

Nina Emge and DonChristian Jones

EN

Resonance

Curated by Kathy Battista

15.11.2024–04.01.2025

Resonance is an improvisational dialogue between two emerging artists who share similar themes and concerns in their work. Nina Emge (*1995) and DonChristian Jones (*1989), despite living and working on different continents, have much in common: practices rooted in collaboration and social transactions form the core of their artistic positions. Spanning installation, performance, sculpture, sound, and painting, Emge and Jones interrogate what art might be and resist a singular approach to their respective practices.

Emge lives and works between Zurich and Berlin. Her practice typically takes the form of sculptural installations that rely on collaboration and the participation of audience members. With a spirit of generosity and care, the artist creates objects and situations that are dependent on exchanges with invited collaborators as well as audience members. Jones was born and raised in Philadelphia and is now based in New York City. Their work flows organically from and between dance, music, performance art, and visual art. As an extension of their practice, Jones founded a community-based non-profit called Public Assistants during the COVID19 pandemic.

For *Resonance*, Emge created two new sibling sculptures that are based on *Reverberation*, an installation that she first presented at Lagos Biennale in 2024. *Reverberation or Unintended Consequence of an Event* are constructed from found objects and locally sourced materials: metal infrastructures feature hook-like shapes, from which hang old amplifiers that emit an emotionally charged soundtrack. Each element of these sound sculptures was created by the artist's hand. Emge welds the metal rods into forms that resemble arches with three legs, which could be interpreted as tents or places of refuge. Pieces of fabric that were stained with tumeric, natural dyes, or acrylic paint, result in tonal hues that create a painterly effect when combined. These bits of fabric are tied together and woven through smaller serpentine metal elements that help suspend the amplifiers. In places these scraps are festooned with tiny beads, which the artist found in Brazil and Berlin. This embellished cotton fabric resembles both skin and earth as it wraps around the solid speakers, creating a soft frame around the hard geometry and echoing the visual subject matter of Jones' work.

The aural element of *Reverberation or Unintended Consequence of an Event* is comprised of ambient music sampled from a track by American musician Dedekind Cut as well as poetry that is read by four different voices. The source poem is by Berlin based Duygu Açal and focuses on themes of friendship, love, and loss. Açal's poem is read by close friends of Emge's, who recorded the sound using voice messages, their usual form of communication. At times the voices work in harmony, yet they are each distinct. Over the course of the 52-minute loop, the friends' recitations move across the two speakers in alternations, join together, echo each other softly, and then form a cacophony. As the variance in accents brings novel inflections to the existing text, the visitor hears the poem repeated within the space, a palimpsest upon which new iterations formulate. The composition playing over the two speakers working in tandem can be understood as Emge's interpretation of the poem.

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Jannah had decided to stay with her sister. "Vigils get the best of me", she says. Jannah tells Aisha she couldn't tackle a single day after she had attended one. „My love", she would whisper to me confidently: „You know, I could always handle the pain, the grief, all the empty and weary faces. "Yet, what I would drown in every time we'd pass one of our beloved onto lighter spheres and souls, are the remains of the love actions that our families would forcefully impose on each other." The sudden phone calls, the presents from a trip to Turkey, the pictures on Instagram we'd get tagged on, the random "how-are-you's?" It would suck her dry. The journey of a loved-one would always be a reminder to my Hala. That we should try to love and hold each other with a compassion and honesty that is not only to be shown once our beloved has gone to other spheres. That's pathetic, self-righteous and simply a love that is not pure. She would rather have all her family members forget about each other, when she's dead, she tells Aisha, while handing me a coffee, stroking my hair.

Excerpt from *Kara*, written by author Duygu Ađal

For Emge, the poem was a vehicle to create a bridge between her closest supporters and her work. Ultimately, there are three perspectives at play: that of the writer, the artist's friends recording it, and Emge's translation of it.

Nine paintings by Jones surround Emge's installation. Situated in dialogue with her evocative installation, Jones' paintings revisit his training in oil painting as a student, a practice that was reprised after many years for this show. The series is predominantly figurative, with paintings of family and friends that are sourced from their iPhone. In *Karen Watching Akua at The Shed 2021* and *DCJ in Morgan's Light at Hauser & Wirth LA 2023* Jones paints moments from earlier performances, switching their role from participant to observer. The works move beyond documentation into the realm of interrogating subjectivity. Deeply personal in scope, these two works are painted in moody, vibrant, chiaroscuro with heavy contrast: the artist's white pant leg lifted mid-dance reflects the exuberant movement of the performance.

A friend of the artist is depicted in *Rafe's Gaze at The Whitney 2023*. Jones took the photograph as they and Rafe participated in a performance by Martine Gutierrez, another friend and chosen family member. In *Performance School Pyramid with Humans and Dog: Kate, DCJ, Kaur, Elise, Kristin, Monica, Colin, Halo 2024* and *DCJ Bobbing for Apples 2024* (where the artist is seen with platinum blonde hair) Jones paints joyful memories from a performance school in Maine where they lead intensive workshops. *Cape Cod Sunset (Emily's House)* shows a glorious sun that is setting and reflected in an infinity pool. Choosing to show glimpses of the artists, including themselves, at leisure speaks to the importance of play in an adult world. This group of paintings is also indicative of the community building that is so vital among LGBTQIA+ artists, and is a signature of Jones' practice.

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Carrying on from the playful mood, *Fisher Price Globe (You're in the Hood Now Baby)* is a small work hung at children's height on the gallery's east wall. The globe in question is a vintage children's toy owned by the artist, which formed the basis for the logo of Public Assistants, the community organization founded by Jones. A simplified version of the globe is paired with the Latin translation of "You're in the Hood Now Baby", a phrase taken from an old Gap commercial that featured Lil Kim selling hoodies. Jones and their colleagues have taken the pejorative term 'Hood' and elevated it to a position of pride.

Dad on the beach in Bermuda 1994 is a small, intimate painting that offers little details to the viewer. The source image is a photograph taken by the artist's mother while on honeymoon with his father. Jones' late father, Rick, is painted in silhouette, echoing the fact that it could be a portrait of the artist given their similar stature. The work is also especially poignant given that Jones' father passed last year after a long illness. A related work, *Karen and Teddy's Wedding Day 1987*, shows the wedding day of Jones' aunt, who married the R&B and soul musician Teddy Pendergrass, pictured in the doorway seated in a wheelchair. This joyous painting features the same woman seated in the background in *Karen Watching Akua at The Shed 2021*. These recollections of family events sit in conversation with Emge's work, which connects deeply to her community of friends and allies.

In a time when the world is increasingly divided, Emge and Jones are heralding a call to the communal, as seen through the fusing of disciplines, people, and experience. The exhibition may be read as a meditation on the power of dialogue as envisioned through both tangible and ephemeral elements. The artists' personal iconographies intertwine and challenge the viewer to consider what is most important: beloved objects, family, friends, caring for others as a way of nourishing one's soul. Today, as in times of great conflict throughout history, art can provoke and also remind us of what is most significant in our lives.

Kathy Battista

marytwo would like to thank artists and friends Nina Emge and DonChristian Jones and curator and friend Kathy Battista for the beautiful collaboration in creating this exhibition.

Also a big thank you to Olivia Rast for the wonderful food served at the opening of *Resonance* and Johanne Lapraz for helping install the show.

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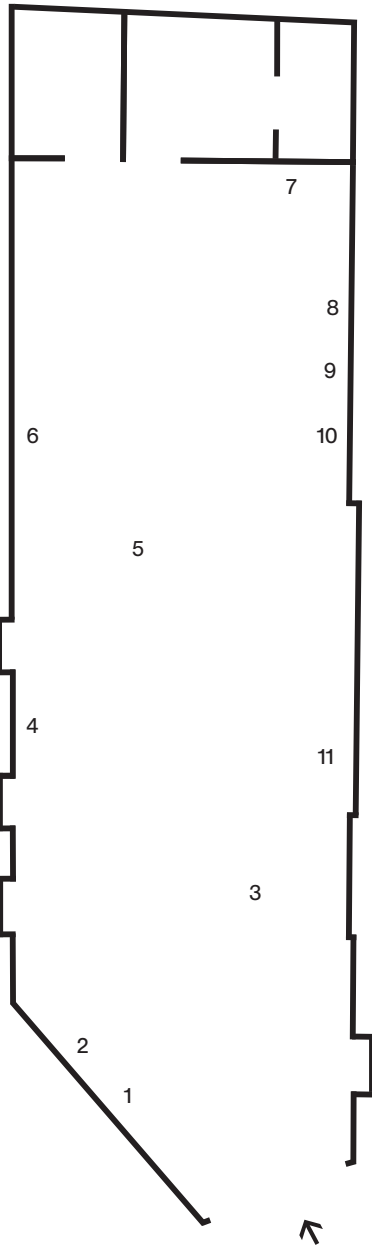
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1 DonChristian Jones
Karen Watching Akua at The Shed 2021, 2024
Oil on wood
28 × 35.5 × 4 cm / 11 × 14 × 1.5 in

2 DonChristian Jones
DCJ in Morgan's Light at Hauser & Wirth LA 2023, 2024
Oil on wood
35.5 × 35.5 × 4 cm / 14 × 14 × 1.5 in

3, 5 Nina Emge
Reverberation or Unintended Consequence of an Event, 2024
Iron, painted and/or dyed cotton, glass beads, speakers, audio track, 52'. Poem by Duygu Aġal, read by Sam Nimmrichter, Michelle Schuhmacher, Tina Omayemi Reden, Sam Ghantous
Dimensions variable

4 DonChristian Jones
Performance School Pyramid with Humans and Dog: Kate, DCJ, Kaur, Elise, Kristin, Monica, Colin, Halo 2024, 2024
Oil on wood
20 × 15 × 4 cm / 8 × 6 × 1.5 in

6 DonChristian Jones
Karen and Teddy's Wedding Day 1987, 2024
Oil on wood
61 × 51 × 4 cm / 24 × 20 × 1.5 in

7 DonChristian Jones
DCJ Bobbing for Apples 2024, 2024
Oil on wood
76 × 50.5 × 4 cm / 30 × 20 × 1.5 in

8 DonChristian Jones
Cape Cod Sunset (Emily's House), 2024
Oil on wood
25.5 × 25.5 × 4 cm / 10 × 10 × 1.5 in

9 DonChristian Jones
Rafe's Gaze at The Whitney 2023, 2024
Oil on wood
50.5 × 40.5 × 4 cm / 20 × 16 × 1.5 in

10 DonChristian Jones
Dad on the beach in Bermuda 1994, 2024
Oil on wood
23 × 30.5 × 4 cm / 9 × 12 × 1.5 in

11 DonChristian Jones
Fisher Price Globe (You're In the Hood Now Baby), 2024
Oil on wood
25.5 × 20.5 × 4 cm / 10 × 8 × 1.5 in

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