



CLEARING

Neil Beloufa
Pandemic Pandemonium
January 29 – April 10, 2022

Here we are again, sending out well wishes to be reunited again from afar; across a continent, over an ocean, and sometimes just down the street. This recurring pattern of our lives has become regrettably predictable. Neil Beloufa, like all good artists, has the ability to tell stories that prepare us for what's coming. These aren't stories in the bougie or post-bougie sense; those that make the viewer think they are the character at the centre of the story. Neil's stories are more like myth-making, where the political process and struggle of the community are embedded within, never a centralized point perception, ultimately providing narratives for us to understand in common and work through together.

Almost a decade ago, in 2014, I invited Neil to join me in the Canadian Rockies mountain range for a residency and to make an exhibition. He brought most of his studio team then, and they produced the film at the heart of this exhibition. Back then it was called Home is Wherever I'm With You, and I described it as a goofy, soap-opera-like comedy of errors and disinformation, set in the context of a global pandemic all told through skype calls between the characters. Then the myth we made became real, so the film was re-edited into a mini-series and was given an extra layer of engagement, games.

We've all heard how gaming will take over the future, but give it a try before scoffing about it. Over a million views/players so far for a weird art film tells us that we must be onto something. So throughout the pandemic, we experimented with the project on different websites, and in a year-long exhibition in Milan too. At the same time, the next layer of the internet accelerated. We're talking Web3, the internet of value, blockchain, decentralization, NFTs and DAOs, and all those new words that caught fire on Twitter, Reddit, and Discord. Our language was forever shifted, and a lingua franca between gamers, basketball fans, teenagers, art world snobs, hackers, and nerds was born. The team producing these online and real life experiences evolved and formalized into a new production company, ebb.global that's describing itself as a Distributed Organization (DO) that develops Web3 projects with artists, galleries, museums, and brands; integrating digital and physical cultural experiences. With members from the North American West Coast to Paris and beyond, we're trying to answer to the challenge that new technology has maybe a little over a decade before it gets acculturated and solidified into an infrastructure.

That's why ebb.global is working with curiosity and collaboration in this uncertain and frenetic space. What's at stake is the ability for artists and their communities to forge the values of independent culture, artist-driven approaches to production, and an economic system that will better reward those who contribute, both creators and supporters. These are the potentials, but the tools and the culture they produce are still to be seen. It feels like everyone outside of art is looking at us with this new technology and waiting to see how we work with it. They are looking at us again, once more, like in pre-modern times, and the general expectation is that we create stories, artworks and cultural world-making that can get mass-collaborative relationships ignited, and in turn maybe we'll get to be part of the momentum that redefines how value is ascribed, determined and distributed. But if none of this speculative digital layer that's being built out from the artworks is all that

interesting to you, that's fine too. You don't need to get it nor take part in it to visit the show. For the time being, you can still take part as you would have before this digital Promethean momentum took off.

When you join us in person, you'll be greeted, hosted, guided, and sometimes distracted by three avatars in the exhibition space; the yellow bot, the blue bot, and the red bot. These characters are an amalgamation of ebb.global's community, and they compete to gain your attention; the most valuable resource these days. But you have to pay attention to what the characters in the film say too. This isn't a biennial where you should just catch five mins to get the vibe and move on. The knowledge you gain from staying with the film chapters will be enough for you to play some games and quizzes inside the space. This is like Robert Filliou's eternal network, meets the shitty sims game Instagram keeps advertising to you, inside an immersive cinema. If you gain enough tokens in these challenges you'll be able to acquire artworks that you can take home with you in your hands, and also in your crypto wallet. The interfaces take some time getting used to. The keyboards aren't what you're used to either, but they work, we promise. Note, they may invoke some neuroplasticity, by getting you to learn anew and acclimatize. If you get stumped, fret not; just go find the central room, with a cinema in the round responsive space that interacts with your body's movement. Perform in here, and you'll get some codes to get you through the games. In here you'll also meet some notable figures like Bill Clinton and Milli Vanilli on cheaters' beach, who will shame you if you try to collect too many codes.

We can try to redesign value and culture with you, but one thing stays true, we can't take away the unchill vibes of just riding on the backs of others. This show is an embodiment of the Web3 space; gamified content, segmented and unlocked by your commitment to it. Like a matryoshka doll or any good artwork... the layers can be peeled away over time. A game of lock and keys ensues. A new form of storytelling and world-making is born. This is just the beginning. Hold onto your tokens and NFTs gained here because they'll allow you to access future engagements, both online and IRL. We can stay in touch, and not just with some likes. Until next time; have fun, build with us, and tell your friends. Let's keep making myths together.

Jesse McKee

Neil Beloufa (born in 1985 in Paris, FR) lives and works in Paris.

The artist had solo exhibitions in Kunsthau Glarus, Zürich; LISTE 16, Basel; Kunstraum Innsbruck, Innsbruck; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Fondation Ricard, Paris; Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin; Lehbruck Museum, Duisburg; La Casa Encendida, Madrid; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Institut Francais, Amman; The Western Front, Vancouver; New Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; MOMA, New York; Whitebox, New York; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Zero; and C L E A R I N G Brussels. Neil Beloufa has been part of several group exhibitions including New Museum, New York; Sculpture Center, New York; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Songeun Art Space, Seoul; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Carré d'Art - Musée d'art Contemporain de Nîmes, Nîmes; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Royal College of Art, London; Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz; C L E A R I N G, Brussels and New York.

Works by Neil have been shown at the Triennale Kleinplastik Fellbach, Fellbach; Taipei Biennial; Shanghai Biennale; and the 55th Venice Biennale.

Neil Beloufa's work is part of the collections of Julia Stoschek, Düsseldorf, DE; Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; Sammlung Goetz, Munich, DE; David Roberts Arts Fondation, London, UK; Fondation Francès, Senlis, FR; Pinault Collection, FR; MoMA, New York, USA; K11 Foundation, Shanghai, CN; and MART Museum, Rovereto, IT.