

*Vijay Masharani***Triage**

10.06.2021 - 04.09.2021

I hallucinated a boat decorated with purple and orange LED Christmas lights while failing to catch a leopard shark at the Coyote Point Marina, on a trip that capped off a hazy year inaugurated by a great death. The shimmering lights were strung along the edge of the boat's triangular sails, which, twinned by their reflection, produced a single symmetrical form resembling a drone or a pterodactyl. I kept a reference photo in the clouds, then returned two years later with a camcorder, but when I went back, the boat was flanked by a few others, and I couldn't get an unobstructed shot. So I filmed a different one, seen in *Nervosism, stutter, b-b-buh-bye*, which is more brolic – not merely decorated, but swollen with excessive, jingoistic adornment. The lights behave diagrammatically, plotting the state as an appendage of a larger monstrosity, a literal mass ornament.

This piece established a standard affective pitch to which other videos could subsequently be tuned. They are each single, uninterrupted takes, and while they retain certain regional signifiers – price tags, flags, accents – they appear to take place in an imprecise, blurry, composed gamespace. Because their specific contextual circumstances have been sloughed off, muted, cropped, or painted out, these works depict models rather than events: general representations of general dynamics. They are unreal, distilled ur-situations.

Command | Plea alters footage from a medical study titled “the airborne lifetime of small speech droplets and their potential importance to SARS-CoV-2 transmission,” which uses a green Coherent Verdi laser to illuminate small spit particles spewed during speech¹. Since the speaker's mouth isn't visible, tiny ephemeral lights burst forth seemingly from nowhere, like an impromptu insurrection of lightning bugs or a super good idea. The locutionary act is visualized as viral spontaneous self-organization and disassembly within a single reactionary utterance – stay.

Last summer, during a trough of New York's case curve, I was living among an exemplary cross-section of neoliberalism's original social base – big small whites, poor lil riches, perennially wounded, et cetera – who have now pivoted to a dazzling post-Trumpian diagonalism². I was tripping in the Paradise Aquarium, the filthy exotic pet store in which I made *Good Attack*, eyeing the nuchal humps of the \$130 pink Flowerhorn Cichlids, which I later learned to be a man-made fish, the product of selective breeding. Once introduced to the wild, they became “invasive” to the point that they are now “illegal” in some countries. When I saw the dreadful sign behind the counter that read “DIE / TERRORIST / SCUM,” I was bemused, I was vindicated, and for what?

Triage is a practice of schematizing urgency to mitigate gratuitous loss – a hermeneutic born of extreme duress.

--Vijay Masharani

¹ Valentyn Stadnytskyi, Philip Anfinrud, Christina E. Bax, Adriaan Bax, “The airborne lifetime of small speech droplets and their potential importance in SARS-CoV-2 transmission,” PNAS June 2, 2020 117 (22) 11875-11877; first published May 13, 2020; <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2006874117>

² Quinn Slobodian and William Callison, “Coronapolitics from the Reichstag to the Capitol,” Boston Review. Accessed May 27, 2021. <http://bostonreview.net/politics/william-callison-quinn-slobodian-coronapolitics-reichstag-capitol>.

Vijay Masharani (Bay Area, CA, 1995) is an artist living and working in Brooklyn. He received his BFA in Fine Art from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2017. Masharani showed at: Shoot the Lobster, Los Angeles, Helena Anrather Gallery, New York, Museum Gallery, Brooklyn, New York, High-Tide, Philadelphia, PA, Drawer NYC, New York, Mery Gates, Brooklyn, New York, Clima, Milan, Like a Little Disaster / Pane Projects, Polignano a mare, IT.