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C and I were sanding a floor in our gallery in 2014. We had been sanding for days now. Sporadic complaints from the upstairs neighbour punctuating the dusty solitude. ABBA Gold was getting us through in a fugue state of airborne particles and deadline related exhaustion. The visitors were coming. Whether the neighbour with legitimate complaints or the fast approaching opening of the gallery for its debut show.

The dog is barking downstairs. I still don't know her name but she licks my hand now when I see her so I guess we are friends. Her owner speaks so quickly and so much I find it hard to keep up, straining my ears and internal translation. I reply and am always met with a slightly quizzical look. I say stuff wrong or sound wrong, I don't know. He's too polite to correct me. The dog barks when the music is too loud. I turn it off instead of down.

The Visitors is in my view the perfect disco track. It has a great driving synth-bass growl, dreamy vocals in that softly Swedish-tinged lilt so identifiably ABBA and the classically sci-fi, disco-ball twinkle. *The Visitors* also has a darkness, anxiety and bite that is absent from much of the powder-puff campy ABBA back catalogue. A lyrical and musical nervousness which feels like a keystone for the ongoing pandemic and foreshadowing of post-COVID social interactions.

I always say I don't much like dancing, though tango clubs in Brussels after midnight would maybe say otherwise. If they called that dancing. I don't dance unless I'm drunk and now I don't drink so I don't dance. I can dance in my apartment though. No one can see me in here, up in the attic, facing the playing fields.

The palpable anxiety in the lyrics, exacerbated by the rhythmic tremulations formed a perfect backdrop to the frenzied sanding. The anxiety of bothering others in the space we shared, feeling like imposters. The anxiety of upcoming hosting duties. In the frame of a new venture and a small scale artist-led space, isolated in its location within the building, city, country, there seemed a strange providence.

I rediscovered *The Visitors* in an unexpected place. The 2019 edition of the Gothenburg International Biennial of Contemporary Art featured a wonderful two channel video work by Doireann O'Malley and Armin Lorenz Gerold—*Prototype II: The Institute*—which closes on it. A dreamy androgynous bar dance scene highlighting the ubiquitous catchiness of the track; the need to move, the need to move with people. The work was produced borrowing methodologies from Live Action Role Playing (LARP), somatic exercise and world building. It highlights the diffuse nature of the boundaries between gender, human, nature and technology. It's improvisational but feels tight and furtive at points, like a fencing match. Then there is the release, the coolness broken by disco. An anxious rhapsody.

The pandemic has seen many of us spend an exponential amount of time in our place of residence. Limited to interaction with those we share a building with, the woman behind the counter at the convenience store and screen mediated family, friends and colleagues. The space of our apartment has become, more than ever, a sanctum and prison. Our door—a barrier to the possibility of infection. The noises on the other side inducing a strange exaggerated excitement, simultaneous dread and elation. It's just the postman.

The books, the paintings and the furniture. The backdrop to our Zoom life. We are constantly amongst the things we love so dearly now, but everyone else is scrutinising them. We curate our shelves to display our best self. We set up strange ad hoc TV studios in our living room. Tweaking the desk lamp to take the glare off the spectacles. Switch out the Dungeon Master's Guide for a Mark Leckey catalogue. Clean the bathroom even though no one will see it (hopefully), let alone use it. Our trinkets are us. Our screen-projected-meeting-self turning into a Holbein of semiotic status and optical illusion.

I think there is a lot to be taken from LARP and from role-playing games in general. At some point we are going to have to relearn socialising. Sometime in the future when the lockdowns are properly over. Once we come out of the crippling sand-foundation of unknowingness. Pale and blinking. Perhaps we will all have forgotten the characters we used to play to one another then and will have to invent new ones.

*
These walls have witnessed all the anguish of humiliation. A loss of altitude. A melon smashed on a door-jam. A row about moisturiser. So frivolous. The dog is barking again. I'm isolated now. Irritated. Trembling. Unable to speak. The phone rings and suddenly the panic takes me.

*
I found myself startled awake in that same room I had been sanding. Numb and frozen. A phone torch glaring angrily at me. Sleeping inside an upturned plinth lined with damp cushions and a dusty blanket. Drifting between places and spaces exhausted. The angry torch had a familiar voice, and an unfamiliar one. A chimera of familiarity. I waved at the light as though it would dissipate like smoke.

*
What can we take from this disco odyssey? How many disco odysseys have there been down the years? How will we feel when those first tentative parties, true parties, sprawling and filled with people we only half know, come around. When those people we only half know come around, come around. When that one asshole

AN ANXIOUS RHAPSODY

turns off ABBA and puts on Arctic Monkeys. Will we stand listening to the growing clamour on the other side of the door, rumbling in the stairwell, trembling, listening to the irritation growing? Will there even be irritation growing or will the revelers here for the party on the other side be as circumspect about the whole arrangement? Checking their phones to see when the polite amount of time has passed to give up and go. I want ABBA there then. Disco ball glittering in the dust laden air, reminding me I'm not alone in my panic.

by Joe Rowley

25mg of Dopamine and 15mg of Oxytocin.