

Elizabeth Ravn

*Downtime*

21.04.–10.06.2023

When watching *Tár* recently, audible murmurs were passed around the audience as certain locations appeared onscreen. We were seated in a theater in Berlin, where the film is incidentally set, and as each new scene appeared, the audience collectively attempted to map the film upon the city. I was convinced the main character's old apartment was just around the corner from my flat, but upon following it up after the screening, I was proven wrong. While Lydia Tár and Elizabeth Ravn don't share being part of the coterie of megalomaniacal musical cognoscente—sorry, Elizabeth—they are both lesbians who also happen to live in Berlin. I wondered when looking at Ravn's paintings if the viewing audience might also attempt to seek out this sort of recognition in the people and places found in the paintings presented here, Elizabeth's exhibition entitled, *Downtime*.

When looking at the in-progress works around Ravn's studio, either on the wall or propped against it atop of wood blocks, I asked, "Oh, aren't there two of those statues in the city, one in the Tiergarten and—where is that—in front of the Neues Museum?" I was referring to the statue of the *Amazon on Horseback*, a figure sculpture by Louis Tuillon, depicted in Elizabeth's *Amazon Encounter*. There are two of these statues in Berlin, the one in the Tiergarten being much larger. I first encountered the larger of the two sometime in 2017, a friend who had invited me out on residency had been fixated on the statue for some while. We sojourned there a few times during my stay at different states of light in the summer. One evening he took his slipper off and held it under her foot, his size 44 shoe nearly a perfect fit.

The paintings in this show represent a spectrum of daily life scenarios, relatable, and regardless of the downtime nature of the activities can nevertheless possess a variety of personal, social, and political possibilities, maybe even unbeknownst to the participants. I think we often can underestimate the sort of new territories our minds wander off to during these states, as downtime's definition is polysemic and can constitute rest/recuperation and leisure activities, productive time away from our billpaying job, melancholy, sheltering indoors due to a pandemic, etc. Fred Moten refers to its convivial form in his oft-quoted sentence about how hanging out is the most anti-capitalist gesture one can do. In an interview asking what she hopes to do next, Claudia Rankine summons downtime's productive solitude when she answers, "I'm also interested in doing nothing for a while, to see what comes up."

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*Downtime* is an exhibition of sixteen paintings made between 2022 and 2023 by artist Elizabeth Ravn. The paintings range in size, the smallest being 32 x 40 cm, and the largest being 110 x 140 cm. All sixteen works are oil on canvas. The paintings, save for one of a building being torn down, depict friends, colleagues, and loved ones in various states of non-laboring situations: laying around, sitting, doing chores, going for walks, drinking Coca-Cola naked and hungover. Figures appearing in these paintings are listed here alphabetically: Alizée, Athanasios, August, Claude, Dorian, Ellinor, Liam, Lucci, Magdo, Manuel, Penny, Shirin, Silke, Zayne. I won't say whom, but I rang in 2022 with one of these figures, who, after cutting my hair like a young Jean-Michel Basquiat at my request, made out with me on their rooftop underneath the new year's fireworks, as friends.

To fit the title of the show, this text was written only during the downtime of my job as an artist assistant.

- Christian Alborz Oldham