

James Lewis
Ruderal
07.05. - 18.06.2022

James Lewis' solo exhibition *Ruderal* at Nir Altman is rooted in a sensitive environmental awareness. Like flowers turning to the sun, free-standing sculptures peer at passersby through the gallery's street-level storefront window. A yellow PVC curtain along the window separates outside and inside. It evokes the shrink wrapped vegetables in supermarket shelves. It's unclear whether the onlookers on the outside or the sculptures on the inside are the packed, protected goods and whether the foil contains or emits the acidic ambient haze that illuminates both sides of the window.

Outside and inside are linked through electrical switch cases in the curtain. They are differently labeled and each offer two options, perhaps recalling the omnipresent two button meme. Illustrating the agony of choice in an intense state of insecurity, it features a comic character attempting to push one of two red buttons labeled with interchangeable or contradicting statements. This frames Lewis' concern with datafied reality, here proposed as alternating states that can be turned off and on at will.

Most people know that statistics are wrong the minute they are made, but what other ways are there to relate to the world? 47% of people believe in fate.¹ Facing a wasteland of information that can't be controlled, channeled or processed by human capacities - switch on probability. Enjoy the ride. 274 km/h is the average speed of nerve impulses.² Your portal to manifest thoughts into one of the probable realities behind the curtain. We used to have skin in this game. Consider the average surface area of skin is 22sq/ft³ - our barrier to the world, growing thick.

Lewis' ruderal flowers shaped into forms of hanging branches have developed a thick skin, layers and layers of cells. Their stiff bodies demonstrate vitality and vulnerability at the same time. Manufactured from concrete, a building material, the flowers seem to have grown from the debris of human construction and simultaneous environmental destruction. Plantlife lives through exchange and these species endure although the gardener has failed to recognise the interconnectedness of living things. They coexist with the hum of an electrical light which, although invisible, insists on its material textures. Composed of archived sounds sourced from a sample library of field recordings, it repeats the commitment of stacking and layering fragments of repurposed material. This is perhaps how we will remember the world outside - canned and classified. A strange simulation.

Text by Sarah Johanna Theurer

¹ *What do people believe in?* Available at: <https://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/british-public-reveal-beliefs-new-survey/>

² *99 Quick and Fascinating Facts About the Human Body* Available at: <https://brightside.me/wonder-curiosities/99-quick-and-fascinating-facts-about-the-human-body-38305/>

³ *99 Quick and Fascinating Facts About the Human Body* Available at: <https://brightside.me/wonder-curiosities/99-quick-and-fascinating-facts-about-the-human-body-38305/>