediums, and look for ones which aren't necessarily our mediums. So, even looking at platforms and things which you won't really consider something you can manipulate in an artistic way, I really push myself to create something new in this new digital world.

S: [REDACTED]

T: I think for me personally I found that I've been really questioning the role of art, rather as in the public sphere but bringing that then into the private, and where does it stand there, and what's its use and purpose, and how do we interact with it when you know it's from your own home and in your own personal environment. And also the role of the artist and curator, and the interaction of public and private sphere, and all the different roles of art as a way of expressing emotions. But also as an audience member, how do you receive it on a personal level. And so it's just been questioning that and how we can play with context in relation to that.

T: [REDACTED]

I: Yeah because I suppose that the pandemic has accelerated everything, because for years now we've been moving towards the digital world, but it has accelerated everything. And now of course we are kind of forced to have everything online, in this very weird space that doesn't really exist.

I: [REDACTED]

S: Because technology advances so quickly, so these objects like VHS and CDs, it becomes this peak and then just recedes and disappears, and now it's become completely digital in this world that it doesn't really exist it's not physical. I guess the pandemic really helped to acknowledge these new objects and these new mediums and materials which don't exist in the physical realm, but because of the pandemic we had to use them and sort of encourage the new way of thinking and approaching art and objects.

S: [REDACTED]

T: It's all about what you notice and what your way of thinking is, because compared to, rather than a physical object, it's interesting because it's becoming more about ideas and art as a way of sharing ideas, and art as a way to propel technology as well.

T: [REDACTED]

I: Where do you think [INSERT ART HERE] stands in this? Because of course you have the artists basically disappearing into their own work.

I: [REDACTED] [INSERT ART HERE] [REDACTED]?

T: Yes and no. I would say it's a relationship between the art and the artwork. The artist is very much present in the piece because it's through their shape, through their form that you experience the artwork. So I think in a way the audience sees the artist more than they would have otherwise. And I think Zoom as a platform, as I mentioned I think it's quite intimate, because I never really facetedimed people before the

pandemic if I wasn't particularly close with them, and I still think that people do think it's a bit odd to be face to face with someone on a call. There's something about it that feels kind of close, and we're all getting used to it now but I think there's still a bit of that in [INSERT ART HERE] and we tried to show that with the private slots. We had private sessions where the artists would have a much smaller audience, and you feel like you're able to converse with them a bit more, or you experience that human to human rather than being in a white empty room with just a piece of artwork and a silent artist.

T: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Zoom [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [INSERT ART HERE] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

S: And I guess another way of putting it would be that initially you'd have the artist and the artwork, and usually they would exist as two different entities. You have the artwork that exists in the gallery space which is up for purchase, and you see the artwork a different way, and the artist you'd approach a different way they explore their work through this and they talk about it. So they exist as two quite different entities, I guess with [INSERT ART HERE] we really wanted to focus on the creation and the unity of both of them. Through [INSERT ART HERE] using Zoom we are able to embrace the relationship between the artists and the artwork, so how they see their work, how they react to their work. And it just became this fluid amalgamation of the two. And which the digital world allowed us to represent and showcase.

S: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [INSERT ART HERE] [REDACTED] [INSERT ART HERE] [REDACTED] Zoom [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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