

# TIBOR DE NAGY

11 Rivington St New York NY 10002 212 262 5050 info@tibordenagy.com

**assume vivid astro focus**

*Hairy What? Hairy How?*

**May 16 to June 26, 2021**



**assume vivid astro focus** *Poodle*, 2020  
acrylic on board with wool fringe  
46 x 27 x 1 inches (116.8 x 68.6 x 2.5 cm), studio view

Tibor de Nagy Gallery is pleased to present **assume vivid astro focus** - *Hairy What? Hairy How?* The exhibition, originally scheduled for last year, will be assume vivid astro focus's first with the gallery. For this inaugural show, curator Ricardo Sardenberg, wrote the following essay.

## *The Fast and Energetic Movement of Stasis* by Ricardo Sardenberg

In a 20-year career, assume vivid astro focus (avaf), encompasses a collective project that is also individual, and vice versa. avaf is notable for working in a diversity of mediums, often simultaneously and in an amalgamation of videos, paintings, tapestries, wallpaper, drawings, clothes, masks, neons, and installations. avaf creates immersive artistic experiences in which the public is invited to submerge themselves. The experience can be totalizing for the viewer, a gesamtkunstwerk, an enveloping and sensorial encounter. Yet all of the pieces are individual. Each is part of a larger mosaic but also always have their own expressiveness.

The set of works that avaf presents here in *Hairy What? Hairy How?* value this specificity. The title of the show pays tribute to the Chicago artist group The Hairy Who? These artists as a group hid their identity not as a collective, but as project of depersonalization of the authorship. Similarly avaf is not an artist, movement or a collective, but all and none at the same time. avaf can be thought as a creative platform for different projects. Each project has a different configuration of collaborators or none. avaf's work is permeated by insinuations to ambiguous and shifting sexual genders, represented in a fragmentary figuration, which leaves much to the public's imagination. Although the works in the current exhibition are free and detached from the total experience of art, which we saw in many of the great public installations previously created by avaf, the public is still immersed in powerful colors and abstractions which emanate a solar energy that stimulate one to decipher them into some kind of coherent image.

The images are methodically planned on a computer screen, as if they were an architectural project. They resemble a certain type of Brazilian constructivism with its well-define shapes and forms. However, the shapes contain joy, sensuality and humor, and are filled with bold vibrant color in a dialogical clash with dégradés (gradients), all contained in well-defined shapes that sometimes reminds us of coloring books. Even what appears to be gestural and spontaneous, like a crayon scrawl or doodle, in reality is a careful rendition of a previously planned design on the computer screen.

The paradox one finds in avaf's new paintings can also be seen in the material presence of the carefully manufactured executed surfaces of corrugated duplex kraft paper. As objects, colors and shapes that were once digital gain in this process a tactile appeal. The delicate cutouts that subtract the flat surface of the cardboard reveal a corrugated interior, which is plastically incorporated into the overall composition of the image. What in reality is an act of subtraction thus becomes an apparent addition, as if the layers were created through the collage of abstract shapes and color patterns. It is in this operation that one can feel the sensorial relationship with architecture, and the corporeal experience of space, which was always a fundamental aspect in avaf's total installations.

In addition, the effect is also a sensual transposition and rendition of the computer's backlight onto the painting itself. The paintings' light source is the pornographic light emanated by a computer screen. To achieve this, avaf has developed their own "pantone-like" color system that encompasses over 500 tones. These signatures colors, or pantones, have the mission of translating the sensorial experience previously

encountered in avaf installations to the optical sensory system. What before was a communal event similar to a dance floor, now is a personal, individual, contemplative experience of audacious color tones. I would venture to say that avaf is an impressionist painting for the 21st century, in which the light of the computer is the mediating force of pictorial reality.

Not unlike the virtual space, where all references happen asynchronously, without respect for barriers of historical and cultural notions, the public might see in avaf's imagery dozens of possible references simultaneously, like collages by the German artist Kurt Schwitters, to the very Brazilian syncretic symbols of Rubem Valentim, or the tropical urban landscapes by Tarsila do Amaral, or even the choreography by Michael Clark and punk costumes by Leigh Bowery featured in the film *Hail the New Puritan*. Or are these references pure imagination of an educated public eye and in reality are these images of buttocks, dicks, breasts, mouths, extra-long nails?

One has to remember that all these works were developed mostly in the past year, during a time in which all our ideas of possible ecstatic communal experience have been subverted. In this private world where we all have been forced to live in the past year, these works give us a response of pure energy that one can feel pass through the body, albeit a private body, instead of a collective one. They feel like a remedy, a shot of powerful color-energy, an invitation to dance against all the fear, unhappiness, pain and exhaustion caused by the pandemic.

The great challenge proposed by avaf is the tightrope one has to walk between what is, on the one hand, an extremely well planned and controlled artistic action, which uses a software as if a tool, a brush, to build structures of colors (avaf pantones) — and on the other, the gestural freedom of the subjective imagination of the public: one sees what our desire commands to see. We are all looking at the movement of clouds and trying to guess their future shapes using an algorithm that sets shapes in the flat depth of a computer backlight.

**assume vivid astro focus** was founded by Eli Sudbrack (b. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1968) in 2001. avaf occasionally morphs into a duo with Paris-based artist Christophe Hamaide Pierson (b. Paris, 1973) and sometimes also into a collective, depending on the different projects they are involved in. Sudbrack lives and works between São Paulo and New York.

avaf has been the subject of major exhibitions, performances and public art projects around the world. These include Galerie Hussenot, Paris (2020); CCSP, São Paulo (2019); Storage by Hyundai Card, Seoul, South Korea (2019); Roskilde Festival, Roskilde, Denmark (2019); Museu Brasileiro de Escultura (MUBE), São Paulo, Brazil (2019); Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, USA (2019); Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg, Germany (2019); MATE, Lima, Peru (2017); The Faena Art Center, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2014) and Miami (2017); Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Santa Barbara, USA (2016); Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany (2016); Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, USA (2015); The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway (2009); São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo, Brazil (2008); Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA (2008); Museum of Contemporary Art (MOT), Tokyo, Japan (2007); 1st Athens Biennale, Athens, Greece (2007); The Geffen Contemporary (MoCA), Los Angeles, USA (2005); The Whitney Biennial, New York, USA (2004); among others.

Later this year avaf will participate in the Thailand Biennale and is curating a "posthumous collaboration" with the tridimensional tapestries of Norberto Nicola and Jacques Douchez opening late 2021 at Museum of Modern Art (MAM), São Paulo.

**Ricardo Sardenberg** is a curator, publisher and art critic living and working in São Paulo, Brazil. Formerly, he was director at Zabriskie Gallery, NY from 1994 to 1998 and from 1998 until 2000, he was curator and executive producer for exhibitions at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo. From 2001 until 2005, he curated the founding collection and developed the program at Inhotim, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Later on he founded Cobogó, an art and culture publishing house based in Rio de Janeiro. He also curated a series of exhibitions which began at Mendes Wood DM, and evolved over the years in different venues such as Pivô Arte e Pesquisa, Galeria Luisa Strina, Bergamin Gomide and Galleria Continua, which culminated with an independent show called *Fuck U Mr. President*, in downtown São Paulo.