

Kupfer

Waiting Room

Leo Costelloe, Aimée Lyon and Dominic Myatt

24 November - 9 December 2023

Opening: 23 November, 6 - 9 pm

Kupfer

3 Scrutton Street, EC2A 4HF

Opening hours: Monday - Friday, 10 am - 5 pm

Saturday: by appointment, please email contact@kupfer.co to arrange a visit

Performances by Aimée Lyon:

23 November: 8 pm

25 November: 3 pm

2 December: 3 pm

“One day the stars will be as familiar to each man as the landmarks, the curves, and the hills on the road that leads to his door”.

- Beryl Markham, *West with the Night*

I observe the city as a speck on the lens, slowly coming into focus. Changing the position of my face frames it differently. I am apart from it, but can feel its heat through the pavement. I peel it open, reading its crowded living scenarios. I see a cross-section of its tunnels and its drains and its basements; its hidden spaces of access and negation. Impossible strata; excessive flows. Leafing through its truncated history, I picture entire lives based on the hue of a light in a Georgian tampered window above an off-license.

The rivers move like ice. People skate in tandem while markets flux. From within, the city's intensities are internalised by my own body. Its stresses become my own; its heat warms me and its rain takes from me. Its mappings unfold across my psyche, just as an animal is projected across a line of stars in the night sky, thousands of years ago in a desert somewhere. And then suddenly the city looks impossibly isolated; shrouded in mist like a planet floating above some great ocean floor.

The word 'wait' finds its roots within the realm of the visual - to 'observe carefully', or to 'be watchful'. Projection, like waiting, is concerned with visualisation. And belief too. We have all heard that seeing is believing, but in the case of the shadow show, we are not seeing the head of a barking dog, but rather two hands enmeshed, making an image of a commitment: to that which we might choose to see as a dog.

The cold plunge of belief leaves the door to illusion ajar. That shadow puppet is nothing more than a shadow puppet, but the human bias that casts it into something else is still an earnest, fearful, and exciting escape route through the back of the stage set. In an early instance of a live projection illusion, John Henry Pepper presented living 'ghosts' to an audience in 1862. The apparitions - back-projected from below the stalls - created a live moving image, foreclosing a future where the possessed lives of Elvis, MJ, Tupac and ABBA were always hurtling towards a reanimation via holographic projection technologies.

The city is slowly becoming itself. It performs a seamless role with an innumerable cast across an immense timeframe. It sections itself, casting X as a site of concentrated labour, and Y as a vista of respite. These distinctive roles are reversed within a heartbeat, based on what I believe I see, and how I think I feel on a rainy day in October, looking Southwards through a broken window. Zooming in further, the city's ongoing project becomes true of its constituent objects. An object is always becoming itself; is always in waiting, hurtling like a comet towards a fresher instance. With enough time, it crystallises into a more distilled thing. If altered, it becomes sublimated into something else, which will then strive towards becoming a truer version of that alteration. It is through this unending change that objects become inscribed, burdened with evidence and memory. In stone tape theory, it is speculated that hauntings are analogous to tape recordings; that mental impressions during emotional or traumatic events are projected onto rocks and other objects around them, which become replayable under certain conditions. As easily as that, every object you have ever encountered is cast as a mute character witness.

The transformative potential of activation haunts the objects that we surround ourselves with. Decorative objects are bountiful, overflowing; constantly fulfilling their function. Functional objects wait to be needed, and objects devoid of function are made to wait even longer, until they are repaired or reassembled or reconstituted anew. Projecting now, objects are laden with perpetual lives of their own. In 1999, a Taiwanese man married a Barbie doll to appease the restless spirit of his wife, who had passed away twenty years prior. As part of the ceremony, a paper model of a red Mercedes was burnt so that she could make use of it in the afterlife. The phantasy of their wedding was buffered by the wife's anxious family attending the ceremony, while the doll was adorned with gold jewelry and rings that had belonged to her previous incarnation.

The city's most integral folds cradle the spaces that facilitate; spaces inextricably tethered to a future of becoming overlooked. We take the path of most resistance to a place that is uncherished. Imagine a room for a designated activity. Fine. Now imagine a room where the activity is that of waiting. It becomes devoid, about facilitating time passing; facilitating an absence. Both logical and dysfunctional, its own act becomes just that: to stand and wait. To do nothing is an act of negation, and is therefore resilient and political. I want to be smart so I read. I want to do nothing so I wait. I want to count the seconds in a year so I wait. I want time to fly so I wait. I want to rest...

From the outside, I see a now-room in an ex-office on a still street. Droplets spawn on the glass, the shimmering outlines of a new starfield; infant constellations informing the objects within the window's frame. Medical grade shimmers glint among blighted steel. Disposable cups attend in useless piles. Several Polaroids are cast as the evidence of some forgotten act. The wrong things - composed through some amnesiac's task of sense-making - lie scattered like the runic glyphs of an unknowable alphabet. Amenities and white goods have been pried from the walls, revealing absences that gape and stare. And all is gathered at the center of the space, heaped into an improbable limbo. Invited inside, I sit, finally able to wait a while. A light casts a stark silhouette from behind a white door, while a shadow moves back and forth underneath. I sit and wonder what this room is actually used for. And how long is a wait in limbo meant to take these days anyway?

- James Sibley

About the artists

Leo Costelloe (b.1993) is an Australian-born artist living and working in London. His multi-disciplinary practice, including work in glass, metal and silversmithing as well as video and installation, explores the transient and sentimental nature of objects and images, drawing inspiration from popular culture, spiritual practice and personal experience. Costelloe graduated from Central Saint Martins with a BA (Hons) in Jewellery Design.

Aimée Lyon (b. 1998) is an artist living and working in London. She graduated from Goldsmiths in 2021 and HFBK Hamburg in 2022. Her practice navigates fantastical propositions through an installation and performance practice that foregrounds discovering by chance.

Dominic Myatt (b. 1993) is an artist living and working in London. He graduated from Goldsmiths in 2014 and The Royal Drawing School in 2019. With a focus on drawing his practice often explores the spaces between sexual fantasy and reality. His work is held in the Tate collection, The Royal Collection and the Soho House art collection. Clients and commissions include Channel 4, Selfridges, Vivienne Westwood, Fred Perry, Hugo Boss and Ambassador Theatre Group.