

## *Everything Is So Alive!*

24 January — 30 March 2025

Bergen Kunsthall presents the group exhibition *"Everything Is So Alive!"* with works by Dora Budor, Tianzhuo Chen, Nikita Gale, Ventura Profana, Tracey Rose and Tejal Shah.

*"Everything Is So Alive!"* offers a hopeful exploration of the possibilities for cohabiting the ruins of a world moving into collapse. Rather than viewing collapse as mere destruction, the exhibition embraces it as a generative force. It considers collapse as a moment of new beginnings, where brokenness is understood as a condition to embody and negotiate, rejecting the neoliberal logic of repair.

After decades of queer theory evolving around world making, Jack Halberstam describes his concept of unworlding as "not antiutopian. It is a project that understands that utopia is delayed until we unmake the world that we are currently living in."<sup>1</sup> This concept explores the idea of dismantling the dominant frameworks and systems that shape our understanding of our existence. It emphasises the importance of breaking free from oppressive structures—social, political, and environmental—developed out of Western thought. Unworlding suggests an undoing of the existing world order, creating space for new possibilities that emerge from the collapse of these systems.

Through strategies of storytelling, preservation, and engagement with Indigenous knowledge systems, *"Everything Is So Alive!"* offers perspectives on navigating the state of brokenness. Beauty can be found in chaotic city soundscapes, kinship can be found in wastelands, and connections — both human and non-human — can be found in light and shadow, in forests and in the depths of the ocean. The new and existing artistic works depict forms of past, present and future life that seem like fiction: personal visions of hell and heaven; the appearance of a whale as a blessing; a motorised character traversing the galleries; caffeinated and intoxicating stimulants for managing contemporary life; and a frozen performance. Where do we go from here?

The exhibition insists on movement in circles and in all directions. The planets will continue moving, with or without us. And everything that moves is alive. In stillness, we sat on the Bergen mountaintop, and she said, *"Everything Is So Alive!"* After all, there are futures that await us.

## About the artists

**Nikita Gale** is an artist living and working in Los Angeles, California. The artist's work has recently been exhibited in the 2024 Whitney Biennial, New York; Chisenhale, London (2022); LAXART, Los Angeles (2022); Swiss Institute, New York (2022); California African American Museum, Los Angeles (2022); Kunstraum Kreuzberg, Berlin (2021); MoMA PS1, New York (2020), and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018).

**Tianzhuo Chen** lives and works in Berlin, Germany. Recent solo exhibitions include Song Art Museum, Beijing (2024); Tank Shanghai (2023); Dark Mofo, Tasmania (2021); Kyoto Experiment (2021); M Woods Museum, Beijing (2019); Kunsthalle Winterthur (2017), and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015).

**Tracey Rose** lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. Rose has exhibited widely internationally, most notably, Performa 17, New York (2017); Documenta 14, Athens, Greece and Kassel (2017); 58th Venice Biennale (2016); 11th Biennale de Lyon (2011); Tate Liverpool (2010); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008); The Hayward Gallery, London (2005), and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2005). *Shooting Down Babylon*, exhibition touring to Kunstmuseum Bern from Zeitz MOCAA, 2024. *Shooting Down Babylon*, exhibition touring to Queens Museum, New York, from Zeitz MOCAA, 2023. *Shooting Down Babylon*, mid-career retrospective exhibition, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town (with monograph), South Africa. 2022.

**Dora Budor** is a New York-based artist and writer. Budor's recent solo exhibitions include Nottingham Contemporary (2024); Galerie Molitor, Berlin (2023); Kunsthau Bregenz (2022); GAMeC Bergamo (2022); Progetto, Lecce (2021), and Kunsthalle Basel (2019). Her work has been featured in international group exhibitions including the Whitney Biennial, New York (2024) and the Venice Biennale (2022).

**Ventura Profana** is a missionary pastor, singer, writer, composer and visual artist living and working in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In recent years she has carried out actions and exhibited at Kunstverein Wien, Vienna (2024); the 60th Venice Biennale (2024); 35th São Paulo Biennale (2023); Serpentine, London (2023); Frestas Art Triennial, Sorocaba (2021); and Tenthaus, Oslo (2021).

**Tejal Shah** is an artist living and working in India. Shah's work has been exhibited internationally at venues including the 60th Venice Biennale (2024); 35th São Paulo Biennale (2023); 4th Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2018); Documenta 13, Kassel (2012); Tate Modern, London (2011); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2010), and the Rotterdam International Film Festival (2007).

## Foyer

**Tracey Rose** is best-known for her evolutionary performative practice which often translates to and is accompanied by photography, video, installation, and digital prints. Often described as absurd, anarchic and carnivalesque, Rose's work explores themes around

post-coloniality, gender and sexuality, race, and repatriation.

*If Hitler Was A Girl That Went to Art School [Hitler Girl]* (2025) is a new work by Tracey Rose. The work is designed to be displayed as a hologram on a robot vacuum cleaner, whose purpose is to move around the exhibition space to confront and destabilize. In a preliminary video format, the drawings and collages serve as a ghostly archive of authoritarianism—dictators, icons, agents of control. But this is not a mere critique; rather, it is an offering of alternative histories. What if the tyrant was the Artist? What if violence became creativity? Each pixelated portrait throbs with a latent eroticism and the pulsations of an unmade decision. They create an alternate universe where atrocity is aestheticised, and art itself becomes the battlefield for unfulfilled ambitions of power.

The text fragments in the hologram—lifted from the series, *Enema: The Art World Needs to Take a Shit*, which continues to explore the excremental nature of cultural production—dissolve and reappear throughout the holographic plane, as transient and insubstantial as the very critiques of the art world's complicity in perpetuating structures of violence.

Positioned as both a provocation and a meditation, Tracey Rose's text-based wall piece, *A Story about the Beginning of the END OF TIME* (2025), confronts the viewer with a cascade of fragmented narratives that oscillate between dystopian prophecy, biting social critique, and existential reflection. Painted directly on the wall by the reception, the text weaves a cosmic yet intimate tapestry of collapse and renewal, drawing connections between race, gender, power, and the planetary crisis.

## Gallery II

*"mothers, millennia (or milleniums),  
tides and rivers are dancing.  
trails of stars, escapes in hunts,  
near the fire, into the sea...  
I feel a surreal peace."*

The sound of "Eu Não Vou Morrer" (We Will Not Die) and the voice of artist Ventura Profana fills the entrance gallery, as part of her installation *How Deep Is The Ocean* (2023). The Brazilian missionary pastor, singer, writer, composer and visual artist uses evangelical strategies to develop methods of resistance against the white patriarchy and colonial culture embedded in Christianity. She advocates for the multiplication and abundance of Black, Indigenous, and Trans life.

Profana's artistic practice addresses the poisoned state of the world and seeks a cure by building community. She and the travas, short for travesti, Brazilian and Latin American trans gender identity, have begun constructing another world, reflecting on the idea that healing can arise from unexpected sources. Religion, as Profana suggests, serves as both a weapon and a means for liberation.

*How Deep Is The Ocean* takes form as an altar devoted

to the divine spirits (orishas) Yemanja and Oxum from the Yoruba religion. Originating in West Africa and spread to the Americas through the Atlantic slave trade, Yemanja is considered the goddess of the sea, whilst Oxum is known as the goddess of rivers. In the artist's words, we are reminded that we were "born after being swallowed by a big fish," and we must never run away from ourselves. Our existence is like seeds and jewels—precious and resilient, shaped by our experiences. In the depths of the ocean among the mysteries of the waters, it is possible to find other ways of being; a new anatomy, a body and a spirit that defy colonial order and challenge incarceration.

Healing can emerge from spaces marked by fear and suffering, transforming them into realms of joy and peace. Belief in transformation is essential to building a world where dignity is accessible to all. Art, for Profana, must be a space where water flows freely, committed to the causes of the oppressed, the persecuted and those condemned by system of violence. Art needs to be a space where the waters can flow unchecked.

In this exhibition, Profana honors Yemanja and Oxum's beauty, power, and care, reminding us that we were born to be free, loved, and that cleansing our waters is a vital journey, no matter how impossible it may seem.

In Kalunga, Profana's Brazilian community, colonial pain fades, and boundaries dissolve. Her mission is to sow life in inhospitable terrains and renew belief in freedom and transformation, even if we are tied to a reality known for incarceration.

## Gallery I

Tianzhuo Chen's video and performance works merge tradition and ecology, spirituality and technology, progress and interspecies symbiosis into mesmerising installations.

At the core of the gallery, a film projection immerses viewers in the sights and sounds of Lamalera, Indonesia. Here, the appearance of a whale symbolises the ancestors showing themselves and offering a present as a blessing from God, like the ocean has opened up and proffered its gifts. The cry "Baleo! Baleo!" signals both the presence of a whale and the deeper cultural and spiritual currents that flow through the community. It is a call that challenges fate and has existed for centuries, in struggle, worship and redemption.

Rooted in the intricate yet affective narration in Lamalera village in Indonesia, *Ocean Cage* (2023) encompasses the entanglement between the whale, the fisherman and the ancestor. The encounter with the sperm whale highlights the connectedness of a complex, interspecies ecosystem. This occurrence is the bedrock of both the local solidary economy and a spiritual connection with the ancestors. The work presents a system of interwoven coexistence, like the links of a chain where a beginning and end can no longer be determined.

Audiences are invited to breathe and dissolve into the

porous and leaking bodies of water, mammals, fisherfolk, ballads, breezes and spirits. By immersing themselves in the tender, still, afflicted ideological rift, audiences can reflect upon the interdependent relationships between species and imagine a more-than-human justice.

The immersive installation also creates the setting for the performance in which performer Siko Setyanto becomes the central protagonist in a cast of changing characters.

The performance is presented in collaboration with Borealis.

## Gallery III

Dora Budor's *Pucks (bagarreurs)* (2021) dot the floor of Gallery III. The French word *bagarreurs*, which means brawlers, underscores the work's association with ice hockey as an exceptionally physical and competitive sport. Their gliding circulation and the lack of order produce a negation of space and disorient the viewers, which are made to oscillate between vigilance and distraction.

*Pucks (bagarreurs)* were moulded out of the discarded coffee collected from the Kunsthaus Bregenz museum cafe into the solid shapes of standardised hockey pucks. Extracted from what has already been exhausted, they play into shifting meaning of language and material circulation. Part of Budor's recent exhibition *Continent* (2022), the work follows the artist's long-standing interest in neoliberal demand for productivity and self-optimization and resistance to those social imperatives.

Whilst caffeine is the most widely consumed psychoactive substance in the world and stimulant central to ushering of productivity, the films *Orange Film I* and *Orange Film II* (both 2023) feature distortion resulting from a camera rig equipped with a glass of orange wine – a popular intoxicant with mythologised premodern origins. Orange Films mimic structuralist tendencies in film while using minor, prosumer tools. Made in collaboration with Noah Barker, they were shot in New York on sites of adaptive reuse such as Domino Sugar Refinery and High Line, in which nostalgia and disorientation act as synthetic portals to a past instrumental to the recent urban development.

The new series *blue horses* (2024) refer to another recent phenomenon of mobility and privatization. Part of Budor's photo archive, Instax polaroids capture Citibikes which have been permanently freed from the docking stations and let to roam within the urban landscape. Enabled by the monopoly on the service, the bike-sharing system has become synonymous with the contemporary representations of New York, advertising an association between Citibank and the City of New York.

## Gallery IV

Tejal Shah's practice is influenced by queer feminism,

eco-poetics, and Buddhism. Shah has worked with various media, including video, photography, performance, sound, drawing, and installation. Since 2017, her practice has primarily been non-object-based.

*Between the Waves* (2012) is a five-channel video installation that unfolds as a circular fable—a speculative mythology that offers fertile ground for reflecting on the Anthropocene and its entanglements. The work invites viewers into a surreal landscape of transformation and interconnection, where human and more-than-human relationships are reimagined and the boundaries between nature, technology, and culture begin to blur.

Drawing on a layered, palimpsestic approach, the installation brings together elements from art history, queer and non-binary aesthetics, eco-sexuality, and spirituality, while also engaging with themes of technology and science. Shah's methods oscillate between the high-tech and low-tech, blending simple animations with a reimagined iPhone Morse code app. The decoded signals, framed within the shape of a Rosetta stone, suggest themes of translation and interpretation, offering viewers space to consider their own limits of understanding and imagination.

The title emerged serendipitously from Shah's misreading of Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* and *The Waves*. This coincidence reflects the artist's interest in the fluid nature of waves—whether in science or mysticism—where meaning and form shift depending on their origin and context.

Within the installation, hybrid unicorn-like figures inhabit a dreamlike world of waste and regeneration. These characters engage in ambiguous, playful acts: dancing on landfills; assembling patterns underwater with discarded plastics; and creating kinship with garbage, insects, and polluted environments. Their movements and actions evoke questions about survival, transformation, and the role of touch and intimacy in making sense of a damaged world.

The installation holds space for humor, awkwardness, and curiosity, embracing the unpredictable and the accidental as integral to its process and meaning. Rather than presenting a fixed narrative or solution, *Between the Waves* invites viewers to explore its shifting layers, drawing their own connections and interpretations. It offers a poetic meditation on what might remain—of bodies, ecologies, and gestures—after profound upheaval.

## Gallery V

See separate handout

## Upstairs

Tracey Rose's film *Raison d'Être* (2009) depicts the reimagined story of Mami Wata, an African deity and mythical creature. Across African and diasporic narratives, Mami Wata is depicted with a female torso and the lower body of a fish. Contact with the water

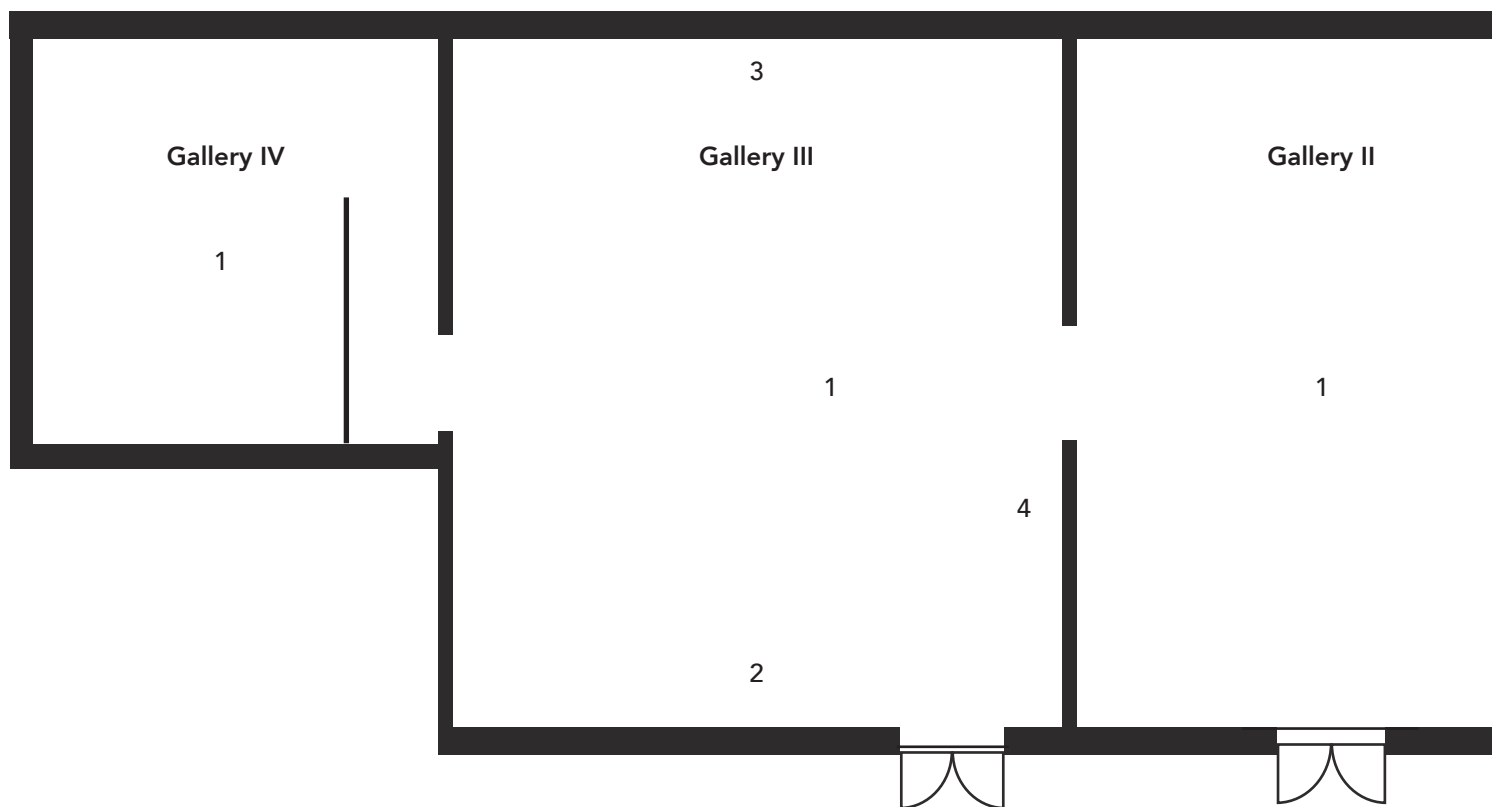
spirit leads to initiation into the supernatural world, bringing wealth, health and beauty. In the artist's film, Mami Wata preens herself on a riverbank while a boat approaches. The goddess jumps into the water and swims towards the boat, choking on oil and nuclear waste. This is witnessed from the boat by a young girl called Verida who is stirred into action, organising a protest march to save Mami Wata from the polluted river and refusing to eat fish.

Rose's film uses techniques from French New Wave cinema that were popular in the 1950s and 1960s. The narration is in French with English subtitles written by the artist in the style of her drawings. The story is told in episodic fragments, like a montage interwoven with pictures, text and music. By translating oral tradition into an experimental visual form, the film uses African folklore to critique contemporary socio-political issues, including environmental destruction caused by industrialisation.

Curated by Nora-Swantje Almes and Silja Leifsdottir

Supported by H. Westfal-Larsen og Hustru Anna Westfal-Larsen's Almennyttige Fond





#### Gallery IV

1  
 Tejal Shah  
*Between the Waves*, 2012  
 5 channel video installation  
 Partially synchronized, colour and  
 b/w, sound  
 TRT 85 minutes and 40 seconds,  
 loop  
 Courtesy the artist

#### Gallery III

1  
 Dora Budor  
*Pucks (bagarreurs)*, 2021  
 Coffee waste, thermoplastic poly-  
 mer, wax  
 Variable dimensions  
 Courtesy the artist and Galerie  
 Molitor, Berlin

2  
 Noah Barker & Dora Budor  
*Orange Film II*, 2023  
 HD video, colour, sound  
 4 minutes, 7 seconds  
 Courtesy the artists

3  
 Noah Barker & Dora Budor  
*Orange Film I*, 2023  
 HD video, colour, sound  
 6 minutes, 42 seconds  
 Courtesy the artists

4  
 Dora Budor  
*blue horses*, 2024  
 Fujifilm Instax Wide Print,  
 archival boxes  
 12 pcs, 32 x 24,5 x 3,5 cm (each)  
 Ed. 3+ 2AP  
 Courtesy the artist

#### Gallery II

1  
 Ventura Profana  
*How Deep Is The Ocean*, 2023  
 Installation composed of video,  
 digital collage on adhesive paper  
 and altar made with candles, shells,  
 stones, pearls and sand  
 Variable dimensions  
 Courtesy the artist

## Gallery I

1

### Foyer and bookshop

1

Tracey Rose  
*If Hitler Was a Girl That Went  
to Art School [Hitler Girl], 2024*  
Tracey Rose Performance  
Sculpture: Animated Hologram Fan,  
Tripod, Vacuum Cleaner.  
A.I. Protocol Systems  
generated by Adilson De Oliveira  
& A.I. generated soundscapes  
by Working Horse.  
13 minutes, 21 seconds  
190 x 65 cm  
Courtesy the artist

*New version arriving soon.*

### Gallery I

1

Tianzhuo Chen  
*Ocean Cage, 2023*  
Mixed media installation  
Variable dimensions  
Courtesy the artist

### Gallery V

*See separate handout*

### Upstairs

1

Tracey Rose  
*Raison d'Être, 2009*  
Single-channel video projection  
8 minutes, 50 seconds  
Courtesy the artist

## Events

### Opening

Fri 24 Jan 20:00

### Opening Party

ASIANDOPEBOYS, Hordaland Goths

United

Fri 24 Jan 20:00

Landmark

### Plattform: Artist talks

Tianzhuo Chen, Ventura Profana,

Tracey Rose

Sat 25 Jan 14:00

Upstairs

### Plattform: Tejal Shah

Thu 20 Feb TBA

### Workshop with Tejal Shah

21–23 Feb

Bergen Kunsthall,

Live Studio

### Tours

Every Sunday

13:00 Family tour with workshop

14:00 Guided tour

## Bergen Kunsthall

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Kjersti Solbakken

Director

soso brafield

Communication

(on leave)

Sofia Marie Hamnes

Live Programme Manager

Thea Haug

Members and Reception

Ragna Haugstad

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alphie hubbard

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Marie Lahn-Johannessen

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