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Currents 11: The Turn of Many Suns
21.09.2024 - 03.11.2024

Awa Gaye

Gwoon Lee

Dorothy in Hell

Lize Crauwels

Jiyoon Chung

Nura Afnan-Samandari

Kiko Reitsma

Newt Contrino

Javkhlan Ariunbold

Shoaib Zaheer

Dakota Magdalena Mokhammad

Kadia Doumbouya

Cynthia Carballo

Stefan Kruse

Currents 11: The Turn of Many Suns

Curated by H M Baker, Nadim Choufi, Michał Grzegorzek, Lucas Odahara

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12 – 5 PM

Where do we learn a language when its words, images, and forms do not only carry our stories of survival but also move us to survive? This language is not necessarily found in the rhetoric of education systems but rather in a role model or another student, in family members – both biological and chosen. In a favorite band, in the darkness of nightlife, in a lover's arms, or in a painting. It emerges from bodies and spaces where expressions of being do not stop at mere gestures but become ways of living. Our languages move us forward.

This year's edition of Currents – *The Turn of Many Suns* presents the works of fourteen artists who have lived and studied for the past years in the Southern Netherlands, Belgium, and North Rhine-Westphalia. These artists bring with them cultural, social, and political relations that question, expand, and at times undo the fabric that defines a region and regional education. The image of many suns places their works in a collective story with many protagonists, marking the moment learning exits the institution and continues as a way of shaping the world.

Nura Afnan-Samandari and Awa Gaye suggest walking as a form of exploring one's own past and present. Cynthia Carballo, Jiyoung Chung, and Stefan Kruse's works evoke the controversies of legal systems that control people's movements. Dorothy in Hell, Kadia Doumbouya, Newt Contrino, and Lize Crauwels offer frameworks to look at the body and its will to move beyond its limits. Gowoon Lee and Dakota Magdalena Mokhammad's works examine how the political power of imagined realms manifests itself in our realities. Kiko Reitsma, Javkhan Ariunbold, and Shoaib Zaheer present memories and communities that challenge the definition of the region.

The graduating artists articulate landscapes in which learning and unlearning play out. Together, they direct individual and collective willpower into ways of working and living. In *Radical Graduation*, Audre Lorde's 1989 commencement address, she reminds students "that [the] surge of power you feel inside you now does not belong to me, nor to your parents, nor to your professors. That power lives inside of you. It is yours, you own it, and you will carry it out of this room." This sentiment is not limited to students but extends to everyone who still believes in their own potential to carve out a space in an unjust world. It could also be a gentle nudge of encouragement to those who have lost hope. The works in *The Turn of Many Suns* use this surge of power to define the choreography of moving beyond the school walls and into a collective, albeit unknown, future.



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Awa Gaye grew up in Belgium and is currently based in Ghent. She studied photography at KASK, Ghent. Her work draws inspiration from family relationships, cultural identity, origin, and race.

Looking for Flowers is a work that seeks to question the photographer's relationship with Belgium through a portrait of her friend Sarah, who also acts as a mirror to the photographer. They share a similar background: both have a Belgian mother (in Sarah's case, Belgian-Dutch) and a Senegalese father and grew up in Belgium their whole lives. A growing sense of unease in the country led them to travel to South Korea to create a literal distance which they hoped would provide clarity over their identities, feelings, and ways of being. The work is a search for home, identity, and freedom. It tackles certain realities and disparities that live within the photographer's mind while aiming to find solutions to them. The pictures were taken between Belgium and South Korea; some are images of Senegal from the photographer's archive. The work is ongoing, as Awa and Sarah would like to complete the project by going back to Senegal to capture Sarah's return after 10 years and eventually turn it into a photo book.

Awa Gaye — Looking for Flowers (2023 - ongoing)



Gowoon Lee is an artist based in Düsseldorf, Germany. She holds degrees from the University of Auckland, New Zealand (2014) and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Germany (2024). Her paintings question the limits at which popular images fracture, severing memory, and the urgency of efforts to reveal the underpinning of violence and stereotypes in children's cartoons. Recognizing television shows as a fleeting collective memory, her work questions the individualistic associations of abstraction through the appropriation of ultra-recognizable characters from Disney and Looney Tunes.

Through a painterly language of doubling, blurring, and collapsing figuration into the static abstraction between television frames, Lee focuses on the hallucinatory and psychedelic visual effects employed by popular animated cartoons that the artist watched as a child in the 1990s. In a post-television era in which viral, self-generated media eclipse preordained entertainment, Lee questions the vestiges of our collective consciousness that remain. Each oil on canvas or jute painting is completed in a single session using a wet-on-wet technique, mimicking the trance-like state induced by cartoons and psychedelic visuals. Elements of digital image manipulation such as zooming, cropping, and freeze-frame are co-opted in Lee's painterly process to examine the lasting aesthetic impact such images hold. Through abstraction, Lee examines the aesthetic of cuteness as a device that cloaks underlying violence and mechanisms of control.

Gowoon Lee —
Casper Magenta (2023)
Casper Green (2023)
Casper Cyan (2023)
Fifty Stars (2024)
Twelve Stars (2024)

Gwoon Lee, *Casper Cyan*, *Casper Green*, *Casper Magenta*,
2023, oil on canvas, 90 x 200 cm





Dorothy in Hell

- Solacoles (2023)
- Acceler revelation (2024)

Dorothy in Hell, a graduate of Maastricht Institute of Arts, is a trans woman and multidisciplinary artist. She is engaged in an ongoing process of exploration, creating her own world through a range of artistic media such as marker paintings, sculptures, video, sound, and performance. Her work delves into the horror of having a body and the complex relationship between gender and the institutional violence and frustration that often accompany it. As she herself defines the process: “I am in hell, and heaven is a personal ascent achieved through creation.”

In Dorothy in Hell’s universe, the solar mixes with the local. There is a sense of alienation mixed with a strong desire to belong. Vibrant, often contrasting colors clash to create an eruption of moods and collisions of drawings and texts. Wings fold from exhaustion, only to unfurl once more, as if in anticipation of flight or fight. The sun penetrates the breasts, taking the heart with it. Her uniquely autobiographical work expresses both oppression and emancipation, oscillating between the aesthetics of fine art and vandalism. The artist deliberately moves between fandom comics, emo graffiti, and *horror vacui*. An audiovisual overstimulation based on the imagery of distant (often cyber) space allows her to confront viewers with the most personal and intimate feelings: anger at systems and institutions, fear of the flesh, a body one didn’t choose to be born in, love for the people around you, or the quest to find your ideal self.

Acceler revelation will be sporadically performed by the artist throughout the exhibition.



Lize Crauwels studied Printmaking and Drawing at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, where she is currently based. Her work taps into the region's long history of comics and illustration, using ink pressings and fast mark-making to impart a sense of urgency and rawness. Her work *I swear I'm not angry, that's just my face* is a series of screaming portraits on paper, installed over the exhibition floor in different directions. Like the work's title, her drawings directly address the viewers, moving between what she decides to display and what the viewer takes with them.

Crauwels' practice understands the medium she is working with – the paper – as a powerful space that speaks both to the inside and the outside. From the privacy of a sketchbook to the laying bare of single sheets of paper on the floor, in the middle of the room, which visitors cast their gaze down on. The space of vulnerability her work assumes in both situations requires a keen sense of one's place in the world. How does one define where they stand, where do they go, where do they come from, or where do they wish to be while also communicating who they are to everyone else? The friction between these questions can be seen in Crauwels' screaming portraits and her piece *Ran Away*. Looking in different directions, following distinct routes, her work addresses everyone while also looking for spaces for itself.

Lize Crauwels

- **I swear I'm not angry, that's just my face (2024)**
- **Weggelopen (ran away) (2024)**



Jiyoon Chung, *Apology Gifts*, 2024, six stamped letters of apology ghostwritten by a former head of police investigation, a law firm, a private attorney, a licensed administrative agent, a screenwriter, and a ghostwriting agency for petition letters regarding criminal case number 2018 형제37430, 100 × 130 cm

Jiyoon Chung — White Lie (2023) Apology Gifts (2024)

형제 indicates a Korean legal term for a classification of case types. Generally, it refers to two cases. First, it refers to cases that are filed directly with the prosecution, and second, cases that are referred to the police.

Jiyoon Chung's work probes the performative conditions that invite subordination to and deviation from societal structures. Through diverse media ranging from sculpture, installation, sound, text, and photography, Chung – who recently graduated from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste–Städelschule, Frankfurt – contemplates how societal conventions and deeply autobiographical states of mind such as ego and affects intersect and merge. With an exaggerated minimalist approach, she embraces a seemingly paradoxical strategy that reflects nuanced obedience and coercion.

In *White Lie*, the rolling door – half open – invokes the image of a guillotine about to drop, while its title refers to the harmless lies people tell to maintain relationships and avoid minor conflicts. There is neither crime nor violence nor escape in the work. Instead, there is an honest complicity and an admission of self-contradiction in how we build societies foregrounded on shortcuts, life hacks, and cutting the rules – yet where the line between reward and punishment for these actions becomes ever thinner. *Apology Gifts* turns to the practice of writing apology letters as a widespread form of punishment that is passed down through generations. Chung took this concept further by hiring a law firm, an administrative attorney's office, a personal lawyer, and a professional writer to ghostwrite an apology letter on her behalf for actual infractions she committed while deliberately omitting any mention of the specific misdeed. This piece questions the role of apologies. It highlights the often formulaic strategies used in their creation: those typically employed to present the image of a well-intentioned citizen, but which ultimately boil down to a performance of empty eloquence.



Nura Afnan-Samandari studied Fine Arts at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. She currently lives and works in Düsseldorf, sharing a studio with a collective who provide a space for both art exhibition and production. Her work understands drawing and architecture as a single gesture of taking and giving space. For the artist, drawing is the starting point for room installations, as she likens looking at a sketchbook to looking at architecture. She believes that “by walking through a building or turning the pages of a book, the viewers place themselves in the midst of a piece.”

At first glance, the work *No title (Floor)* is indistinguishable from the architecture of the exhibition. A seemingly empty room with bare walls allows the viewer to be in its center – to take space. At the same time, the work extends across the floor, with yellow and blue ceramic tiles of red clay composing a wall-to-wall drawing. The artist chooses the materials for room installations intuitively – just as she chooses the right pen for a certain type of paper. The blue tiles form a smaller rectangle in the center, mirroring the room’s proportions. In this architectural drawing, the viewer is reminded of their own body and the weight they apply during every movement. Each step is a more conscious one, each movement a louder sound. The viewer is part of the drawing, retracing the artist’s own decisions, the routes, the marks she left behind.

Nura Afnan-Samandari — No title (Floor) (2024)



Kiko Reitsma — Heavy Duty (2024) Metal Rules (2024)

Kiko Reitsma, born in Tilburg and raised in 's-Hertogenbosch, is a musician, artist, and metalhead – the latter more than anything else. He graduated from St. Joost School of Art and Design in June 2024. As a filmmaker and member of the thrash metal band Headless Hunter, Kiko explores the intertwining of subcultural lifestyles and personal identity, particularly within the context of the metal community. Through visual art, music, and film, driven by a passion for telling stories, he aims to celebrate diversity and the power of self-expression.

In the work *Heavy Duty*, Kiko invited members of his metal community to participate in the collective patchwork of a battlevest. The battlevest is an important symbol in metal culture. Usually made of denim or leather, the vests are adorned with patches and pins of the owner's favorite artists. It can be viewed as the essence of a metalhead's personality, something by which you can recognize that person even if you only have their vest. This shared battlevest represents not just a single metalhead, but a whole community. Kiko's film *Metal Rules* delves into metal culture and the life of a metalhead. The narrative is intertwined with his personal journey to find community as a Dutch-Surinamese person and his experiences within this vibrant community. Through interviews with the people closest to him, the film explores how they view this culture and simultaneously influence and shape his relationship with it. By capturing the essence of the metal scene and his role in it, Kiko aims to provide an authentic and heartfelt portrayal of this unique subculture.



Newt Contrino is an artist based in Ekeren, Belgium. She holds a master's degree in animation from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Gent. Her work looks inward as a way of understanding the world around her. *Quelle Magnifique Journée* is an installation departing from her experience of being at home, alienated from a moving world outside. Her seemingly still animation, spread over a triptych and two side projections, depicts monstrous figures in a medieval, surrealist style. All the figures in the animation slowly move in sparse intervals and appear to suffer from the same painful conditions. A gentle twist of the tongue, a quiet flap of wings, almost as if these exquisite bodies are fatigued, uncomfortable from the stillness of the portrait, stretching before returning to work in their original, cramped position.

Contrino says she “questions [her] own conscious self while exploring the unconscious.” She does so by fastidiously addressing the body and its confinements. The idea of ‘being at home’ means both a space of comfort and constraint, something familiar but strange. Her animation evokes movement as a rehearsal. A rehearsal where one questions their own stage, testing its limits, waiting for the right time for a next, perhaps unforeseen, movement.

Newt Contrino — Quelle Magnifique Journée (2024)



Javkhlan Ariunbold divides her time between Germany and Mongolia, her country of birth. She graduated from the Kunstakademie Münster in 2018 and the Academy of Media Arts Cologne in 2024. Her practice is concerned with the collision of diametrically opposed approaches to nature: the traditional, respectful reverence and preservation efforts by the nomadic population versus the capitalist-driven destruction by politics and industry.

An 'ovoos' is a large pile of stones often found in rural areas or on mountain peaks in Mongolia. The term originally referred to a place for shamanistic rituals, a practice that was subsequently adopted by Tibetan Buddhism. Nowadays, the construction of new ovoos is limited to locations where there is believed to be a strong presence of powerful and sacred nature spirits. The film follows Munkhuu, a doctor from Ulaanbaatar, and his relatives during the annual ritual in the Gobi Desert. Munkhuu follows in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, a Buddhist monk engaged in meditation at the mountain known as 'Jargalant Khaikhan' (regarded as a sacred site since ancient times). The family attempts to establish contact with the ancestor's spirit in order to ask him to protect them in the coming year. Images of traditional Mongolian rituals and beliefs are depicted at a juncture of significant economic, social, environmental, and political transformation within the region. This coincides with the year 2023, when France and Mongolia entered into a mining agreement for a substantial uranium deposit situated near the mountain.

Javkhlan Ariunbold — Ovoos (2024)



Shoaib Zaheer — A group of honourable people from far away paid over 60 million papers for my education (2024)

Shoaib Zaheer began his artistic journey at a young age in the art markets of Afghanistan, his country of birth. He recently graduated from KASK & Conservatorium in Ghent. He works across mediums tailored to the themes he tackles, including but not limited to installation, painting, computer animation, and AI. The common thread in Shoaib Zaheer's practice is storytelling that challenges conventional boundaries as a way of bridging traditional and contemporary forms. His work aims to blend cultural heritage with the surroundings he encounters.

In *A group of honourable people from far away paid over 60 million papers for my education*, Shoaib Zaheer recreates a classroom for Afghan children. This emulates the education system implemented by the US first in refugee camps in Pakistan and then inside Afghanistan since the 1970s for Afghan children, which coincided with the USSR's aggressive, coercive encroachment on Afghanistan. Blackboard and book-based methods to teach children to count and read are juxtaposed with numerous paper planes modeled after fighter planes in the Afghan sky within the installation. Shoaib's project examines his journey within such educational systems and how they determine how he should live, what to study, and what his future character would be. Together with his drawings, this installation presents a journey that navigates the paradoxes of political intervention and his personal resistance to being modeled by exterior forces.



Dakota Magdalena Mokhammad describes herself as an alchemist with roots in Russia, Afghanistan, and Kazakhstan. Currently living in the Netherlands and having just finished her studies at St. Joost School of Art & Design, her practice is concerned with the meticulous gestures used in constructing one's identities. She offers the viewer a glimpse into her own experience by carefully threading textiles and juxtaposing, adding, removing, and layering different materials. All of these crafts have been passed down by the generations of women in her family. She now harnesses them as a way of moving toward ideas of legacy while also creating opportunities to puncture and traverse them.

In *Theys Архангел*, the artist reflects on gender and its limits of representation. Growing up being told stories from the Bible and Quran, Dakota looks at the image of the archangel as one that transcends gender dichotomies. While in *Hairy Magdalena*, Mokhammad finds her own intersection with the biblical story of Mary Magdalene. Portrayed as a beautiful woman, Mary Magdalene was often depicted with hair covering her body, emphasizing her connection to the natural and spiritual realms. Dakota invites this anecdote into her work through the symbolic presence of the fur coat in her family, passed down as a sign of maturity and acceptance as a woman. Dakota Mokhammad's practice moves across generations, weaving together the crafts she was taught, the teachings she had to unlearn, and the images she was pushed to envisage, culminating in a unique language that understands transformation as a foundational element in one's identities.

Dakota Magdalena Mokhammad — *Theys Архангел* (2024) *Hairy Magdalena* (2024)



Kadia Doumbouya is a pluridisciplinary artist from Brussels who graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Gent. Her work is a profound exploration of identity, culture, and immigration. It is deeply intertwined with her own personal history, which spans continents and cultures. Born in the Netherlands, spending her youth in Guinea, and later relocating to Belgium at the age of twelve, Doumbouya reflects on a perpetual search for an identity she once thought lost. This search for self-understanding and acceptance is one of the driving forces of her practice.

Her work *Que reste-il* looks at colonial photography found in books and on different social media platforms. Kadia uses these images as a base for her paintings on paper, depicting figures of black women. She purposefully cuts these figures, following the body's shapes and giving them a skin-like presence. She then installs the works on the walls, as if hesitantly touching them. *Que reste-il* explores issues related to race, relationship, sexuality, identity, and gender. The work offers multiple narratives for the figures she portrays. By recontextualizing the images in the exhibition space, Kadia encourages the viewer to look at the image of the body with a different gaze. Crossing between different media, she pushes the boundaries of imagination and expands the body from the limits of representation. *Que reste-il* can be considered a massive collage, a drawing, a sculpture, or an installation. But more than that, it is a movement of liberation.

Kadia Doumbouya — Que reste-il (2024)



Cynthia Carballo is a Mexican visual activist based in Brussels. She graduated from LUCA School of Arts. Her practice is a search for justice and empathy, focusing on social issues of migration, racism, and human dignity. Primarily using photography, film, and traditional crafts of knitting and Cartonería, she addresses issues of inequality while highlighting the importance of nuance within the lived realities she encounters.

The Questionary begins with questions asylum seekers are faced with as Carballo confronts her reality as an immigrant who, despite an extensive resume, could only secure a job as a table cleaner in an events hall. The questions slowly shift to personal ones that reflect possibilities and dreams. The language changes from being boxed – ‘why you are here?’ – to a more open ‘what do you want in life?’ The constant coming and going of Carballo’s thoughts while working long shifts enter the subtitles of the film, bringing up her sensitivities, aspirations, and dignity – criteria often dismissed – of a person undergoing migration. The film becomes a touching account of people’s movements for better opportunities, including education, while remaining critical of what that might entail.

Cynthia Carballo — The Questionary (2024)



Stefan Kruse is a research-based filmmaker and visual artist. He holds an MA in Visual Culture & Identity from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts School of Design and a Post Graduate degree from the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. Exploring different ways of seeing, Stefan's work reflects ongoing research into technical image production, the visibility of power, surveillance, and patterns of control. His films have been presented at film festivals such as *Visions Du Réel*, *Courtisane*, *25 FPS*, and *Festival dei Popoli*. In January 2024, he published his first artist's book '*Stefan Kruse A LACK OF CLARITY*' with Walther König publishers.

Kruse's three-channel video installation *No Clear Evidence* follows a long-range military drone as it patrols the Mediterranean Sea and surveils the borders of Europe. Who is flying the drone and what is the economic structure facilitating its operation? Through different sensory apparatuses, the films attempt to challenge the lack of information surrounding the Frontex's Heron 1 drone. Virtual desktop research transforms into a real-life waiting situation somewhere between the military-industrial complex and a local plane-spotting community. What does accelerated technological development at Europe's borders really look like?

Stefan Kruse — No Clear Evidence (2024)

CURRENTS 11: THE TURN OF MANY SUNS

Currents is an annual group exhibition displaying the works of young artists who recently graduated from fine arts programmes in Belgium, South-West-Germany and the south of the Netherlands. The exhibition is embedded in a coaching trajectory in which training, network and professionalization are key.

Curators & Texts:

H M Baker, Nadim Choufi, Michał Grzegorzek, Lucas Odahara

Artists:

Awa Gaye, Gowoon Lee, Dorothy in Hell, Lize Crauwels, Jiyoong Chung, Nura Afnan-Samandari, Kiko Reitsma, Newt Contrino, Javkhlan Ariunbold, Shoaib Zaheer, Dakota Magdalena Mokhammad, Kadia Doumbouya, Cynthia Carballo, Stefan Kruse

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JAN VAN EYCK ACADEMY:

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TEAM JESTER

Yesim Bektas, Koi Persyn, Dimitri Vossen, Stef Renard, Kevin Reynaert, Rachel Daniels, Clara Tashjian

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TEAM MARRES

Valentijn Byvanck, Julie Cordewener, Oonah Duchateau, Rosa van der Flier, Kim Jongen, Tineke Kambier, Jody van Kuijk, Alejandra Murillo, Farah Wilbers, and all volunteers.

INSTALLATION TEAM MARRES:

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Coordination: Jody van Kuijk

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Translation: DUO vertaalbureau

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