



EN

## Gig

with Stina Fors, Lucca Süss, Cyril Tyrone Hübscher,  
Jason Hirata, Virginie Sistek

Opening on Saturday, 7th June / Exhibition until 13th of July 2025

### Gig or Notes On a Nu Rockism

by Nikolas Brummer

It's the year 2005, and I am glued to the tube television in my parents' living room. There is a music video playing that features a potpourri of archetypical aughts characters. A bunch of young, blonde women by a swimming pool – cut – a 13-year-old boy with a baseball cap – cut – a woman in a business suit – cut – some guys in baggy jeans in front of Times Square – cut. They are all facing the camera, lip-syncing the song's lyrics: "Hey, hey, I wanna be a rockstar." What would later be dubbed "one of the worst songs of all time" by several pop-culture listicles is, in that moment, alluring me with its display of collectivized aspiration: the single *Rockstar* by Canadian band Nickelback proposes a lifestyle at once accessible and out of reach, animating avatars of everyday life with its supposed sex appeal and magnetic cool. The song arrived at the tail end of a decades-long obsession over rockstar antics, soundtracking the end of an era by demonstrating an awkward self-importance that today could only be labeled "cringe."

Rock music's death was imminent. A year earlier, music critic Kelefa Sanneh had published *The Rap Against Rockism* in *The New York Times*. Reviving a term from 1970s music journalism, he described the "rockist"

as someone who distills rock into caricature, then weaponizes it: idolizing so-called legends while mocking pop stars, favoring punk over disco, live performance over music video, the growl over gloss. Rockism elevated authenticity, rawness, and "talent," while dismissing artifice, polish, and mass appeal. Sanneh's critique – exposing rockism's macho, queerphobic, and racist undercurrents – paved the way for a new evaluative mode: poptimism.

Fueled by the mainstream industry and the so-called "loudness wars," poptimism was the antidote to toxic rockists, valorizing pop as a profound art form worthy of intellectual scrutiny and respect. Opening doors for other genres in music culture, poptimism later found further momentum in avant-garde and experimental branches of hyperpop and electronic dance music. The pop bubble inflated, until it burst. Pop's volume, sheen, and ferocity – fortified by theoretical frameworks and aesthetic categories (see, for example: bimbofication) – eventually exhausted themselves, metabolized by the cultural machinery in an infinite feedback loop. What was meant to feel like a liberating embrace of artificiality, stripping away guilt and surrendering to pleasure, soon revealed itself as escapism, absorbed by consumerist despair and the extractive logic of online virality.

In search of new forms, recent years have ushered in a kind of *nu rockism*. Now fashioned more diverse and inclusive, nu rockist expression frames authenticity as both intrinsic intuition and deliberate strategy; not only as a given, but also as something decidedly manufactured. These well-crafted utterances are defined by gestures of analogue sincerity and ambiguous emotional complexity, tailored to fit both their producers and their consumers. Defying the binary of high and low culture, I've seen nu rockism surface across the cultural spectrum: in the lime-green opus magnum of the girlified rockstar, in the massive comeback of shoegaze on social media, or in the reinvention of a Berlin-based ex-hyperpop artist performing an unplugged set at a downtown music bar – replete with live instruments, lyrics exploring trans desire, and a searing cover of Hole's iconic "Doll Parts." I've witnessed bands returning to the Global Billboard

Top 100, lost myself in ravaging moshpits imbued with a surprisingly respectful spirit, and heard rock music elements being reappropriated as a derivative, employed as narrative storyline, and adopted wholesale as costume and brand.

Given my interest in conceiving of music as metaphorical for other artistic or cultural currents, I like to view *Gig* at Hamlet through this lens of *nu rockism*. While not all of the works engage with the subject of music directly, the exhibition seems to hint at a sounding world, using rock's material values – DIY ethos, rawness, realness – as an aesthetic trajectory, albeit deadlocked in its struggle for emancipation. Here, the word “gig” doubles: once a site for subversive expression, it becomes a matter-of-fact means for contemporary survival: to work is to perform, and vice versa. This melancholic unmasking leads to a sobering demystification: the rockstar is broke(n). Promises of actually fulfilling desire (money, sex, fame, glamour) appear distant, their realization both an inevitable wellspring and a futile craving. What is far more appealing, then, is the acknowledgment of this impossibility, transforming Nickelback's cringey hook into: “Hey, hey, here's a detailed and transparent account of how I'm continuously failing while forcibly revolving around efforts to become—simultaneously disseminating but also contesting the assumption that—I wanna be a rockstar.”

Situated in this dilemma of political and economical inhibition, the rockstar of *nu rockism* resorts to post-cool ambiguity, entertaining eclecticism, difference, and disruption as coping mechanisms. The odious returns from the margins and comes into renewed focus. A pause, a dreaded silence, begets relief. Calm music disintegrates into noise. At Hamlet, the ghost of a screeching performer haunts the exhibition space. The distant rattling of her drums makes the air tremble. This *nu rockist* draws from a rich repertoire of tactics for manipulating the audience's mood and attention. Direct address and seemingly spontaneous remarks become a commentary on the performer's emotional outpouring which unfolds before the audience's eyes. Appearing simultaneously magnetic and repellent, her scream echoes beyond both caricature and catharsis.



Curated by Divided Studios

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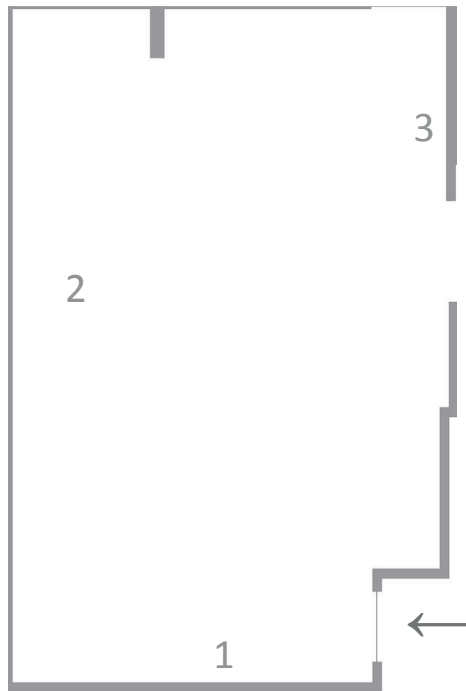
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Exhibition until 13th of July 2025



1 | Cyril Tyrone Hübscher  
*untitled*, 2025

spray paint, dispersion paint, foam  
cardboard, screws, glue, glitter, epoxy  
resin, mini soy sauce bottles, wire,  
straws, aluminum tape, vape pen

3 | Lucca Süß  
*she just smoked my eyelids*, 2025  
faux-hair, cotton, chrome steel, metal,  
plastic

2 | Stina Fors  
*Stina Force*, Performance, 7th June, 8pm



5 | Virginie Sistek  
*L'envie de plaire*, 2024  
Fabric

6 | Lucca Süß  
*peculiar dive into  
a harvest of shine*, 2025  
faux-hair, resin, fabric, chrome steel,  
metal, leather

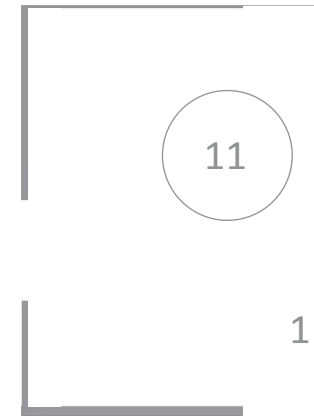


7 | Lucca Süss  
*vaguely figuring out a level of joy*  
*i've named shall not be tamed*, 2025  
 faux-hair, leather, metal, resin, plastic

8 | Jason Hirata  
*Almost Happy: to be in front of as before,*  
*and the risk of going after – not yet*, 2025  
 three metronomes

9 | Virginie Sistek  
*Les gammes du game*, 2025  
 wood

10 | Lucca Süss  
*rings a tinkerbell in the dawn,*  
*gummysmile or that was gone*, 2025  
 faux-hair, leather, chrome steel, metal,  
 resin



11 | Jason Hirata  
*Grave Fatura – Hamlet*, 2025  
 Invoice

1 | Cyril Tyrone Hübscher  
*untitled*, 2025  
 spray paint, dispersion paint, foam  
 cardboard, screws, glue, glitter, epoxy  
 resin, mini soy sauce bottles, wire,  
 straws, aluminium tape, vape pen