

foreign & domestic

**Peter BD**

*GALLERY ANNIVERSARY*

July 14, 2023

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**VENUE**

**FOREIGN & DOMESTIC**

**DATE/TIME**

**FRIDAY JULY 14, 2023  
DOORS 7PM, 8PM START**

**EVENT**

**"GALLERY ANNIVERSARY" WITH PETER BD  
PERFORMATIVE SCREENING OF "ART FILM"**

**DIRECTORS**

**PETER BD & CALEB BRYANT MILLER**

**CAST**

**ASHLEY GUZMAN, JUSTIN KAMP,  
FRANCIS LOUVIS, TRAN PHAM, OWEN PRUM**

**DJS**

**DON-RI & POISONFROG**

**FEAT.**

**NICHOLAS W JOHNSON "SUBMERGED GALLERY"**

**ADDRESS**

**24 RUTGERS STREET, NEW YORK**



## ENTER THE ART WORLD (Peter BD's "Gallery Anniversary")

by Matilda Lin Berke

### ACT I: SUBMERSIBLE

It is the summer of the imploded submersible. As a corrective, collective measure against hubris—against an *Event* at once tragic and luridly preventable—we develop a new fear of being underwater. It is also the summer of the Canadian wildfires. In New York, the air, like water, becomes thick and unbreathable.

From the street, the *Gallery* resembles a vessel surfacing on Rutgers, or a sunken aquarium. In a small mirror set above the entrance—a kind of reverse porthole—you can see the other side reflected in miniature: as in the curved surface of a dewdrop, a little jewel-set image of *Real Life*.

Tonight, at "Gallery Anniversary," there is an image in residence ("Submerged Gallery"). From its place on the far wall, it scans the contours of the space (hypothetically flooded) moving like the opening credits in a video game (planar, totalizing) down from the street; through the doorway; through the fake water, its flat, mirrored surface.

It moves you too. You cannot control the pace at which you travel; you are immersed, compelled to inhabit, to *enter*. The projection functions as a kind of alternate world, an *Art World*, an oblique reflection

which calls upon you to relitigate your steps as you take them, to imagine yourself here, but not *here*: here, but abstracted, blurred, like seeing it indirectly, from somewhere else.

Here, I am talking to Nicholas (*Artist*) about the *Gallery* (submerged).

Nicholas is interested in biosystems — mimesis, convergent evolution — the paths, deliberate or accidental, by which constructs wind up approximating life (a work of autofiction, a robot that runs like a dog or flies, inconceivably, like a bee).

Art Critic: I think of your practice as being very Grimesian.

Artist: What?

Art Critic: As in *Grimes*.

Artist: Oh, Grimes.

Like Grimes, he works in hybrids, chimeras. In the process of digitally mapping the space for a separate installation, Nicholas found himself gathering media organically: his construction materials, the real textures of the interior. From these material surfaces he generated immaterial ones—then dressed them up in *mud* texture, *aquatic plants*

texture, *water* texture — lacy half-images thinly, persuasively layered to suggest the aftermath of a major flooding *Event*. I'm thinking of "Doppio Sogno di Primavera" ("The Double Dream of Spring") by Giorgio de Chirico, which treats reality and its mirrors; this soft collection of surfaces, infinitely recursive; piled upon itself like tulle or *mille-feuille*, a Life in the Vivid Dream.

I'm speaking as an *Art Critic*, Johnson as an *Artist*. We are writing this text in real time — applying lenses, glazes, surfaces — gliding over it at a predetermined pace. These textures, too, are borrowed from *Real Life*; glossed in the *Art World*, its adhesive sheen.

Art Critic: Is this—

Artist: Is that—

Art Critic: —The real experience I'm having?

Were we submerged, the kelp would be up to our shoulders, the *Gallery* dark, the light crystallized into a beam, a chifony surface, a planar ray like the one painted over the fake window in the Morgan. So I act like I would were I really underwater, and look, and listen.

## ACT II: LIFE IN THE DOUBLE DREAM

From somewhere past the screen, Peter emerges from the belly of the *Gallery* — an elusive, submersible figure; an *Artist-in-Residence*; a resident of the sunken *Art World*, the real life aquatic. He is wearing his signature paper NPC mask. Anonymized, but not really, he shakes some hands. A guy reaches out and is ignored. Then some things go on behind me that I can't see.

Mimesis — becoming what you see, or seeing in the world what you've identified in yourself. I am thinking about what I am called upon to think about: what draws my attention. Also, I'm drinking a beer. This summer, I started drinking beer because I wanted to keep up with the guys, *Art Critics*, *Artists*...

Artist: Enter the *Art World*...

(Enter the *Art World*.)

I am reminded of Mark Rothko's Seagram murals for the doomed Four Seasons Grill Room, made to press in on the restaurant's patrons — dark portals, negative surfaces casting their shadows across *Real Life*, the *Art World* opening up its mouth and saying *Enter*...

The old Grill Room is gone, of course; in its place, we have the Grill — still expensive but truncated, dulled, watered-down by

postmodernity. The Rothkos, which never even made it there, hang in storage or up at the Tate Modern, cruelly decontextualized. Half the *Art* would have been made in the room (the *Gallery*), the reaction, the interaction.

This is why Peter does what he is doing now — intoning facts and invitations and aphorisms at half speed like he's leading a yoga class underwater; smoothing, optimizing his voice; modulating it, modeling it out into the languid sinusoidal waves of low-frequency vibration healing. This is all part of his practice, his gamification, his curatorial project, which sidles up to *Real Life* — the real thing — wearing the flat paper mask of pastiche: call-and-response, social-mathematical functions, oblique reflections and reflected gestures dressed up as "skits" and songs, summer camp games, flimsy talent-show fare.

Artist: Downtown, that's the *Art World*. Now it's time for... "Art Film..."

(Another guy smiles, then looks around to make sure this is an appropriate reaction. This is beer. This is water.)

Again, the screen demonstrates our surroundings, displaced — this time along a different axis (time) — "Art Film" was shot in this very *Gallery*, which opened a year

ago, which is what we're here celebrating tonight. Sometimes there is a film within the film. Cuts back and forth reveal that things are also happening inside (on the surface of) an old television, the classic mirrored-reality gesture.

(The film's primary subject is an observer, like us. She stares obliquely out from the screen, past the camera. Unlike us, she has to be here: between the *Art* observers and the *Art*, trapped behind a little desk in the *Art World*. *Gallery Girls*, or *Gallerinas* — here, both names seem frippery — they have little claim on the *Gallery* as they neither own *Art* nor take care of it, but are instead its plain-language translators, its ambassadors, its gargoyles, its decorative gatekeepers. Think of them as *Art Angels*.)

*Art Angel* observes a parade of fellow stock characters — *Art Enthusiast*, *Dancer* (variation on *Artist*), *Art Critic*, *Party Girl* — figures posing like figure models (as in *commedia dell'arte*) who I am distinctly pleased to recognize (as in autofiction) when "Art Film" ends and its actors emerge from behind the screen into a kind of loose play, a dynamic *tableau vivant*.

(Before she can join them on the live performative plane, *Art Angel* has already fallen, driven mad by

the press of observation — when she screams, the surfaces align, *Art* and *Real Life* — that is to say, the floorboards projected on the wall match up with the floorboards beneath our feet.)

In *Art*, these characters enact the petty dramas I can only imagine they experience in *Real Life*. *Party Girl* is also, or more importantly, *Muse*; to prove the purity of his intentions and the validity of his artistic commitment, *Dancer* performs a transcendental routine to Britney Spears's "Everytime;" *Art Critic* brandishes a little notebook quite like mine.

Peter has directed them in rehearsal, behind the screen. To remind us of this, he releases laugh tracks, planned cues.

(Enter the *Artist*, who emerges to direct the actors — then us, the observers — in a shamanistic procession of rites, ambiguously scripted, like Simon Says.)

Artist: *Art Critic* — fall to the ground.  
*Art Enthusiast* — fall to the ground.

(*Art Critic*, *Art Enthusiast* fall to the ground.)

Artist: *Entire Gallery* — fall to the ground. *Entire Gallery* — scream.

(*Entire Gallery* falls to the ground.  
*Entire Gallery* screams.)

We are mimetic animals, easily compressed into suggestions, evolutions, into stories and figures. The *Gallery* is submerged, like all the rest; like the faces that appear when you sleep, which only ever find their origins in the waking world, the *Art World* is made of familiar textures—the stuff of *Real Life* abstracted, draped over itself, suspended in a *Double Dream*—

Artist: We need these lights going crazy—

(*Light Man*—a new beat.)

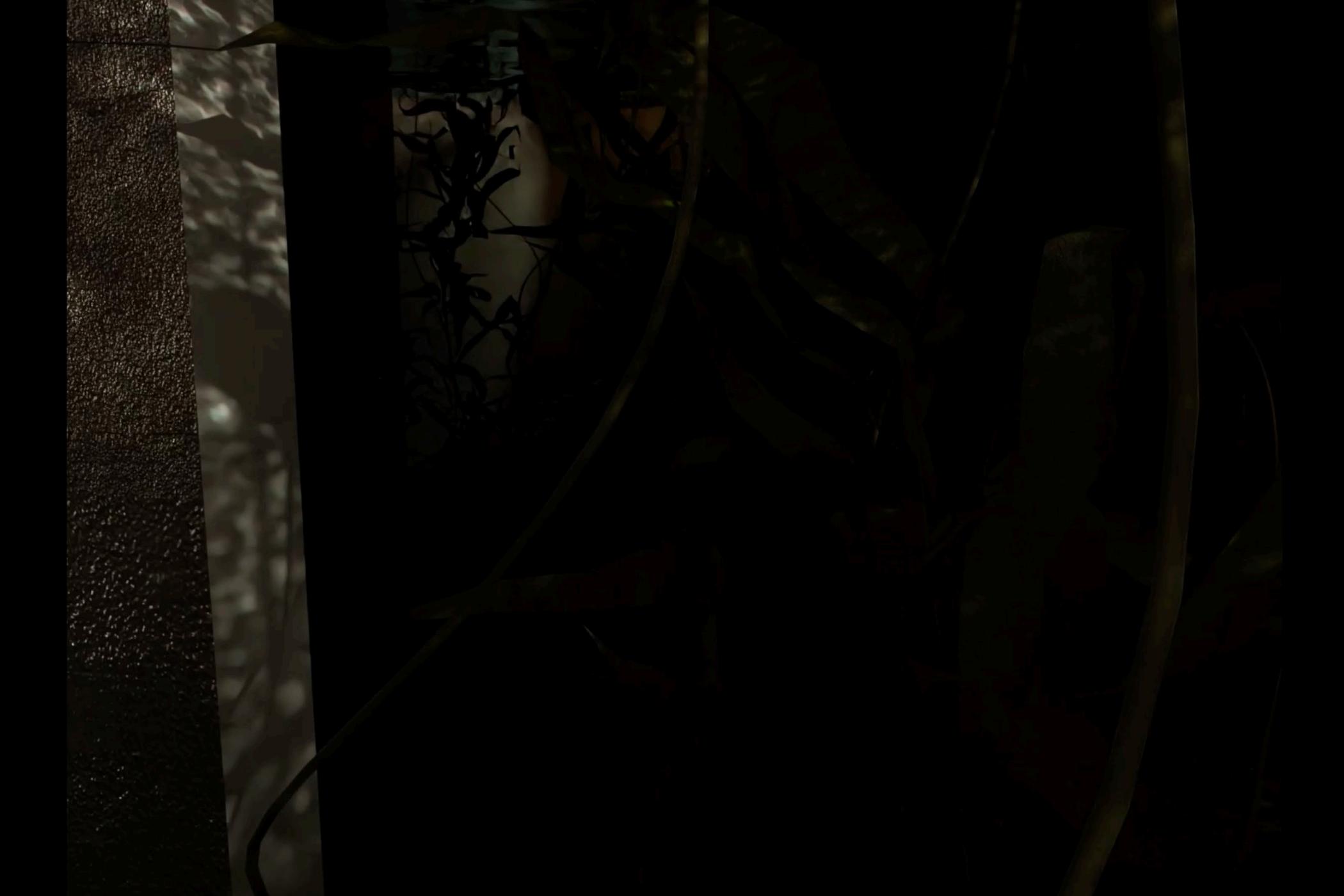
Artist: Let's party, let's dance.

Here as everywhere else, it's all best slightly blurred—as viewed through water, or beer—not where you ENTER THE ART WORLD, but where you surface, where it ends.



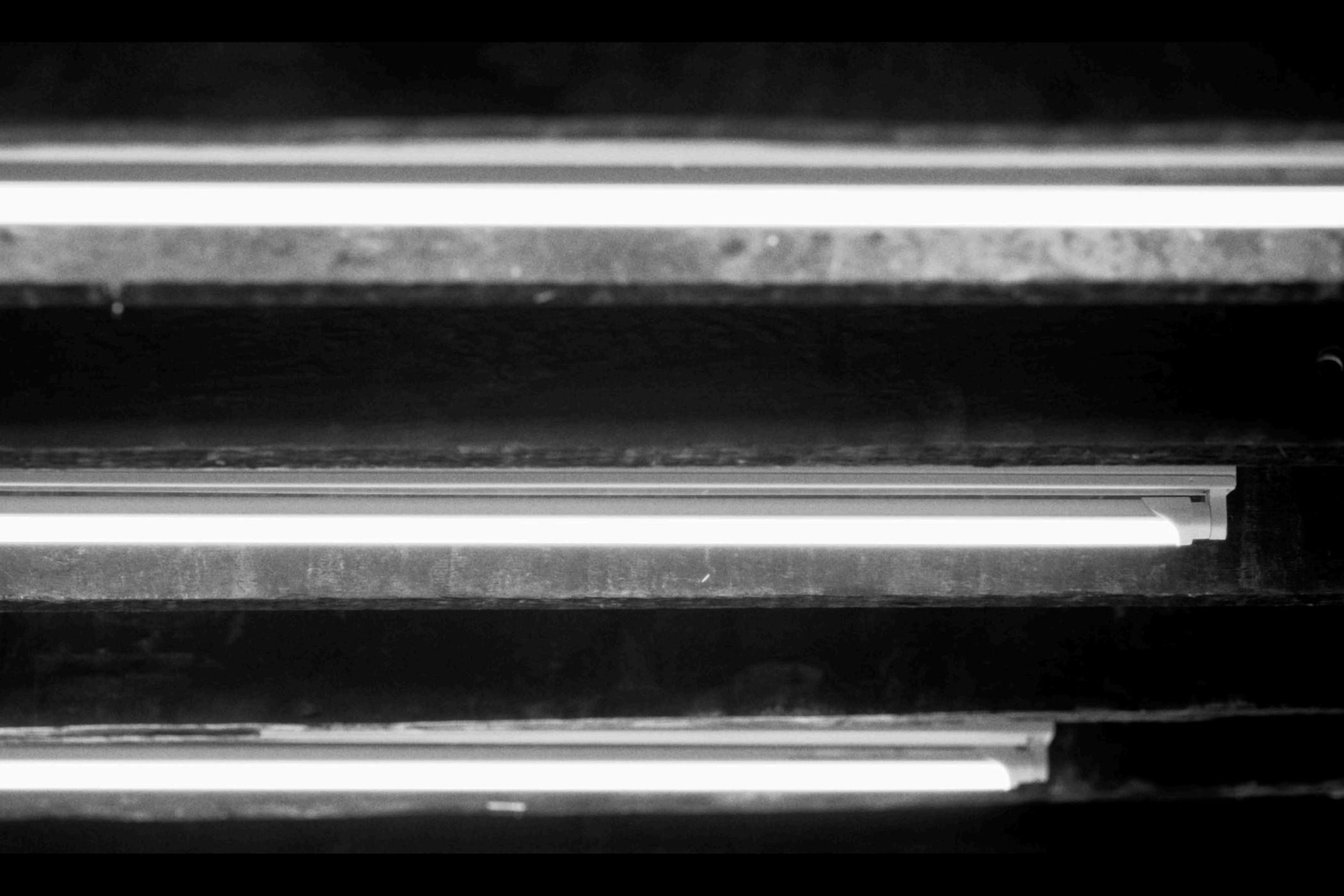












"ART FILM"





















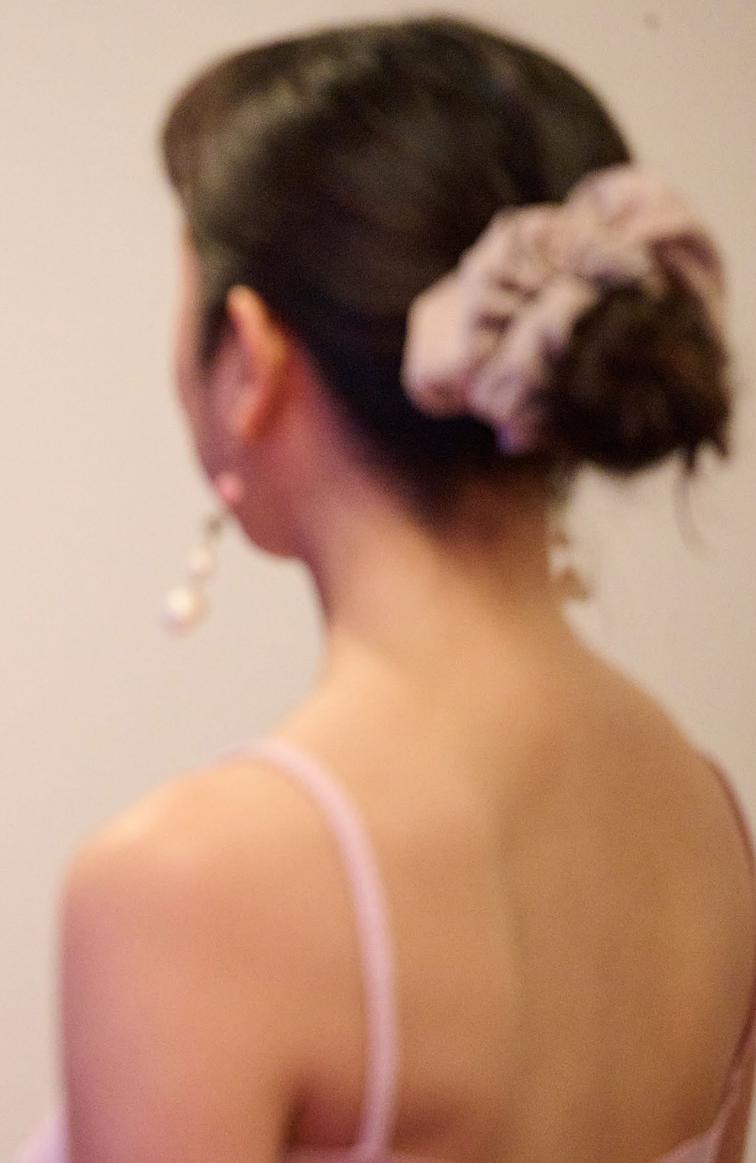


























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