

disCONNECT – A ‘LOCKED-DOWN’ ARTIST TAKEOVER

Schoeni Projects & HKwalls present an urban art ‘takeover’
 in a South London townhouse in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
 In person: 24 July – 24 August 2020
 Online: from 31 August 2020



Mr Cenz, Installation view *disCONNECT* at Schoeni Projects, London (2020), photo: Nick Smith

Schoeni Projects and *HKwalls* are pleased to present *disCONNECT*, an exhibition transforming a South London townhouse with new site-specific artwork from ten artists, working across seven countries. The exhibition opens in-person from 24 July – 24 August and online from 31 August, 2020.

Full list of participating artists:

Adam Neate (UK); Aida Wilde (Iran); Alex Fakso (Italy); Mr.Cenz (UK); David Bray (UK) Herakut (Germany); Icy and Sot (Iran); Isaac Cordal (Spain); Vhils (Portugal); Zoer (Italy).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the exhibition is adapted to not only adhere to lockdown restrictions, but also to reflect on the creative and physical constraints of the current global crisis, exploring the psychological and political ramifications, as well as the role of technology as a conduit between the two. Starting 31 July, audiences can access *disCONNECT* online through Matterport, a platform which allows visitors to tour the space virtually. Each work is further activated through an accompanying programme of digital initiatives, including downloadable artwork, online videos, and an Instagram Live interview series. The project also urges the collaborative efforts of the public through submission of their own art.



Aida Wilde, Installation view *disCONNECT* at Schoeni Projects, London (2020), photo: Ian Cox

London-based artists Aida Wilde, Alex Fakso, David Bray and Mr Cenz create their site-specific pieces within the space, whilst adhering to UK social distancing guidelines. Repositioning one of the house's toilets as a 'pandemic mausoleum' complete with Emoji wallpaper, Wilde presents her signature text works on paraphernalia including t-shirts and hats, with slogans sharing reactions to the pandemic – some the artist's own ('FEAR LESS LESS FEAR'), others sourced through social media outreach ('99% of us are in this together'). Surrounded by everyday objects which have become totemic of the contemporary climate - toilet roll tubes donated by neighbours, discarded objects from "lock-down" spring cleaning and bottles of bleach sourced locally from the independent manufacturer Zamo – the works are presented alongside hazard tape, demarcating 'socially distanced' two metre intervals. In an adjoining storeroom is her *Pandemik Panik Room*, which comprises of posters from her neighbourhood community print making workshop, held prior to her residency at the house.

In a nearby hallway, Mr Cenz's mural *Inside Out* expands the ordered patterns and colours from the house's tiled floor into a fantastical blend of photorealism, illustration and graffiti lettering, reflective of his many street works which decorate the city of London. Upstairs in the 'master bedroom', Fakso presents new photography-based works reflecting on isolation and the pandemic. Images of crowds taken during the artist's travels (before the pandemic) are presented alongside found archive portraiture. In an adjoining bedroom, Bray's landscape paintings provide a means of escapism for audiences, whilst they remain restricted from physically travelling. Responding to a personal need for escape, which he felt more than ever, Bray creates imaginary views of the outside world, finding peace with an inner journey.

Artists creating remotely include Vhils, whose bas-relief carving technique transforms the house's library doors, received, and worked on during lockdown in his Lisbon studio. Sao Paulo-based Adam Neate also creates works on the house's window blinds, shipped to his studio - some 'positive propaganda' text works, others show torturous figures bearing extreme isolation.

Cordal's new miniatures, placed throughout the house, respond directly to global images of the pandemic; a man in his dressing gown stands alone within a bird's cage, whilst a quarantined masked couple appear both socially and emotionally distanced on their sofa, eyes fixated to phone screens.



Left: Isaac Cordal, Installation view *disCONNECT* at Schoeni Projects, London (2020); photo: Nick Smith
 Right: Zoer, Installation view *disCONNECT* at Schoeni Projects, London (2020); photo: Nick Smith

Iranian born, Brooklyn-based, arts duo Icy & Sot's kitchen-based installation is modelled on a discarded table found within the unrenovated house. Titled *Socialism vs Capitalism* (2020), the folding table is now complete with two folding table places: the plates and cutlery split and hinged so they too move with the tabletop. The work reflects on the often-debilitating effects of capitalism on the poor, here represented through the most basic of human needs: food.

Berlin-based artist duo HERAKUT's cardboard installation *Silent Battle* (2020) presents children engaged in various competitive games against an assortment of characters. Suggestive of an imaginary world conjured up to combat childhood isolation, the work also proposes that seclusion does not impede personal growth: '*spending time challenging yourself holds the opportunity to become a better version of yourself - hopefully a nicer, kinder and more appreciative self*', the artists explain.

Zoer's piece *A Case Study of a House* (2020), presents an anamorphic installation created through a 'barricade' of domestic objects and furniture stacked within the space. Highlighting both the reality and futility of partitions, the works symbolise the 'shield' of objects and material possessions used to evoke social or emotional 'distance' to others.



Zoer, *School*, Acrylic on Japanese paper, 32 x 47 cm, 2020,
 photo: Ian Cox, courtesy the artist, HKwalls, and Schoeni Projects

Following the exhibition's run in London, this collaboration will, as the works travel to Hong Kong in late 2020, to be presented alongside a dedicated programme of dialogues and discussions on artistic expression and the current pandemic, led by Hong Kong-based artists.

Nicole Schoeni, Schoeni Projects Director, comments:

"Schoeni Projects is the exciting next chapter in my family's commitment to facilitating cross-cultural collaborations between Asia and Europe. Building on this legacy, my new venture expands beyond the confines of the typical gallery model. I had always wanted to mark this with an unconventional show – namely a street-art takeover before we are set to renovate Schoeni Projects' future home. Now, confronted with the pandemic, the adaptable and topical practice of this artistic medium has become integral to the project's fruition. My hope is that, whilst reflecting my father's philosophy and unique joie-de-vivre, through Schoeni Projects London and Hong Kong we will also provide distinctly new and dynamic spaces, which offer a truly contemporary hub for artists and art lovers to meet, engage and collaborate."

Artist Mr Cenz comments:

"At a time where we have been disconnected from our friends and family my work is about the importance of connecting internally with your imagination, creativity, and aesthetic pleasures in order to maintain a positive mental health. This ability to be at one with yourself, think positively and have hope for the future is fundamental in our ability to cope and rebuild our lives."

Artist Isaac Cordal comments:

"The proposal for this exhibition came before the pandemic, but the virus and its side effects were the protagonist of the production process; freedom of movement is restricted as well as access to materials. With all this it was necessary to make a mixture of works that whispered to our present concerns about the future."

I was surprised that many topics I had worked on in the past became more relevant to the current confinement itself; events were accelerating, creating a vertigo of the unknown. Our relationship with isolation, social distancing, the balcony as a panopticon, the romanticization of the confinement ...the news of the day invades everything. An invisible enemy became our roommate, like an annoying squatter for the welfare society. Turn everything off but wash your hands."

About Schoeni Projects

Based across London and Hong Kong, *Schoeni Projects* is a new contemporary arts space promoting and celebrating cross-cultural exchange through an innovative series of collaborations, presented in unique creative environments. Founded by Nicole Schoeni, Schoeni Projects focuses on two initiatives each year – with an outlook from 'West-to-East' and 'East-to-West'.

Schoeni Projects London, opening with a soft launch in July 2020 before its full opening in summer 2021, serves as both creative exhibition space and collaborative forum for the development of ideas and inspiration. An Artist in Residency programme and artist studio space are currently in development. Schoeni Projects HK opens in November 2020 in Hong Kong's vibrant Wong Chuk Hang neighbourhood. The space presents Schoeni Projects' commercial focus, committed to offering infrastructure and support in promoting and developing the careers of emerging and established international artists and collaborators.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the London location is open by appointment only.

[Schoeniprojects.com](https://schoeniprojects.com) / @schoeniprojects

About Nicole Schoeni

Nicole Schoeni is an art dealer and director of Schoeni Projects – an art space and collaborative platform with bases in London and Hong Kong - dedicated to promoting contemporary art and cross-cultural exchange between East and West. Previous to the launch of Schoeni Projects, Nicole was the director of her late father's Schoeni Art Gallery, one of Asia's most influential art venues, pivotal in the development of a generation of Chinese contemporary artists and a prestigious hub of the Hong Kong art world. Nicole has also worked as a curator and consultant on international arts projects, sits on the committee for The 14th Factory and is an active patron of Sovereign Art Foundation and Asia Art Archive.

About HKwalls

HKwalls is a non-profit arts organisation and annual street art festival which launched in 2014 with the goal of creating opportunities for local and international artists to showcase their work in Hong Kong and abroad. HKwalls celebrates creativity, originality, and freedom of expression; actively building relationships with artists, the community and organisations worldwide whilst making the creative process accessible to all.

HKwalls' annual street art festival takes place each March during Hong Kong Arts Month and features 30-40 artists painting in the streets of Hong Kong. The festivals' supplemental events and HKwalls' year-round programming focuses on community engagement, artists' career development and raising awareness through the arts.

About the artists

Adam Neate is a British painter and conceptual artist described by The Telegraph in 2008 as "one of the world's best-known street artists". He specialises in painting urban art on recycled cardboard and has left thousands of works in the street for anyone to collect.

Aida Wilde is an Iranian born, London based printmaker/visual artist and educator. Wilde's predominately screen-printed installations and social commentary posters have been featured on city streets around the world and are responsive works on gentrification, education & equality.

Alex Fakso, born in Italy, started out as a graffiti and skateboard photographer in the early '90s. His interest in photography led to studying it at the Arts Institute of Cittadella (Padova / Italy). Taking photos for over ten years, he quickly broadened his horizons and now takes photos with analog as well as digital cameras, colour, and black & white, yet all coined by his own particular style.

Mr. Cenz is a London based graffiti artist who has been scribbling on surfaces since 1988. Working from portrait photographs he creates futuristic and mysterious compositions, which portray strong and spiritual women. Fusing together photorealism, illustration and graffiti, his distinctive style layers intricate and flowing letterforms, shapes and line work in a uniquely rhythmic way. His work has been described as "surrealist graffiti art for the soul".

David Bray has been working as an illustrator since his graduation from Central St. Martins London in 1992. His collaboration with photographer Tim Bret Day for the Harvey Nichols campaign 'HN on Earth' is in the permanent poster collection at the Louvre, Paris. He has been exhibiting as an artist since 2006, with solo shows in London, Los Angeles, Portland and in group shows across Hong Kong, Tokyo, Paris, Amsterdam and more.

HERAKUT is a Berlin-based artist duo, founded in 2004 when Jasmin Siddiqui (born 1981), aka HERA, and Falk Lehmann (born 1977), aka AKUT, merged their synonyms as well as their artistic styles.

Even though their techniques and approach are rooted in the subculture of graffiti, their home is in urban contemporary or street art; they are renowned for painting large-scale murals all over the world, the biggest ones being located in Odinzowo, Russia, in Sao Paolo, Brasil, in Miami, USA, and in Berlin.

Saman Oskouei (born 1985) and Sasan Oskouei (born 1991) know as **ICY and SOT** are artists from Tabriz, Iran, currently residing in Brooklyn, New York. The two brothers started making their marks in the streets of Iran in 2006. Through their unique visual language, they have been delivering powerful, moving statements on the present-day human condition, tackling important issues such as human rights, detention, women's rights, the plights of migrants and refugees, climate change, or the pitfalls of capitalism.

Isaac Cordal (born 1974) is a Spanish artist who since 2006 has placed miniature sculptures in public places around the world as part of an on-going series called *Cement Eclipses*. He lives and works across Brussels and Galicia.

Portuguese visual artist Alexandre Farto aka **Vhils** (b. 1987) has developed a unique visual language based on the removal of the surface layers of walls and other media with non-conventional tools and techniques. His work presents symbolic reflections on identity, exploring the relationship of interdependence between people and the surrounding environment, and life in contemporary urban societies, as well as the impact of development, the passage of time, and material transformation. Having begun to interact with the urban environment through the practice of graffiti in the early 2000s, Vhils has been hailed as one of the most innovative artists of his generation.

Zoer was born in Stromboli in 1985. Working on street murals internationally, his artistic language cultivates paradox; a violent subject can resonate with the delicacy of the render – precision justifying disorder, realism approaching utopia. Travelling the world for painting, he settles within a landscape, imbuing it with a new point of view. Zoer has a master degree as product designer from Strate School of Design, 2008. His work has been exhibited at Kaikaikiki Gallery in Tokyo, Vancouver Art Museum and museum of contemporary art of Lyon. He is collected by the artist Takashi Murakami. In 2017 & 2018 he was curator of 2KM3 Contemporary Art Platform.

Notes to editors

Title: *disCONNECT – A Locked-down Artist Takeover*

Date: 24 July – 24 August 2020 (Wednesday – Sunday, 11-5pm)

Address: Near Clapham Common (further info on request)

Website: hkwalls.org, www.schoeniprojects.com

Social Media: HKwalls [@hkwalls](https://twitter.com/hkwalls); Schoeni projects [@schoeniprojects](https://twitter.com/schoeniprojects); / #disCONNECT

#disCONNECTldn #disCONNECTwalloffame #artduringapandemic

Artists' socials: Adam Neate [@adam_neate](https://twitter.com/adam_neate); Aida [Wilde] [@aida_wilde](https://twitter.com/aida_wilde); Alex Fakso [@alexfakso](https://twitter.com/alexfakso);

Mr.Cenz [@mrcenzone](https://twitter.com/mrcenzone); David Bray [@david_bray](https://twitter.com/david_bray); Herakut [@herakut](https://twitter.com/herakut); Icy and Sot [@icyandsot](https://twitter.com/icyandsot); Isaac

Cordal [@isaaccordal](https://twitter.com/isaaccordal); VHILS [@vhils](https://twitter.com/vhils); Zoer [@zoerism](https://twitter.com/zoerism).

To respect physical distancing restrictions, time slots must be booked in advance:

<https://hkwalls.org/disconnect-london-a-locked-down-artist-takeover-en/#tickets>

<https://schoeniprojects.com/tickets/>

For high resolution press photographs, please contact: maria@hkwalls.org