

HKWALLS PARTNERS WITH SCHOENI PROJECTS FOR THEIR LAUNCH
IN THE UK AND HONG KONG

disCONNECT - A 'LOCKED-DOWN' ARTIST TAKEOVER

Schoeni Projects, a New London / Hong Kong arts platform, and HKwalls present an urban art
'takeover' in a London townhouse - responding to the COVID-19 pandemic
24 July – 24 August 2020



Isaac Cordal, *Social Distancing Since 2003* (2020), Polyurethane Resin, courtesy the artist

HKwalls is pleased to be collaborating with Schoeni Projects, a new contemporary arts platform based in London and Hong Kong, promoting and celebrating cross-cultural exchange through an innovative series of collaborations, presented in unique creative environments. Founded by Nicole Schoeni, Schoeni Projects will focus on two initiatives each year – with an outlook from 'West-to-East' and 'East-to-West'.

This partnership is the inaugural exhibition at Schoeni Projects' London space, a Victorian townhouse in South West London, which opens online and by appointment 24 July – 24 August 2020. Titled *disCONNECT*, the exhibition transforms the period building with new site-specific works from ten urban artists working across seven countries, including Alexandre Farto, aka 'Vhils' (Portugal), Aida Wilde (Iran) and Isaac Cordal (Spain).

Now opening during 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 psychological and political reactions to the crisis, as well as the role of technology as conduit between the two. Accessible to online audiences through Matterport software, each work is further activated through an accompanying programme of digital initiatives, including downloadable art works, online videos, virtual tours and an Instagram Live interview series. The exhibition also encourages the public to submit their own art works for potential inclusion.

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).

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 guidance. Repositioning one of the house's toilets as a 'pandemic mausoleum', Wilde presents her signature text works on wallpaper floor lino and 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 room, new works from Wilde's 'wallpaper poems' series, inspired by Christopher Wool, ask for 'RELEVANCE NOW'. This is accompanied by poetry from the artist and the poet Rumi - offering a glimpse into the artist's own psychological experience of the pandemic.

In a nearby hallway, Mr Cenz's work 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 and archive photography printed on vinyl across the walls, including a photographic installation incorporating an old artwork found within the house. In an adjoining bedroom, Bray's landscape paintings provide a means of escapism for audiences, whilst they remain restricted from physically travelling.

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 from his studio - some 'positive propaganda' text works, others show figures in moments of 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.

Iranian born, Brooklyn based, arts duo Icy & Sot's kitchen-based installation is modelled on a discarded table found within the house. Titled *Socialism vs Capitalism* (2020), the folding table is now complete with two folding place settings: 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 '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.

Following the exhibition's run in London, the works will travel to Schoeni Projects HK, to be presented alongside a dedicated programme of dialogues and discussions around artistic expression and the current pandemic, led by Hong Kong-based artists, in November 2020.

Nicole Schoeni, 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."

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.

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, both sites are currently closed to the public. Once safe to do so, the spaces will be open to all but by appointment only, in consideration of local residents.

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.

ARTISTS LINKS

Adam Neate – https://www.instagram.com/adam_neate/

Aida Wilde – <http://aidaprints.com/>

Alex Fakso – <http://www.fakso.com/>

Mr. Cenz – <https://www.mrcenz.com/>

David Bray – <http://www.davidbray.eu/>

Herakut – <http://www.herakut.de/>

Icy and Sot (Iran) – <https://icyandsot.com/>

Isaac Cordal (Spain) – <http://cementeclipses.com/>

Vhils (Portugal) – <https://www.vhils.com/>

ZOER (Italy) – <https://www.zoerism.com/>

PRESS CONTACT

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IMAGE DOWNLOADS

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W4cu3WYH1DQ6tAQaTsnolG-P4Pb-MkzG?usp=sharing>