



“None of you
shall go out of the door
of his house...”

“...he will see the blood on the
top and sides of the doorframe
and will pass over that
doorway, and he will not permit
the destroyer to enter your
houses and strike you down.”



VOGUE

Jean Paul Mira & Camille Locht

“*Ring de vaccination*”



I feel as
if collage is
having a
moment...

I feel as if collage is
having a special moment during
this lockdown. Artists, being unable
to reach their studios, preferred
tools and materials are forced to
shift. and in this ingenuity are
returning to the basics.

activities and practices that have
shifted with different time frames
attached have come to the fore
with this different treatment of
lockdown time. There is a time of
the hands. There is a kneading,
there is a --- There is collage

#Bodymatter

I usually work in the Public.

Till now Public Art had become one of the few ways in which I felt I could navigate the city's open spaces safely and without awkwardness. After a narrow escape from a violent mugging three years ago my movements had changed significantly. My own forced absences from the outside world make me wonder about how "the others" are dealing with forced isolation. 3 months of legally enforced social distancing have also forced me to wonder about what lies next.

As with most of my life experiences I turn to art again as a means for sense-making of this period of discontinuity or "gap" in the social "order." It's so early in this interregnum that my interest still lies in the questions about moving forward or even contemplating whether I want to go back outside before building the courage to do so. This is me coming to terms with how I now have to behave. In 2017 after my withdrawal I came across "Tokyo!" a collection of movies released in 2008 by Blackout Films. I was initially looking for more of Michel Gondry's movies but it wasn't Gondry's little feature that struck me the most. It was Bong Joon-ho's "Shaking Tokyo" which had suddenly given me new language for the complex depression I had been dealing with not just for the last short period but for years. Joon-Ho had introduced me to the word Hikikomori which referred to Japanese adolescents and adults those who withdraw from society and seek extreme degrees of isolation and confinement. I felt like someone understood.

The habits of Hikikomori echo my own but as a South African man bordering on 40 years of age there are distinct exceptions. South African society,

for all of its flaws, is built on the spirit of the Zulu word "Ubuntu". Ubuntu's Xhosa language parallel is the expression, "umntu ngumntu ngabantu" with an English translation reading: "I am because we are." This rooting of one's identity as a human in the connection to community means that claiming Hikikomori goes against my very grain. Living in Bellville, Cape Town even when I am self-isolating I cannot escape the busyness which is inseparable from life within a Central Business District. From the window of my small apartment I hear the footfalls of passersby; I hear Heirut Bekele's lilting melodies and the parents queuing around the block to register their newborns' identities early in the morning serve as my alarm clock. I hear the man who was selling car window-wipers before shout, "Cigarettes, Cigrattes!" in response to the demand for contraband goods. People want cigarettes and not wipers, it seems. Hikikomori are often supported by their parents – a luxury to which I am ignorant. As one of the self-employed blue collar masses in this country I am forced outside to find my livelihood. But I share this difference without any judgement. I share it only to point out the key differences between my situation and those in Japan with whom I feel a kinship despite the fact that I will probably never meet them... A bond of closeness between people who are apart and isolated.

In my isolation I set about making. One of the few ways I know how to process the world. I started weaving new sculptural work thinking about what was happening beyond my street and so during the lockdown declared on 23 March 2020 I recalled someone else who also withdrew...like me. ..like the Hikikomori.

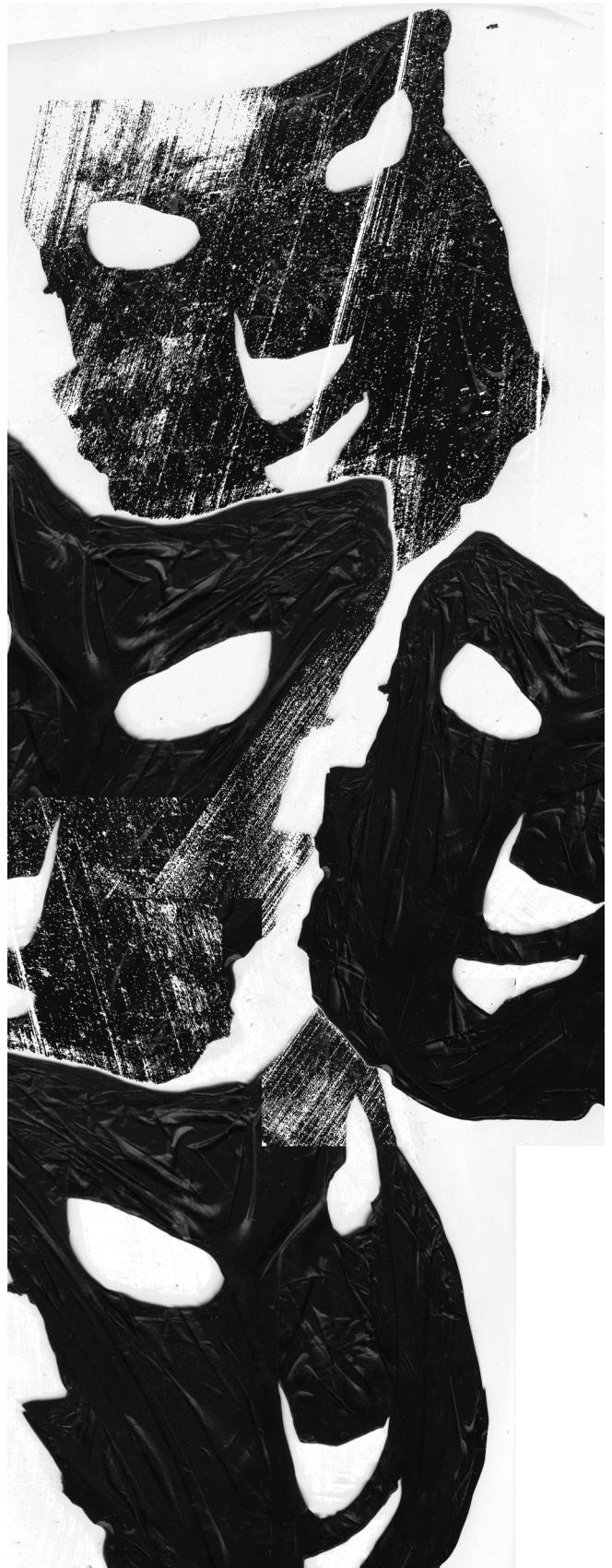
Martin Margiela was already a bit reclusive during his fashion career. To the aficionados of fashion worldwide it's a well known fact that he never once showed his face during his 20 year career. In the documentary, Margiela in his own words, he says of his own almost-invisibility: "I don't like the idea of being a celebrity. Anonymity is very important to me. Anonymity for me was a protection. I always wanted to have my name linked to the product I created, not to the face I have." One of his most recognizable signatures was the use of masks on his models. Aside from saving money in the usage rights from seeing models' faces he maintained that hidden faces ensured that the viewer's attention would not be distracted from the garments.

On Sept 29th, 2008 Martin Margiela left the fashion industry dumbstruck by vanishing from the fashion world. It happened on the 20th anniversary celebration show of Maison Margiela in Paris, at what must have been a high point in his career he formally left fashion. His departure threw the community inside Maison Margiela into disarray and disillusionment. The biopic, Margiela in his own words, serves a little highlights package of Margiela's career but in its construction of this retrospective narrative the documentary also methodically outlines the accumulating factors contributing to Martin's departure from the House carrying his name. Margiela's choice to self-isolate was for the sake of his creative soul – willing even to forsake symbols of his name for the sake of his mental health.

Martin Margiela at 53:00 minutes into the biographical documentary Margiela in his own words:

"I felt very strange, I got depressed."

This disillusionment reverberates throughout the documentary and speaks of Hikikomori sekentei. While Margiela is now revered he was disillusioned by the expectations and public critique, the constant chattering of the doyens of fashion who









I will not romanticize trauma
I will not romanticize trauma
I will not romanticize trauma

I will not romanticize trauma
I will not romanticize trauma

never draw the soap lines and who's hands don't hold the scissors to cut the pattern. Even after his absence from the industry we don't see Martin's face but we see his hands –still dextrous, still innovating instinctively – all of this apparent through the little glimpses of creativity throughout the doccie. Even in seclusion, hands active in their labour.

Martin Margiela's disillusionment with the culture in the fashion world is surely resonant with the same disillusionment which raised its head during the 2020 Blacklivesmatter protests. The global protests, ignited by the murder of George Floyd at the knee of Minneapolis police on May 25, 2020 was accompanied by many statements both online and in the tangible world. The disillusionment here is linked to the type of behaviour characterized by Anna Wintour's limp, self serving apology. In the wake of growing public anger Wintour, who had been at the head of Vogue magazine since 1988, issued the 'buck-passing' apology that "Vogue has not found enough ways to elevate and give space to Black editors, writers, photographers, designers and other creators."

Wintour's apology passes for nothing more than performative wokeness which, supermodel, Joan Small says, "claim to be all about 'diversity and inclusivity'" but does not take responsibility for structural changes. After 32 years at the helm would this the most disingenuous apology really reflect Wintour's commitment to implementing necessary reforms on par with her reputation as a pioneering fashion mind? The recent New York Times article by Ginia Bellafante critiques the apology as "a desperate grasp for relevance" and further details the systemic prejudices within Condé Nast's corporate culture.

In the case of Margiela and Hikikomori the disillusionment with societal pressures pushed a retreat from public whereas our current global battle with COVID-19 has done nothing to stop people filling public spaces all around the world with often very little social distancing being enforced. Even the selective enforcement of social distancing by

governmental authorities has come into question. By and large governments have urged their citizens to stay home, stay indoors. It is incredibly hard to stay indoors when your home, the key enabler for sheltering in place, is being torn down.

"On Friday 19 June 2020 City of Cape Town law enforcement officers arrived in Hangberg, Hout Bay to demolish structures which the City claimed were vacant. Footage of the destruction was posted on the Facebook page, "Hout Bay Complete", by residents documenting the action. In many of the video clips on the Facebook page the community members can be heard crying while their homes are being destroyed. Others can be heard trying to reason with police officers.

The Daily Maverick's article, By Vincent Cruywagen on 22 June 2020 point out that there are legal precedents and interim orders in place to prevent such evictions. While it is unclear whether there is a moratorium on evictions during this period The City of Cape Town's true face has been unmasked and its commitment to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and the welfare of their most vulnerable citizens is clearly in question. Two civil rights organizations, Ndifuna Ukwazi and Reclaim the City have in the meantime had zoom consultations with legal professionals on the topic "Can you be evicted during alert level 3 of lockdown?" and made the transcript freely available via a Google drive link.

But the protests, the disquiet and the conversations around African bodies (diasporic or otherwise) in relation to lockdown didn't start with Floyd's murder in Minnesota (Is it even safe to go outside?) Some would argue that the tinder was actually the video conversation between two French doctors- Paul Mira & Camille Locht where they nonchalantly suggested testing the covid-19 vaccinations on Africans just like the testing of AIDS vaccines on African Prostitutes. The remarks led to much outcry and said much about which

lives were expendable enough to carry the risk of injection with an untested vaccine.

My original intention with this project was to question how we, how I will emerge once we are legally allowed to move as freely as before. But as I wrote this the increase in the number of COVID-19 infections was not the only rapid change taking place. Disillusionment and incessant social injustice have accelerated forced emergencies and emergence in protest.

Conjoined crises seem to have found their moment for expression and while monumental issues are being thrust into the forefront of popular consciousness the questions that plague my neighbours and I are those day-to-day questions. Things like busses and minibus taxis to/from work taking even longer because of the social distancing being implemented in public transport. That means getting up earlier to be able to get a spot on the busses that were running on reduced schedules, and arriving back later than normal. Arriving back later than normal means for me and others having to deal once again with what I had to face in 2017 when public transport and I withdrew.

The only thing any of knows for certain about the way forward is we are globally trying to navigate our challenges related to health, movement and equitable social justice. We areall of us, now attempting cartography and a mapping for new ways of being /doing.

But the luxury of withdrawal is not something I can afford anymore. In my isolation I developed a back problem from all of the sitting one has to do when engrossed in the labour of admin, teaching and applications for work – all done online. One underestimates the importance of the back when you are younger but on the other side of 30 it is a reminder of your mortality.

While teaching university students online with three tennis balls wedged into your back you

look at the names of those who are missing from tutorials, the names of those students who cannot submit their assignments due to issues with data and connectivity. I cannot go out and protest but within myself I know that there is more to concern for students than starting my emails with “I hope you’re safe and well in these turbulent times.” While some hope to bring about change by adding their voices to the many picketing in the streets my work is with the youth and somebody, somebody like me needs to work alongside them, bridging the gap in this digital divide by being a good teacher. I cannot wash my hands of this.

This is where I am in all of this work.



TOUCH AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.



california guy now
@InternetHippo

I like how ads have gone from
"buy a toyota" to "this is a
difficult and uncertain time for
us all...buy a toyota"

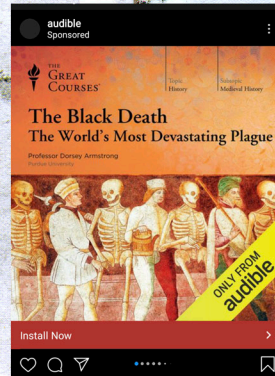


FUGEES
THE
MASK

JJ DOOM
WASH YOUR
HANDS

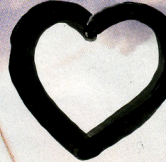
BILL MURRAY
GROUNDHOG
DAY

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Dr Doom
put on his
mask for the
first time due
to the highest scar.
When he put on the
mask the metal had not
cooled down yet and his
own delusions caused him to
scar himself beyond that first
bing scar.

Girl I felt so
alone inside so
I made a
Groundhog
Room





It's getting there. I
acquired so many plants
during this lockdown period

They oxygenate the
space. It also helps
if you talk to them
and touch them.

Something like a bibliography

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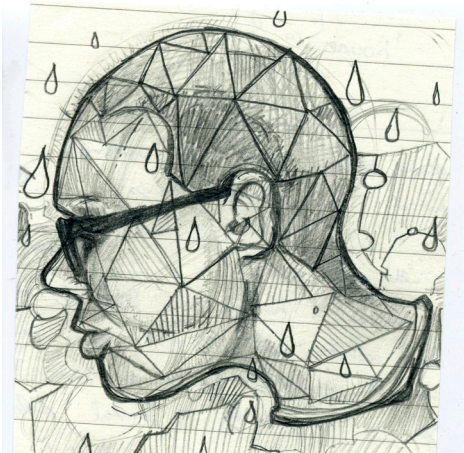
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Scott Eric Williams is a self-taught artist from Cape Town and 2019 Andrew Mellon Award winner. Williams uses diverse media, which includes sculpture, weaving, zines and Wheatpaste street art. Williams creates with an intention to contemplate experiences of migration, land, hope and trade. He has exhibited at Eclectica Contemporary, Gallery MOMO, Geumgang Nature Art Biennale and UCT Michaelis – amongst others. His other work includes Youth Facilitation at The District Six Museum, and writing for various digital and print platforms.

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