

A.I.R.

Dear Friend,

Can I call you that, dear visitor?

You'll think me hypocritical: curating this show about the kinds of friendships artists form, the friends they keep, and the art they make with friends, after I've written critically about the phenomenon of friends curating friends. But that was eight years ago and in a particular context—I was writing about contemporary Albanian artists stepping in to curate each other in the absence of professional curators. This, meanwhile, is an international open call with a blind review and selection process, so allow me the indulgence. Coincidentally, I was in Albania, thinking about my seven-year-old child's nascent attempts to find and cultivate friendships when much of the thinking around this show developed. Admittedly, all this prompted a lot more thinking about my own relationships and friends, some of whom are artists. Dan Perjovschi's open call submission, included in the exhibition as part of this text, reminded me that *documenta fifteen*, which I had experienced earlier in the summer, with its tagline "make friends not art," obviously had also been on my mind.



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Dan Perjovschi, *Friends in Documenta*, 2022, Reproduction on paper, Dimensions variable, Courtesy of the artist.

Another 571 submissions later, and at least that many friends, the 15th A.I.R. Biennial is an exhibition of and with the participating artists' friends. A few of the participants are collectives and several works are made by or include more than whoever is named as a biennial artist. The number of total participants is decidedly higher than the sixteen artists listed here: Manxs Americanxs, Shia Conlon, Duvet, Valérie Hallier, Luiza Kurzyna, Georgia Lale, Priscilla Otani, Kariny Padilla, Super Futures Haunt Collective (SFHQ), Peer Review, Dan Perjovschi, Elise Rasmussen, Annika Sarin, Elisabeth Smolarz, Shirin Towfiq and Bryan Truitt, and Angie Waller.

Bringing together works meant for gallery display with a performance (Duvet), publication (Peer Review), and correspondence (Manxs Americanxs), the exhibition is thus a place for artmaking, communing, and organizing. Exploring collectivity, mutuality, and reciprocity, these and other works in the exhibition (Priscilla Otani, Valérie Hallier), speak to sociality as a condition of artmaking and to the relations and networks that form in the pursuit of an artistic life. Artists, as many do in this exhibition, turn to their friends or befriend strangers when exploring subjects as varied as leisure and joy (Kariny Padilla and Elise Rasmussen); finding community and care (Shia Conlon, Georgia Lale, Annika Sarin); the alienating effects of capitalism and technology (Elisabeth Smolarz and Angie Waller); interspecies love and human loss (Super Futures Haunt Collective). Friendship, a mercurial and relational notion, doesn't appear as a subject in the exhibition so much as it embodied in the art, their making, reception, and affect (Luiza Kurzyna and Shirin Towfiq and Bryan Truitt). Like a good friend, the art welcomes you open-armed.

– Eriola Pira