

JOI MURUGAVELL
'MANY WAYS HOME', 2023
NONAGE GALLERY, SINGAPORE

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MANY WAYS HOME

(Muchos caminos a casa)

Situación: un día cualquiera por las calles de una ciudad neoliberal cualquiera. Imaginemos una escena de matrimonio joven con hijo-niño en su camino a casa después de una tarde de compras. El hijo pregunta al padre: «Papá, ¿Por qué está llorando mamá?» El padre se vuelve al niño y le espeta: «Porque eres gilipollas». Silencio dramático. La familia continúa caminando.

¿Qué tiene de especial este drama doméstico? ¿Qué es lo que lo hace cómico? Es evidente que en esta situación se da un «ingenio» risible que el espectador/oyente capta de inmediato. La risa aparece cuando se rompe, sin previo aviso, el alienante código de conducta con el que cargamos las personas en las sociedades occidentales y/o occidentalizadas. Pero, ¡¡cuidado!! Por muy absurda y desternillante que resulte la anécdota, aquí todavía no aparece el chiste. El humor absurdo, para que funcione como tal, no sólo ha de romper con la lógica sistémica dominante de forma voluntaria, sino que también ha de tener vocación de tráfuga y desertar de una existencia ordinaria. En la escena con la que abrimos este texto no hay intencionalidad alguna. Tampoco hay ni deseo de provocar hilaridad, ni, mucho menos, evasión de la realidad. De hecho, lo que nos proyecta la tesitura en cuestión es un asunto bastante problemático, y hacer mofa de ciertas realidades es muy posible que nos conduzca a otras realidades mucho más profundas e hirientes que no tienen nada que ver con el humor, aunque muchas veces puedan resultar verdaderamente graciosas. Lo que sí es totalmente cierto, es que la vida cotidiana, con todas sus miserias y adversidades es fuente directa donde saciar la sed de absurdidad que muchos fugitivos del sistema demandamos. El absurdismo es elixir, néctar, clave, quid, esencia, alma, fondo y superficie para sobrevivir en un tiempo políticamente prescindible.

Joi Murugavell, jodida (pero siempre contenta) en la asfixiante contemporaneidad, desconfía de los grandes hitos y de las grandes revoluciones de la historia. ¿Qué sentido tienen para los supervivientes vulgares? ¿Dónde quedamos los que no nos sentimos parte de los momentos estelares de la humanidad? ¿Qué nos queda, si no somos capaces de reírnos de nosotros mismos? Llegados a este embrollo existencial, satirizar el mundo que nos envuelve parece la mejor vía de escape.

A través del análisis de la sociedad de consumo, instalada en el día a día de los hombres y mujeres de la época contemporánea, Joi llega inevitablemente a caricaturización de la vida cotidiana con la intención de evadirse de ella por el camino más positivo: el humor (aunque a veces duela). Joi Murugavell es la cómica del gag plástico que pone el dedo en la llaga del snobismo y abre las heridas de la crème de la crème de la intelectualidad académica. En sus trabajos se puede rastrear un serio interés por transformar la realidad, dejando salir la mierda que se guarda debajo de las alfombras de los pulcros salones de una comunidad social hipócrita.

Sus personajes son tanto paradigma del auto-escarnio como del sarcasmo en general. Desde luego, es evidente que detrás de toda la producción artística de Joi hay un rastreo con hocico fino sobre estilos precedentes. No podemos olvidar que el humor absurdo viene de la mano de las Vanguardias, no sólo en lo que a lo formal se refiere, sino también en el sentido de que ambos cargan contra las normas, la moralidad y los discursos históricos establecidos desde el poder. Los protagonistas de sus obras entre el monigote (medio humano, medio animal, medio vegetal), el emoticono caricaturizado y el juguete de factura bobalicona, podrían enlazar con aquella sensibilidad infantil de Joan Miró o con las esculturas satíricas de Marisol (Escobar), inspiradas en la absurda rutina norteamericana de los años sesenta del siglo XX, en plena fiebre del Pop Art.

Partiendo de estas bases que ponen los pies en la historia del arte más o menos reciente, sus dibujos aparentemente toscos y simples, muy cerca del outsider art y del amateurismo, muy pronto nos revelan que detrás de esa pseudo-ingenuidad existe algo más cruel y certero como es la condición humana. La flema irónica que Joi insufla a todo su bestiario le sirve (además de para cortar la cabeza al soporífero sistema posmoderno) de entretenimiento, de descubrimiento personal y de superación como ser humano. Aunque también, el humor es su escondite, su lugar para la reflexión y su pista de evasión de una realidad muchas veces incómoda. Con estas premisas, no es extraño que el collage (¡arte disidente por excelencia!) sea la técnica a la que más recurre. Pintura, dibujo, texto... se mezclan con otros objetos de las más variadas naturalezas para acentuar la general distrofia del sentido común y, por otra parte, para cuestionar, favorecer el debate, transformar y subvertir el muermo de la cultura contemporánea oficial.

Joi Murugavell es una gran escapista.

Juan Llano Borbolla
Independent curator
(Zanahoria Cruda)
April, 2023

MANY WAYS HOME

Situation: any given day through the streets of any neoliberal city. Let's imagine a scene of a young married couple with their son-child on their way home after an afternoon of shopping. The son asks the father: "Dad, why is mom crying?" The father turns to the boy and snaps, "Because you're an asshole." dramatic silence. The family continues walking.

What is so special about this domestic drama, what makes it funny? It is clear that there is a laughable "wit" in this situation that the viewer/listener picks up on immediately. The laughter comes when the alienating code of conduct we are burdened with in Western and/or Westernised societies is broken without warning. But beware! However absurd and hilarious the anecdote may be, the joke is not there yet.

In order for absurd humor to function as such, it must not only voluntarily break with the dominant systemic logic but have the vocation of being a defector that abandons an ordinary existence. In the scene with which we open this text, there is no intentionality whatsoever. Nor is there any desire to provoke hilarity, much less an escape from reality.

In fact, what the scene in question projects to us is a rather problematic issue, as making fun of certain realities may well lead us to other much deeper and more hurtful realities that have nothing to do with humour, although they can often be truly funny. What is absolutely true is that everyday life, with all its miseries and adversities, is a direct source to quench the thirst for absurdity that many fugitives from the system demand. Absurdity is elixir, nectar, key, crux, essence, soul, background and surface to survive in a politically dispensable time.

Joi Murugavell, screwed (but oh so happy) in the suffocating contemporary world, distrusts the great milestones and the great revolutions of history. What sense do they have for the vulgar survivors? Where are those of us who do not feel part of the stellar moments of humanity? What is left for us, if we are not capable of laughing at ourselves? Arriving at this existential mess, satirizing the world that surrounds us seems the best escape route.

Through the analysis of the consumer society, installed in the daily life of men and women of contemporary times, Joi inevitably arrives at a caricature of everyday life with the intention of escaping from it by her only known path: humour (even if it sometimes hurts).

Joi Murugavell is the comic of the plastic gag that puts her finger on the stigma of snobbery and opens the wounds of the *crème de la crème* (the *pus*) of the academic intelligentsia. In her work one can trace a serious interest in transforming reality, letting out the shit kept under the carpets of the neat salons of a hypocritical social community.

Her characters are as much a paradigm of self-deprecation as they are of sarcasm in general. Of course, it is evident that behind all Joi's artistic production there is a fine-nosed tracing of preceding styles. We cannot forget that absurdist humour comes hand in hand with the *Avant-garde*, not only in formal terms, but also in the sense that they both attack the norms, morality and historical discourses established by the powers that be. The protagonists of her work dances between the muppet (half-human, half-animal, half-plant), the caricatured emoticon and the goofy toy could be linked to the childlike sensibility of Joan Miró or to the satirical sculptures of Marisol (Escobar), inspired by the absurd American routine of the 1960s, at the height of Pop Art fever.

Starting from these bases that set foot in the more or less recent history of art, her apparently crude and simple drawings, close to outsider art and amateurism, very soon reveal to us that behind this pseudo-naivety there is something more cruel and certain as is the human condition. The ironic phlegm that Joi instills in her entire bestiary serves her (in addition to cutting off the head of the soporific postmodern system) for entertainment, personal discovery and improvement as a human being.

Now we arrive at humour – her hiding place, her place for reflection and her clue to escape from a reality that is often uncomfortable. With these premises, it is not surprising that collage (dissident art par excellence!) is the technique she resorts to most.

Painting, drawing, text... are mixed with other objects of the most varied nature to accentuate the general dystrophy of common sense and, on the other hand, to question, encourage debate, transform and subvert the glanders of official contemporary culture.

Joi Murugavell is a great escapist.

Juan Llano Borbolla
Independent curator
(Zanahoria Cruda 'Raw Carrot')
April, 2023

Translated from Spanish to English by 3 AI language translators and 1 faulty human mind.



'Many Ways Home', 2023
Installation view, Nonage Gallery, Singapore



ICON Singapore Interview with Joi Murugavell

Can you tell us about your upcoming exhibition “Many Ways Home” in Singapore and share the specific experiences or inspirations that have influenced the themes explored in the exhibition?

Home is where I find a logic system that resonates with me, it's never been a place. So home could be with my pen pal @applecatjam, an artist and teacher who lives in Taiwan. When I talk to him I often feel at home and he's become one of my many ways to feel at home. That is the best example I can think of to explain 'Many Ways Home'. There are other explanations lurking in my head, but I don't have words for them yet. The sort of words that can be the truth anyway.

Is there a specific piece of artwork in the exhibition that holds a special meaning to you? Can you tell us more about it?

Unborn Chicken Voices. I wrote the lyrics to 'paranoid android' on the painting, it's a song by Radiohead I've been listening to for 20 years, maybe. And when they sing 'please could you stop the noise I'm trying to get some rest', I feel like I've just put my head on my pillow, it's an instant comfort and feeling of belonging.

Your art has been exhibited in various countries. Have you noticed any differences in how your art is perceived or received in different cultures?

I can't say I have noticed any differences. But I also haven't been looking.

“Many Ways Home” is your first solo exhibition in Singapore. How does it feel to bring your art to a new audience and cultural context? What do you hope visitors will experience and take away from your exhibition?

I'm always happy when my work resonates with someone as it makes me feel less lonely.

Your art is often described as bright and humorous while also capturing the pain and beauty of the human experience. How do you balance these seemingly contrasting elements in your work?

I'm not sure if I balance it, or maybe that is not for me to say as I'm too close to my work.



Characters frequently appear in your art. How do you choose these characters and what do they represent to you?

Most children draw, I just never stopped I guess. The 'characters' have changed over the years but I think I still draw them for the same reason, to try and understand things or even to pass time in a way that is enjoyable to me. I can't not draw them though, that is what I found out when I tried to make abstract paintings. After 10 minutes a goofy elephant appeared and I gave up trying not to see characters in colours and washes.

What were some challenges you faced in developing your style and voice as an artist, and how did you overcome them?

I've never had a problem with 'style' as I can't do anything else, so it's a thing that I do and thankfully that thing is 'accepted' and exhibited as I wouldn't be able to change it. As for my voice as an artist, that will be a challenge/adventure for life, I don't think that is a challenge I could ever overcome, it's why making art is interesting.

Can you talk more about the role of humor and play in your creative process and how it influences your art?

Humour is a tool to entertain myself, get over myself and also discover myself. It is also a tool to hide myself.

How do you stay motivated and inspired as an artist?

I have this system of input and output. During the input stage I read, talk to friends or strangers, travel, listen to music, watch movies. During the output stage I make art. I'm not an artist who has to or even can make art all the time. I usually work in spurts, for example 2 months of making art non stop then one month of input, and repeat. The inertia of input and output inspires me to keep outputting and then inputting and then outputting and then, you know.

What's next for you after "Many Ways Home"? Do you have any upcoming projects or exhibitions that you're excited about?

I have a residency in Spain (August) that I'm excited about as it's in a beautiful remote setting where I will be able to output quietly for 6 weeks. I suspect I will be doing a lot of 'inputting' too :)



Human being...
leaking air till the end

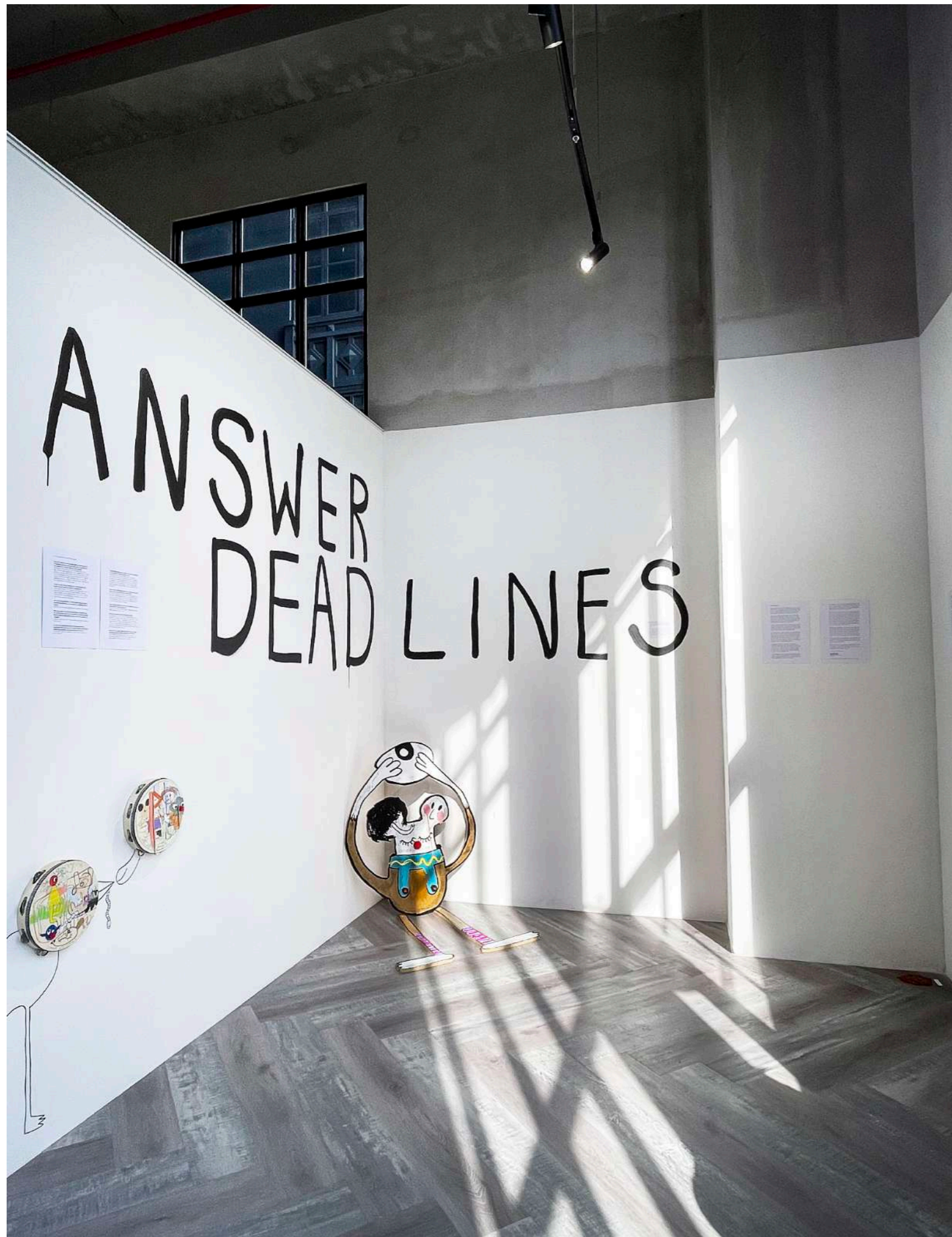


Zanahoria Cruda 'Raw Carrot' designed by Joi Murugavell, made by Ian Langohr

No One I Think Is In My Tree, 2023







Thoughts on answer deadlines

"I think often times when we speak, it's mainly to respond to what I call an 'answer deadline' someone asks you a question and well you must have an answer as that seems to be how we have defined communication".

Apart from conversations with close friends (the kind where you can take your shoes off and feel comfortable with silence), making art has been a way to slow down the answer deadlines imposed on me since I could speak. Alone in my studio, making marks, no one asking questions with no answers required, little bits of what this all 'is' slowly bubbles up from time-to-time. Only to disappear just as you try to put words to it. And then again a *bubbling* when you meet someone, read a book or watch a movie that reminds you of this thing, this feeling of meaning you tried to find in your studio.



ANSWER
DEAD LINES



STUDIO NOTES

CONVERSE ALL STAR

Chuck

Jaylor

CONVERSE

CONVERSE

You're welcome to read the notes in this box that I've come to call 'studio notes'. They are the little notes I make while painting - usually roused by music, audio books and conversations I've had with people. Many of these notes have made their way onto the paintings showing here today.



"Dear Juan,

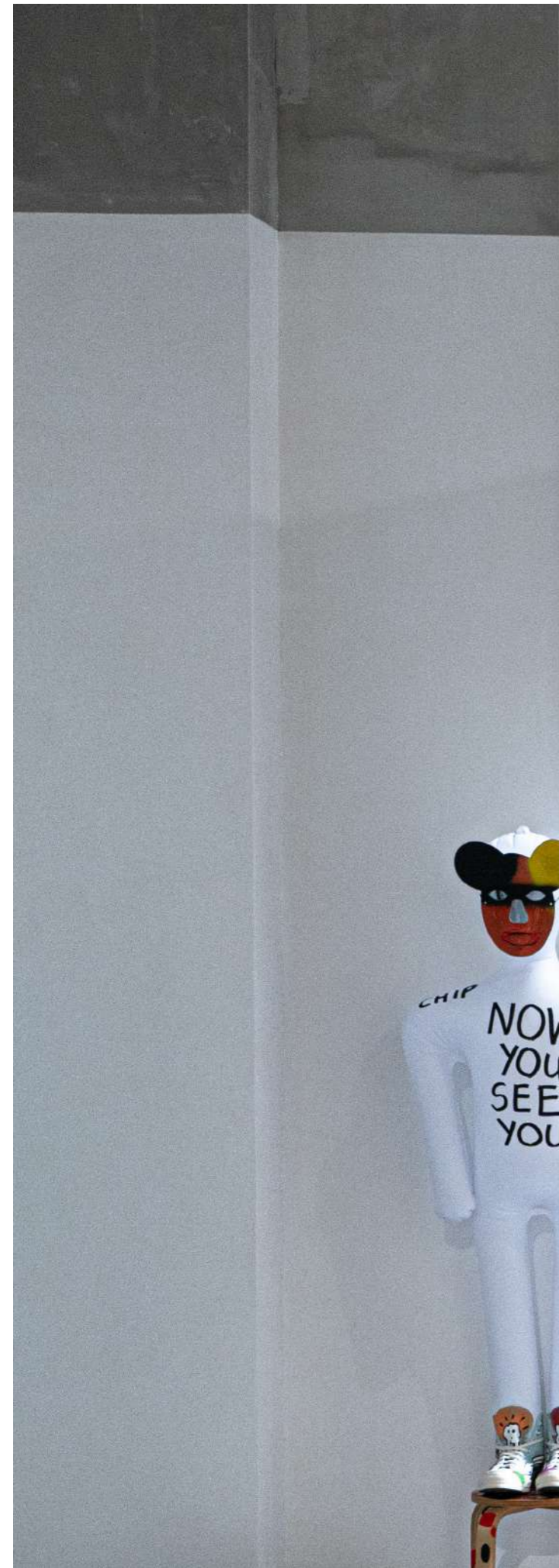
I have a 100 plastic la cucarachas. I have loved la cucarachas for the longest time I think they are so despicable but humorously cute and I love them because they are hated. I will have them in a box that says 'read me' so people scream."

In an email to Juan Llano Borbolla on the 17th of Feb 2023

It's how I feel when I'm asked what a painting is about. It's a cringing necessity that I despise and appreciate at the same time.

ps. they did scream





Please could you stop
the noise I'm trying
to get a rest
from a unborn
chicken
head. What's that?
(I may be paranoid but





"Dear Juan,

I have a remote control fart machine, it can work up to 100ft away, has a boom box and 15 different fart sounds – so it's pretty realistic. On opening night my cousin will have the remote in her pocket. And when anyone sits on the carrot she will activate a fart."

In an email to Juan Llano Borbolla on the 17th of Feb 2023

Unfortunately she was a little too trigger happy and also activated farts when she was specifically told not to.

ps. other people are now in charge of the fart machine as the show goes on for a month. Thankfully it is getting more and more ridiculous.

Replied to you

And I've put the fart machine on auto fart

Today I started a couple's fight with the fart machine, I had to go to them and explain that it was a machine and not the husband farting 😂😂



Chasing the futile proverbial carrot to feed my need for a sense of home has been my full-time quest for the longest time.



"Europe 1916", an anti-war cartoon by Boardman Robinson, depicting Death enticing an emaciated donkey towards a precipice with a carrot labeled "Victory."

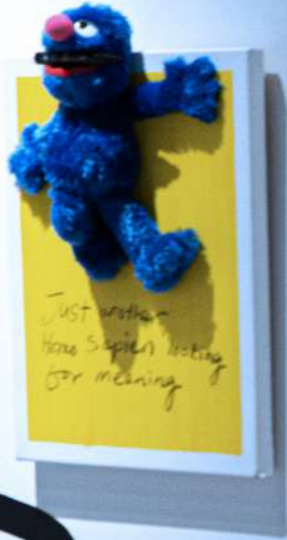


ANY

ME

AYS

By
Jori Murugavell
2023



PLEASE
RESPECT
YOUR
PRIVACY



Joi Murugavell was here

