

Portfolio

James Lewis (he/him), is an artist of South Asian diaspora based in Vienna, Austria. His practice explores the rupture between empirical data and embodied knowledge, investigating how statistical language, sensory memory, and environmental detritus shape our lived experience.

He is interested in the systems, both bureaucratic, architectural and biological, that quantify, categorise and often misrepresent human subjectivity. He is represented by Galerie Hubert Winter, Austria and has exhibited at internationally renowned institutions including; MassArt Art Museum (MAAM), Boston, US (2025); Leopold Museum, Austria (2024); Kunstverein Salzburg, Austria (2022); Fondazione Benetton, Treviso, Italy (2022); Mostyn, Wales (2022); Capc Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France (2021)

He completed his studies within the Fine Art Department at the Royal College of Art in London (2010 - 2012) and since then has taught at The University of Applied Arts, Vienna; The Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna; The Academy of Fine Arts (AVU), Prague, CZ; Leeds University, UK; Norwich School of Art, UK; Kingston University, UK; Paris College of Art, Paris, France; and is currently a Lecturer in Fine Art at The University of Arts Linz, Austria and an Associate Mentor at Conditions, an artist studio complex in his hometown Croydon, UK.

Burdens**Duo exhibition w/Abbas Zahedi, Conditions, UK**

JL: What's the third house?

ML: The house I grew up in.

JL: I'm trying to piece it together and trying to imagine the layout by looking at the backgrounds of family photos.

ML: We had a ground floor flat but it was quite big.
There was a big veranda with a living room and dining room together.
A kitchen.
Two bathrooms and three bedrooms, I think.
Two bathrooms, I remember.
One was white and the other was pink.

JL: That sounds big.
The veranda, do you remember much else about it?

ML: The garden was L-shaped.

JL: And do you remember any of the plants in the garden?

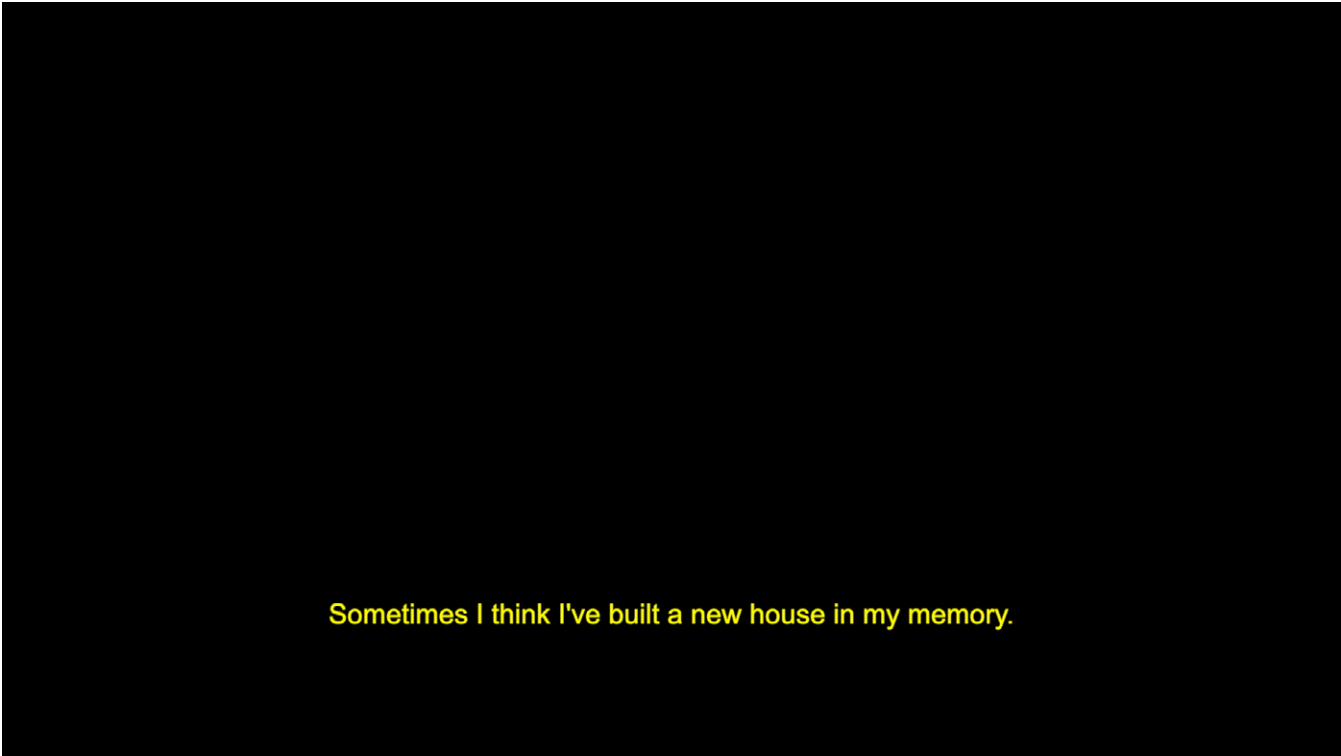
ML: We grew ladyfingers.
Okra.
We had trees.
I remember the trees, but I don't know the type.

JL: Do you remember what the trees looked like?

ML: I think they were Palm Trees.

JL: If you try to remember playing in the garden, what are the plants in the background?

ML: Oh, I do remember playing in the garden.
I used to ride a tricycle around the garden.
But the only thing I can remember is how clean the garden was.
It was very well kept.
Like an image of a garden, rather than the real thing.



Sometimes I think I've built a new house in my memory.

Top: *The Third House*, 2025

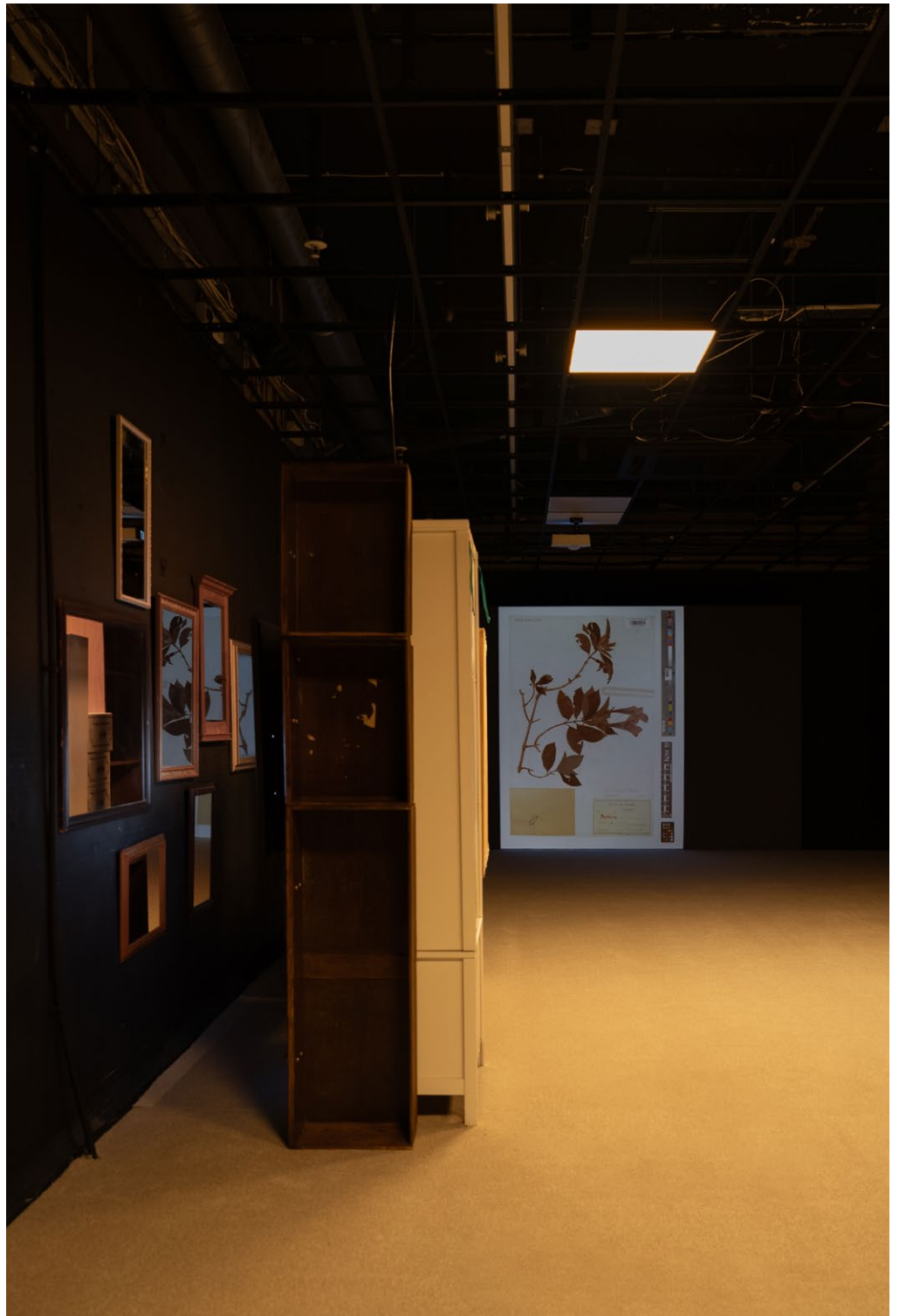
HD-Video, 05:29

Ed 1/3 + 2AP

Link to extract: <https://vimeo.com/1133598592>



Top: *Burdens* (installation view)
Duo exhibition, Conditions, Croydon



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Duo exhibition, Conditions, Croydon



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Duo exhibition, Conditions, Croydon



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Duo exhibition, Conditions, Croydon



Top: *Burdens* (installation view)
Duo exhibition, Conditions, Croydon

Living Stone

Solo exhibition, Pech, Vienna

Notes, transcripts, doodles: it is common to court these marginalia as minutes, as these pertain to the transcribed traces of our statistical experience. Implied is a lot of dead time, dead-ends, marked by clocking in and out, calling, tracing, marking, and re-marking, as it were. Themes of stagnation simmer in petri-dishes, which we are asked to watch like television: enlarged, scaled-up insignia of the real. Life becomes TV static swimming at the atomic scale inside of us.

'Time' comes up in my notes 237 times.

Time, as in: statistical time, markers of time; phones going ring ring, phone numbers, calls with no caller ID, cut lines, power-outs, dial signals. I think about telephone-related movie tropes. But then there is time, also, that rings in alarm clocks, death knells, keypad sounds, ring tones. Trains and planes, arrivals and departures, flight paths, best laid plans, and lines of navigation. I get stuck on the notion of the lines of 'tropic' as a curious marker of time, and space, inverted across the globe.

Two idioms:

Midnight is only dissimulated noon.

and

Night is the winter of the tropics.

I keep thinking about the tropics in winter, and dissimulated midnight, the night of the tropics, the everything that traverses the globe in latitudes and longitudes, measuring distances and sensations.

That is, our attempt to capture, count, and measure everything—even the ruptures.

Impatient time trying to grasp the slowness of space.

James adds to the list:

Masturbating: 6177600 seconds

Watching TV: 289749600 seconds

Cleaning: 46425600 seconds

Driving: 136566000 seconds

Sex: 10108800 seconds

Working: 324000000 seconds

Sleeping: 827859600 seconds

Eating: 115552800 seconds

Showering: 43200000 seconds

Toilet: 7948800 seconds



Top: *Living Stone* (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Pech, Vienna



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Top: *Living Stone* (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Pech, Vienna

Link to extract: <https://tinyurl.com/9y2mwa9x>



Top: *Living Stone* (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Pech, Vienna

Link to extract: <https://tinyurl.com/9y2mwa9x>

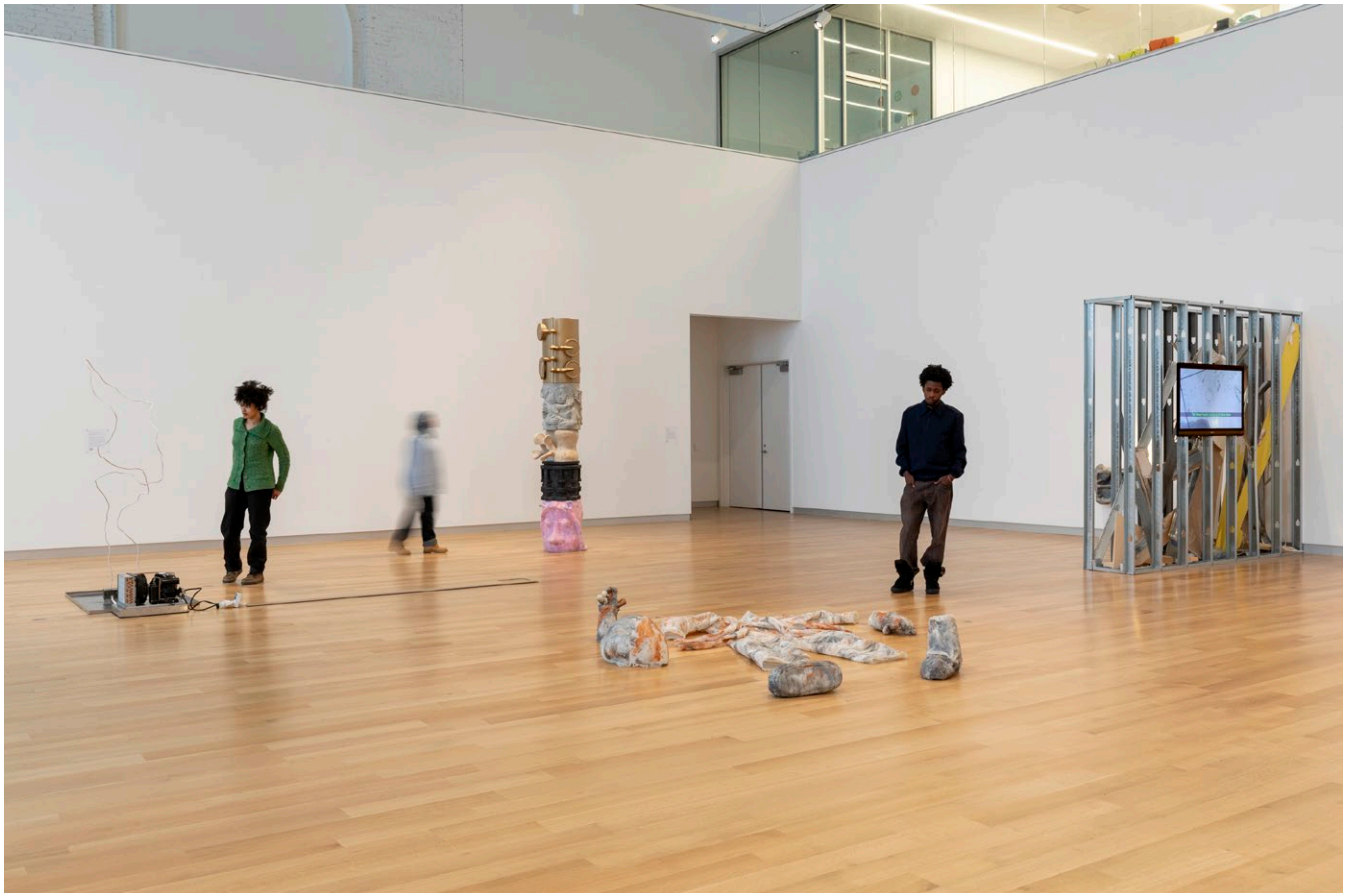


Top: *Living Stone*, 2024

HD Video, 01:07:00

Ed 1/3 + 2AP

Link to extract: <https://tinyurl.com/9y2mwa9x>



Top: *Future Fossils* (installation view)
Group exhibition, MassArt Art Museum (MAAM), Boston, US



Top: *Future Fossils* (installation view)
Group exhibition, MassArt Art Museum (MAAM), Boston, US

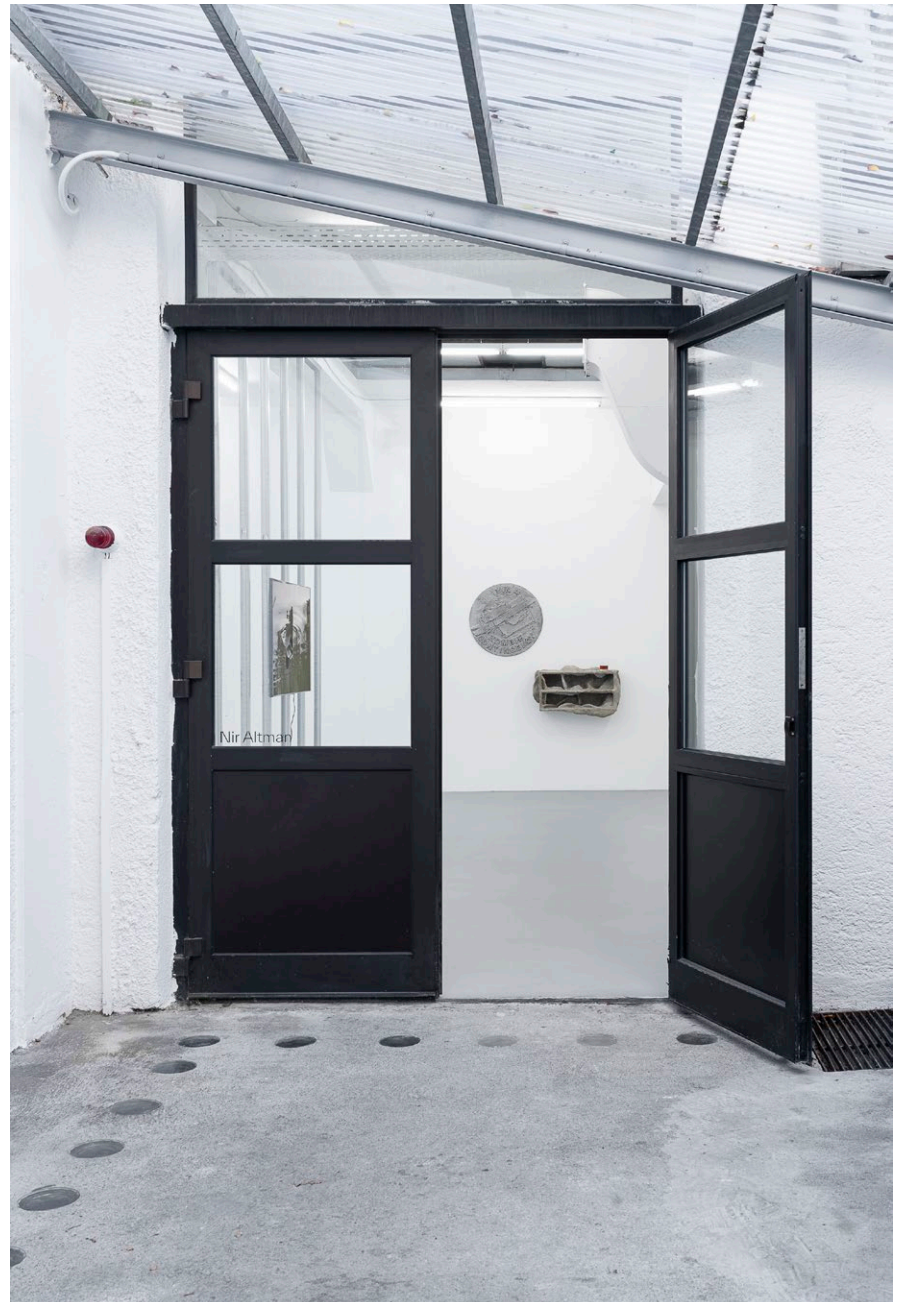


Top: *Slow Thinking*, 2025

HD Video, 00:14:16

Ed 1/3 + 2AP

Link to extract: <https://tinyurl.com/yc4kpt97>



Top: *Transferring Domain* (installation view)
Group exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich

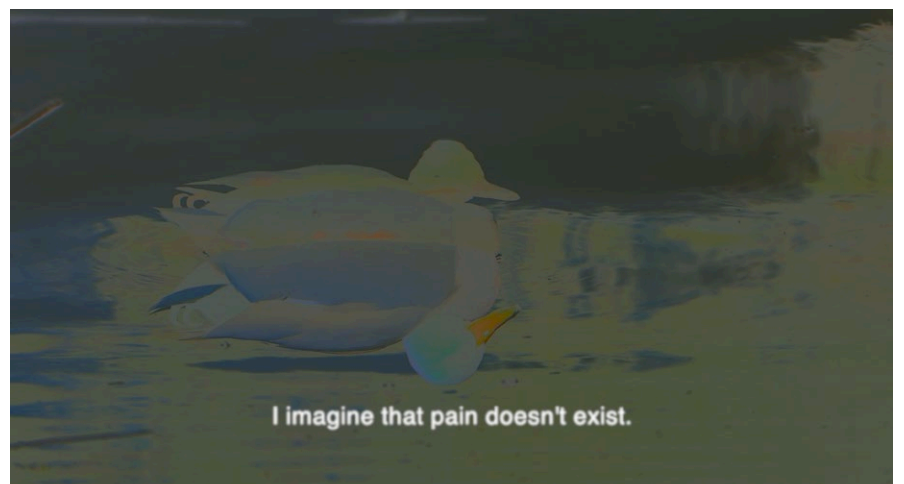


Top: *Transferring Domain* (installation view)
Group exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich

Link to extract: <https://tinyurl.com/3cvncs6u>



I'm sat on the sofa.



I imagine that pain doesn't exist.

Top: *Duck Days*, 2024
HD Video, 04:34:20

Link to extract: <https://tinyurl.com/3cvncs6u>



Top: *Frieze London, Focus Section* (installation view)
Stand H20 w/ Nir Altman, Munich



Top: *Sediment*, 2023

Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey
254 cm x 140 cm x 92 cm



Top: *Two Branches* (1681985542 seconds, 1710386798 seconds, *Einkorn*, 1713542494 seconds, 1726165274 seconds), 2023
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass, resin, pewter, dried leaves
193 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm



Top left and right: *Two Branches* (1681985542 seconds, 1710386798 seconds, *Einkorn*, 1713542494 seconds, 1726165274 seconds), 2023 (details)
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass, resin, pewter, dried leaves
193 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm



Top left: *Two Branches (Snuppy, Dolly, CopyCat, Prometea)*, 2023
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass,
resin, pewter, dried leaves
184 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm



Top right: *Two Branches (Sawmill River, Wien River, Sunswick Creek, River Westbourne)*, 2023
Wood, steel, plaster bandage, concrete, plexiglass, plastic, glass,
resin, pewter, dried leaves
184 cm x 92 cm x 18 cm

Ruderal

Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich

James Lewis' solo exhibition *Ruderal* at Nir Altman is rooted in a sensitive environmental awareness. Like flowers turning to the sun, free-standing sculptures peer at passersby through the gallery's street-level storefront window. A yellow PVC curtain along the window separates outside and inside. It evokes the shrink wrapped vegetables in supermarket shelves. It's unclear whether the onlookers on the outside or the sculptures on the inside are the packed, protected goods and whether the foil contains or emits the acidic ambient haze that illuminates both sides of the window.

Outside and inside are linked through electrical switch cases in the curtain. They are differently labeled and each offer two options, perhaps recalling the omnipresent two button meme. Illustrating the agony of choice in an intense state of insecurity, it features a comic character attempting to push one of two red buttons labeled with interchangeable or contradicting statements. This frames Lewis' concern with datafied reality, here proposed as alternating states that can be turned off and on at will.

Most people know that statistics are wrong the minute they are made, but what other ways are there to relate to the world? 47% of people believe in fate.¹ Facing a wasteland of information that can't be controlled, channeled or processed by human capacities – switch on probability. Enjoy the ride. 274 km/ h is the average speed of nerve impulses.² Your portal to manifest thoughts into one of the probable realities behind the curtain. We used to have skin in this game. Consider the average surface area of skin is 22sq/ft³ – our barrier to the world, growing thick.

Lewis' ruderal flowers shaped into forms of hanging branches have developed a thick skin, layers and layers of cells. Their stiff bodies demonstrate vitality and vulnerability at the same time. Manufactured from concrete, a building material, the flowers seem to have grown from the debris of human construction and simultaneous environmental destruction. Plantlife lives through exchange and these species endure although the gardener has failed to recognise the interconnectedness of living things. They coexist with the hum of an electrical light which, although invisible, insists on its material textures. Composed of archived sounds sourced from a sample library of field recordings, it repeats the commitment of stacking and layering fragments of repurposed material. This is perhaps how we will remember the world outside - canned and classified. A strange simulation.

Text by Sarah Johanna Theurer, Curator, Haus der Kunst, Munich

¹ What do people believe in? Available at: <https://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/british-public-reveal-beliefs-new-survey/>

² 99 Quick and Fascinating Facts About the Human Body Available at: <https://brightside.me/wonder-curiosities/99-quick-and-fascinating-facts-about-the-human-body-38305/>

³ 99 Quick and Fascinating Facts About the Human Body Available at: <https://brightside.me/wonder-curiosities/99-quick-and-fascinating-facts-about-the-human-body-38305/>



Top: *Ruderal*, 2022 (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich, Germany

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://tinyurl.com/mwuwsp98>



Top: *Ruderal*, 2022 (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich, Germany

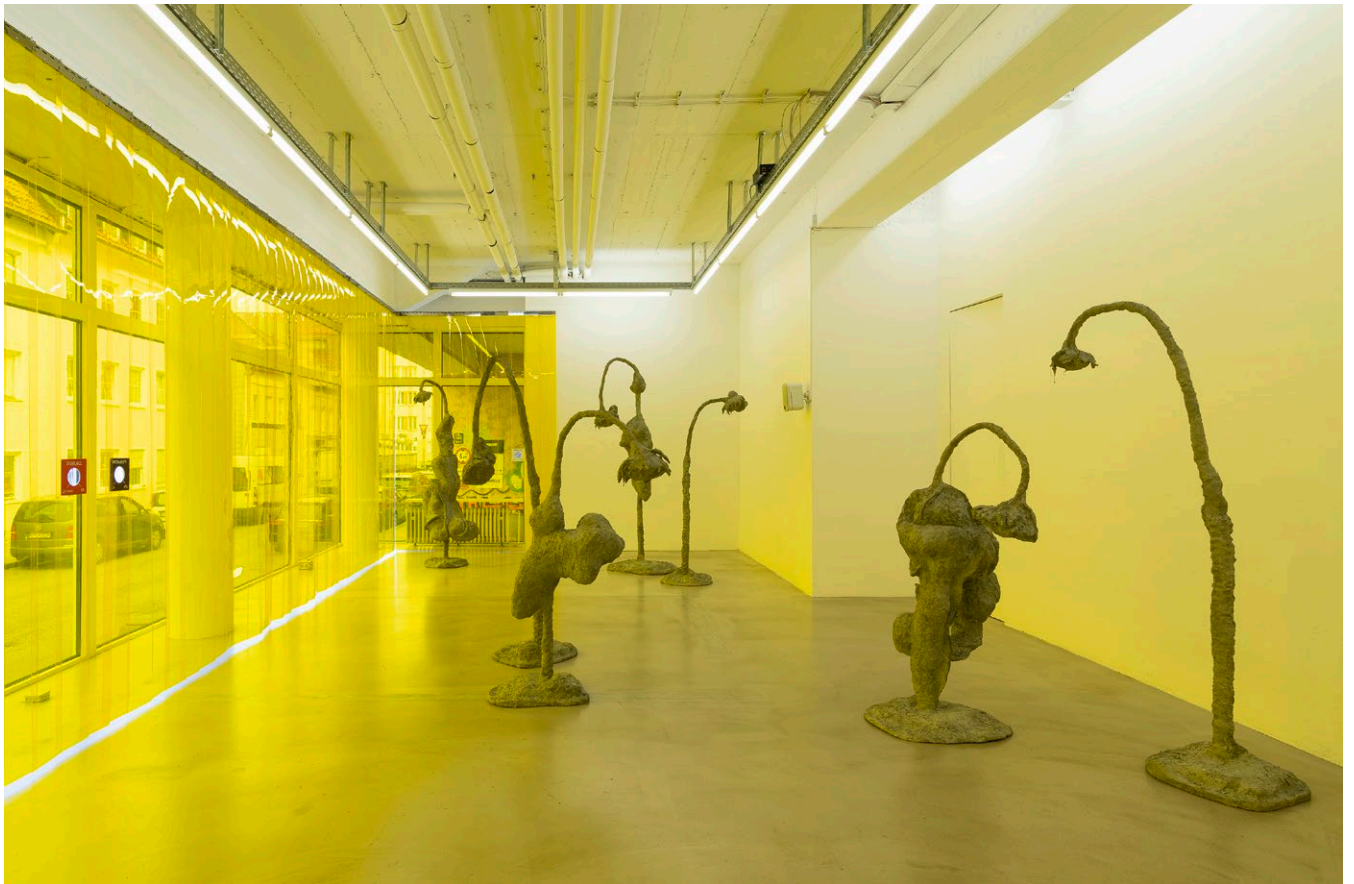
Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://tinyurl.com/mwuwsp98>



Top: *Not just suffering, but all forms of consciousness (Resend)*, 2022
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, steel
209 cm x 78 cm x 102 cm



Top: *Not just suffering, but all forms of consciousness (Reposition)*, 2022
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, steel
170 cm x 55 cm x 80 cm



Top: *Ruderal*, 2022 (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Nir Altman, Munich, Germany

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://tinyurl.com/mwuwsp98>

Injury

Solo exhibition, Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna

Lewis' work is focused on how entropy and chaos structure the world we inhabit, how tiny, interrelated events create reoccurring patterns that are then distilled into notions of time, space or history.

Injury addresses the impossibility of fellow feeling¹ and the works call for a different kind of inhabitation based upon the possibility that society cannot be reconciled, pain cannot be shared through empathy and that we live with and beside each other, and yet we are not as one.

Lewis's landscape is immersed in estrangement. A crackling soundscape interrupted by machinelike beeps and buzzes emanates from *Imaginary Counter Power* (2021). This architectural work with an exhaustively long sound piece creates an atmosphere which oscillates and vibrates over and through all types of bodies and things, producing a complex ecology of matter and energy, subjects and objects.

Narrowly true but broadly misleading (2021) pose propositions for a new set of conveying emotions, attitudes and the understanding of a body in pain or dissonance. These sign or token-like pieces can be decoded into statistics; the average surface area of human skin, how long it takes for food to be digested, the average amount of unique words spoken per day and so on. Thus, creating a strange poetic proposition for the language and understanding of dissonance.

Accumulations of layers, networks of tumorous growth, encapsulate and fossilize over soft furnishings in *Diluvium* (2021). The concrete encrusted strata of this domestic scenography are polluted with sound and the odour of cheap whiskey, each adding additional layers of sensory data, one over another, evoking the portrait of an absent body detached and extracted from the connecting temporal tissue. It is exactly this horror temporis—the ruptures, scars and proliferations of (humanly conceived) time—that James Lewis addresses in his works.

¹ See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 39.



Top left and right: *Imaginary counter power*, 2021

Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip light, clay, acrylic paint, stainless steel, epoxy resin, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
215 cm x 205 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://tinyurl.com/58zkwt6>



Top: *Imaginary counter power*, 2021 (detail)

Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip light, clay, acrylic paint,
stainless steel, epoxy resin, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
215 cm x 205 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://tinyurl.com/58zkwt6>



Top: *Injury*, 2021 (installation view)
Solo exhibition, Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna



Top: *Narrowly true but broadly misleading (CONTEMPT)*, 2021
Cast aluminium
69 cm x 69 cm x 8 cm

Bottom: *Narrowly true but broadly misleading (LANGUAGE)*, 2021
Cast aluminium
64 cm x 64 cm x 2 cm



Top: *Diluvium*, 2021

Wood, foam, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey, strip light,
clay, acrylic paint

200 cm x 200 cm x 215 cm (sofa 155 cm x 100 cm x 75 cm)



Top: *Country of Error (FAECES FRAUD)*, 2021
Cast aluminium, lead
102 cm x 60 cm x 3 cm



Top and bottom: *Cafe Heaven, 2022* (installation view)
Group exhibition, Kunstverein Salzburg, Austria



Top: *Coming home, cleaning up, making dinner, 2023*
Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey, electric cable,
light fitting
85 cm x 85 cm x 55 cm



Top left: *Panic Landscape: Rock/Mineral*, 2022
Wood, poly filler, plexiglass, plastic, steel
60 cm x 42 cm x 4 cm



Top right: *Panic Landscape: Yellow 'blob'*, 2022
Wood, inkjet print on photographic paper, aluminum tape, poly filler, plexiglass, plastic, steel
60 cm x 42 cm x 4 cm



Bottom right: *Panic Landscape: Wild/Poultry*, 2022
Wood, poly filler, plexiglass, plastic, steel
60 cm x 42 cm x 4 cm



Top left and right: *The Odour is Oily*, 2022

Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip lights, acrylic paint, stainless steel, cast aluminium, lead, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
225 cm x 300 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://tinyurl.com/2pjs4dk2>



Top left and right: *The Odour is Oily*, 2022 (detail)
Wood, polyvinyl chloride (pvc), strip lights, acrylic paint, stainless steel, cast aluminium, lead, speakers, amplifier, electric cable
225 cm x 300 cm x 200 cm

Link to extract of soundpiece: <https://tinyurl.com/2pjs4dk2>



Top: *A History of Animals (Scattered Particles)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
63 cm x 63 cm x 12 cm



Top: *A History of Animals (Star Winds)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
83 cm x 83 cm x 12 cm

Bottom left: *A History of Animals (The Emergence)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
62 cm x 62 cm x 13 cm

Bottom right: *A History of Animals (They break)*, 2018
Wood, plaster, lead, concrete, agar, steel, rubber
36 cm x 36 cm x 10 cm



Top: *Dusk Slug IV*, 2022

Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey
90 cm x 85 cm x 85 cm



Top left and right: *Dusk Slug III*, 2021

Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, glass, whiskey, strip light, clay,
acrylic paint

90 cm x 75 cm x 75 cm



Top: *Le Club du Poisson-Lune/ The Moonfish Club* (installation view)
Group exhibition, Capc Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France