collaged scene, or a portal that could return Earth back to nature. Denes used surrealism to get us to question our use of land and our blatant interruption of natural ecologies. In the artwork's contentious placement, just two blocks away from Wall Street, she also invited us to think about food production, hunger, waste, trade, pollution and the many systems of inequality we believe to be permanent and *certain*.

In 2008, a busy audience at Tate Modern were confronted by police officers mounted on horses using crowd control manoeuvres against them. Visitors were not told beforehand that it had anything to do with art. That way, they could experience the full force of police controlling their movement around the gallery; and they would feel the imposition as a vulnerable individual, and not as a safe audience spectating a performance. It was only later revealed as a piece by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera. Bruguera used the simulation to demonstrate how mounted police express certainty using intimidation, and how quick the audience was to accept that expression; even when they were inside a so-called *public* institution dedicated to art.

Side Quest #1: The Jupiter Residency

CONFIDENTIAL

THE JUPITER RESIDENCY MISSION REPORT
AB-1

Composite air-to-ground voice transcription during orbit. Voice fair to good;[35] bad intermittent static. Communications derived from ground station voice-recording tapes using WhatsApp software.

Prepared by: Quest Talukdar
Mission objective: Cast radio signal. Wait for extraterrestrial response. Build connection.

January

AB: Hi, I'm sorry for the voice transmission. I hope it's OK. It's a lot easier to speak than it is to type. If I look at screens for too long, my eyes feel like shit. If I hold my phone for too long, my hands can't take it. Hello, hi, how's it going? My name is Amelia. I'm glad you

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[35] NASA report, *Apollo 17 Command Module Onboard Voice Transcription*, 1973.

messaged, actually. I also don't speak to other artists enough. What do you make? OK. Out. [END OF TAPE]

February

AB: You want me to go first? Roger that. Except, I don't know what to send you pictures of because I haven't been in an exhibition for years and I don't relate much to the art I was making before I left the planet . . . That sounds cryptic. I should probably give you the Previously On. It was during install when I woke up with the flu. I couldn't get out of bed, but the technicians knew where everything was due to go so they hung my pieces for me. I actually missed my own PV, and I was gutted, because I'd only done exhibitions in artist-led spaces up until that point, and this was a classy mid-tier space. I'd told everyone I'd be OK but maybe I jinxed it. I didn't know it back then, but I'd been flung into perpetual motion, away from the people who were sending pictures from the opening when I couldn't even look at my phone. I was in a bad way. I was waking up feeling like I hadn't slept. Eventually, I crawled to the window and found the whole world upside down.

I was working in a museum café at the time. This shit zero-hour thing that meant no sick pay. At the end of the second week, the manager kept texting me, like: *hello, you should be back in work by now.* I should have been. But tell me how I'm gonna stand behind the counter all day if I nearly fainted waiting for my toast to pop. I couldn't send her a picture of the pain inside my legs as proof. I saw a doctor in week 3, assuming the conversation would play out in good faith once I described how bad I was feeling.

They weren't convinced. It's weird to use that word in particular, but in the first year of sickness, I was having to make the case *for* myself *to* myself every day because I also couldn't believe it. I'd have a moment of okayness and think wow, I was lying to everyone this entire time – and then I'd wash the dishes and have to stop halfway through to lie down for hours. It was messing with my head. But you cannot scream in space. Or you can, but no one will hear you.

Needless to say, I wasn't thinking about art or exhibition culture by that point. It wasn't thinking about me. I moved home. I was living life under an eye mask because perception was too exhausting. My mum drove to the gallery to pick up my work months after the fact, and half of it was missing. The half that wasn't missing was dented. She said she wasn't going to tell me but she needed to explain the damage. I didn't even have the energy to be upset; I wanted the *doctor* to explain the damage. Did I have myalgic encephalomyelitis?[36] Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome?[37] All of the above? When you are sick for a very long time, everyone loses interest, even though you

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[36] ME, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome, affects energy, cognition, sleep and pain.

[37] POTS is a blood disorder and heart condition caused by problems with the body's nervous system. Gabrielle de la Puente has it. See her game *People of the Salt*, published on Downpour, 2023.

feel eternally bad, ischaemic,[38] in orbit, far away in a dysautonomic land.[39]

I don't know who I am any more. I'm an enigma, an alien, an Amelia. A post-viral version of myself. An operating system downgrade. It's hard to breathe now. The gravity is stronger where I stand. I'm in a different time zone, and my blood vessels can't handle the summers. I know you only asked to see the art I make but I'm still working through what it means to make art from a recently disabled body. I used to be a person who carried business cards on them at all times but I don't care about that stuff any more. You'll have to go first. You tell me what you make. Over. [END OF TAPE]

April

AB: Copy. Hello, earthling. Reading you loud and clear. See, it's not just me being coy. But I don't get it. Why won't you send me pictures of *your* work? What's your excuse? And what did you say at the end? You wanted to know if I thought business cards were worth it. Er, I mean, they're a bit old school but it's one way of sticking in someone's head: getting nice and withered in their wallet between various fading receipts. People always get too many of them printed. But I'm probably the worst person to ask because I don't actually see anyone.

It's like – you also asked if I still made art, and if I did, was it harder now. (I wonder if you are scared of this happening to you. I think everybody should be afraid of losing their freedom.) There was definitely a stage early on when I was in survival mode and I wasn't thinking about the survival of my 'art career'. But I never let art go, even when things were at their worst – on the bad days, it still keeps me company. I might not be physically upright at an easel, but that doesn't mean I stop thinking about art. I don't think I *can* stop. Art is the thing at the centre of it all. The galleries, curators, and this busy sky of satellites wouldn't be here without the sun holding everything together. I know in myself that when I'm flat out, I still *feel* its pull. Art is the molten core. I live with art in mind, because art is how I interact with the world – it's my default, not just how I approach an image.

When I'm stuck in bed, I don't stop being an artist. Look at Liz Crow – she did that piece where she landed her bed in the gallery for forty-eight hours. She was sick in public. She *couldn't* call in sick! Art is the act of creating a form in which you're asking people to bear witness to you. That's what she did so well, but I don't think I could have appreciated that *before* I got sick. I used to see art so literally. Art was a business; the artist was the supplier; and an artwork was the product. I thought that art meant making something appear out of thin air that hadn't been there before. But that is so

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[38] Ischaemia means reduced blood flow to a part of the body, resulting in pain and an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

[39] Dysautonomia refers to problems with the body's autonomic nervous system.

limiting. Art is not a solid. It's not even a liquid. It goes beyond materials. It's *inside*. If my surroundings change, if my body changes, that's fine because art is within me.

I mean . . . art is my eyes oscillating between the four corners of the ceiling when my muscles feel like bruised metal, and I'm looking at those four corners in a pattern only I know. Or I don't realize I'm making something, and I mark it in my mind as art like an afterthought; as though I've given a moment in time parentheses. There doesn't have to be an audience for those acts. There doesn't have to be an exhibition. In fact, I think it's better if there isn't one; it's more sincere. The type of work I make isn't very marketable anyway. My marginalization is in direct conflict with marketability. No collector wants to buy a piece of work to do good by a disabled person. They want art that will increase in value, and for that, I'm dirt.

But I'm not thinking about any of that Earth-shit when other sick people give me their art. I'm just thinking, great, now I don't need to figure out how to express this particular facet of disability. I feel more understood in art than I do at the doctor's surgery. That's what I thought when I found RA Walden's x̌ây ithřa. The artist collaborated with the linguist Margaret Ransdell-Green to create a language that pinches sick thoughts into new words. Back when I was running around London pulsing from show to show, I used to be *dŷathatŷatŷe*, 'someone who is so attached to their own health and strength that when sickness comes it will be a great shock'. I went through *ówasheyalax̌atsŷiha* when I closed the curtains for two

years. That's 'the feeling of loss when you first realize that you are not in control of your body'. Now I am left with unending *ówashehalax̌adŷiwa*, which is 'the loss of realizing someone you love will never understand what it's like for you to move through the world'.

RA Walden's word for body, *Yala*, is the same word they use for home and planet Earth. It's also the only word that is capitalized in the whole of x̌ây ithřa, and it means that when you're connecting with the language, you're also connecting with the Earth. It absolutely fucks me up every time I think about it, because I can feel in my belly that the artist is speaking to me. Maybe not you. Just me. It made me laugh when you asked if it's harder to make art now, because of course it is. But I used to think sickness meant a person must be vomiting or bleeding or whatever. If a sick person was making art, they can't really be sick. I didn't understand that the sick person might only be able to work a lump of clay for an hour because they'd spent a day resting beforehand and they'd cleared their schedule so that they could recover from the exertion. I have the kind of illness that I can speed away from like a getaway car down a motorway until the inevitable crash.

That defiance is helped by the rails I've got installed everywhere, the walking stick, the mobility scooter, the compression clothing, the medication. My energy is up and down, always fluctuating, and I have learnt to use those waves as jumping-off points. I like it when I get so absorbed in making a piece of art that I forget how much pain I'm in because I'm enjoying it *that* much – and in the course of making, I'll come to a turn, or trip up, or find there's a material I need that I don't have, and I'll come out of the reverie and – shit, *now the pain is hot and loud inside me.*

That's a quirk of chronic illness that's hard to discuss with someone who hasn't gone through it. The quote-unquote *bad behaviour.* For example, I can't lift much weight so I *should* make light, ephemeral artworks, and I shouldn't make a mess when I can't bend down to tidy up after myself; but that spurs me on to make incredibly heavy pieces that take ten people to move. I let the mess be a mess. For all I know, you might be listening and thinking, *if it hurts that much, then stop. Art is not worth putting yourself through this discomfort.* It might even look like self-harm from the outside, but my *self* is always in harm's way. If I have to do life on hard mode, how do I need to prepare so that I can keep beating sickness in these small ways?

One of my sick friends hides from his carer and his partner to draw flash tattoos on the loo, and he *has* to hide because the carer-partner duo will team up and tell him rest is best. But sometimes making art is more important than rest. It definitely is if my mate is hiding in the bathroom to get alone time with it. When Virginia Woolf said, 'A Room of One's Own', maybe she meant the loo. Other sick friends sidestep the bathroom completely and they let themselves get disgusting. They don't wash because washing uses energy that could be better spent on art-making. The dishes pile up and the bins don't get

taken out. But some of us only get to do one thing a day – if that – and I'm obviously going to choose the thing that makes me the happiest. The thing that makes me feel most like myself. I'm not thinking about the volume of art I make, or the consistency, or the mastery. All I'm thinking is: how can I get this thing where I want it to be? And anyway, this is why dry shampoo exists!

OK, if that is enough to scare you off, I'll say my goodbyes across the universe. If not, tell me why *you* don't want to send me pictures of *your* work. Tell me if art is how you interact with the world. How's it going down on *Yala*? I reckon I could send you pictures of the new stuff I've been making, if you want? Over and out. [END OF TAPE]

Early September:

AB: Sorry for the radio silence. It was summer so I had to die. Your message said that you'd tried to find photos of my art by searching my name, but I deleted my website and social media. I don't want to show my art to someone who isn't disabled. Not everything I make is about disability but these recent pieces have disability as the subject. I've been obsessed with the idea that different artworks address different parts of the body. A small, head-sized painting hung at eye level might want to address the head; a human-sized marble statue might want to address the whole body; something slight on a low plinth might speak to the hands by our sides as we approach it; a tapestry across a wall addresses multiple people at once. I've been considering what *category of* audience I want to address with my work, and it's making me want to be even more careful with it. So yeah, I'm sorry, but I can't send these pictures to you. I hope that's OK. You still didn't send me yours to be fair. Out. [END OF TAPE]

Late September
AB: Yeah, I'm happy to explain. I am so put off by how art institutions pathologize disability – both museums and funding bodies – as if I don't get enough of that from medical institutions. I don't want to feel abnormal going into a meeting with a curator, and I don't want to feel abnormal going into a meeting with a doctor either. Other artists are better at navigating that. I've known sick people who have come to the end of what the NHS can offer them, and they've actually turned to art for more active support. I know one writer, Abi Palmer, who wrote a funding application for research and development that took place in a thermal spa that not only rehabilitated her body to give her the capacity to write, but also provided the subject matter for her book, *Sanatorium*. The Arts Council covered the writer's medical bills. I think: wow, that's genius. People shouldn't have to write arduous funding applications to ease their pain, even temporarily. But these are the things we have to do.

It's wild that funding can mean an artist's needs are accommodated for the first time ever, when access to arts funding is as much of a gamble as hoping to get a well-read, not completely burnt-out doctor when you call your GP. It's like, you win your Paul Hamlyn Foundation grant or you don't, and that determines whether or not you get to

be well that year. You get your commission or you don't, and that determines whether or not you get to be well that month. I talk a lot with other disabled artists about not going for the £250 and £500 micrograntss because given the amount of work it takes to apply for them, along with the energy to create the art, and play by the funder's rules for actually getting paid, it's never equitable. But money is the closest thing we've got to a panacea, so how can we ever say no?

And so we say yes, we will work with the institutions, and the institutions want us because they know we are disabled, and that's not curation, that's ethnography, so it's no wonder the curator goes on to place little value on our time. They won't respect lateness or cancellations. They'll be sending emails saying 'we need that by tomorrow' but what do they want us to do if we aren't seeing our support worker until Friday – or the sick person who has no help is on week two of a migraine? Healthy people want everything right this instant, but my time is worth more than a microgrant promises. It *has* to be. It would be more true of my body, and it would be much easier to work with me, if the process of working together acknowledged the inevitable interruptions and mistakes. What about the aftercare, as well? What if there was money set aside to cover how exhausted I am going to feel once the work is done? It's easier if I just . . . don't.

There was a time when I was even happy to be used as a tick box for funding if a curator was frank with me because I know how this stuff works, but no one was ever frank because they knew there was something wrong with the system. If an opportunity is really gauche and offensive, I know artists who will double their fee in order to swallow it. I get it, but I wish I didn't. I don't even want to be contacted by these people any more, that's why I took my website down. I don't want to be questioning whether or not I am ticking a box for them, or if they are genuinely interested in my ideas. Sometimes it's blatant. Just artists grouped badly together around the theme of having a sick body. That's a shit theme for an exhibition. Everyone's having a terrible time, come see art about it! And this is always coming from galleries that stop making events accessible as soon as the *disabled* one's over. That is why I deleted my website, so the galleries can no longer find me. That is why I'm 645.85 million kilometres away.

To go back to my original point, I don't want to show you what I've been working on because while I have a huge desire to make art, I have this growing repulsion towards exhibition and display. I can feel myself starting to have a *bigger* desire for secrecy, and I guess that is because it does not open me up to disrespect. If I were to put my website back up and a gallery got hold of them, the press release would say something like: *in her latest series, Amelia Bridge paints a prone clothed figure in holiday resorts around the world. Referencing the disability that inhibits her from travelling to these exotic places, the images are an exercise in imagination, invisible borders, and . . .* bravery? I don't know. They love saying shit like that. You'd then get an audience who are, by default of

them even being in the gallery, the wrong audience to bear witness to the paintings. It really stings to think about all the art that is produced with public funding, yet so much of the public never even get to see it, because they're sick and unpublicized.

No, if I sent photos of the paintings to you, you'd see destinations of places that don't exist for me any more. I don't have the energy to get there, and even if I did, I'd be like the girl in the paintings: prone and half-clothed at the all-inclusive buffet. I'm joking but that's a case of the difference between us, and I don't *want* the paintings to be about the difference between us. I want them to be about dreaming of going somewhere but not being able to, and for the point of the painting to end there. They should only be seen by people who know where that ending is, not by people who can step over the ending and carry on down the lazy river.

Healthy audiences tend to pity disabled characters in art, even if the artist didn't mean for that to happen, *or* the audience. I really don't want pity. I also don't want to have to declare I don't want pity. I want the opposite of all of that! I want 'access intimacy', the phrase Mia Mingus coined – which has its own word in ẍây ithřa, by the way – I told you about that, didn't I? It's *méalâřinŷâ*. Access intimacy is the ease I feel when I speak to other disabled people and we don't *need* to explain ourselves. It's the unmasking we feel when we visit each other's planets, and we're no longer trying to keep up with anyone else. If art has to have an audience, it would feel *good* to offer something exclusive to people excluded from so much.

And why shouldn't I make up my own rules? Sick artists have done an excellent job of working with and against the rules of art institutions. They have to – they can't do anything else. If they don't make art their job, they can't do it at all, because they don't have capacity for more; and most jobs don't accommodate for the waves, so *artist* becomes the only role that fits. I left that behind when I left Earth. I look at these paintings and I know they should not end up in galleries. They'd do better on bedroom walls or hung over couches. Pinned to the ceiling so there's something to stare at other than concentric Artex lines. They should be in hospitals, doctors' waiting rooms; they should be sent in the post to continue slow friendships with the sick people I know across the solar system. Return address: The Jupiter Residency. A sanctuary I've made for myself where there is no such thing as business cards and funding applications, and no curators selling snake oil. No art market, no critics, no meetings, no calendars – no time at all. Only me floating in crip time through a bunch of swirling gases, milk and taupe. They brush against the windows of my spaceship and bubble in the heavy air that I might always struggle to breathe. [END OF TRANSCRIPT]

No more transmissions received.

Side Quest #2: Art Hospital

'. . . and the doctors in the Art Hospital told me not to use my hands because how will they ever heal if I'm tip-tap-typing, but I'm on pain meds so I can't feel them anyway. I'm also bored in the ward and none of you fuckers have been to visit yet. One of the nurses told me he saw the article on the *Art Newspaper*, and everyone is cancelling Jake, and I knew I had to go live. I've never been live before, but I've watched enough YouTube to pull off a story time. I'm gonna call it BURNT MY HANDS OFF or TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT MY BOSS. More people are tuning in. Oh, there's a comment. Quest! I haven't seen you since we were yay high. God, I wouldn't be here now if my Masi hadn't taken me to the baby group in the museum. How are they treating me? I mean, it's busy here today. Gastroenterology is full of painters who accidentally took a swig of turps instead of the cup of tea next to it. There were rows of miserable-looking people in the ENT waiting room: sound artists who don't know how to turn the volume down; singers with nodes; ceramicists who forgot to turn on the extractor. When I came through A&E, there were tourists who'd tripped over the crack