

\$*phI3's Di@*ry 10

After not having time to head out of Düsseldorf to see the highly recommended museum (<https://museum-abteiberg.de/>) by the director of Kunstverein, who I accidentally was sitting next to at a dinner where I wasn't officially invited. More on that later. I reluctantly decided to check out the Jon Rafman show at the K21. Yes, isn't he cancelled? friends were texting me. I hate him, one said, and I know him personally. What can I say, I was mildly entertained. I was only there for about an hour, and I think the whole exhibition contains something like 3542 mins of footage, maybe more, but who cares?

The work is perfect for OAPs (Old Age Pensioners) it seems. The second room was full; all seats were occupied by people with grey hair. It was Wednesday at noon. I read the wall text and it said the film had hypnotic effects. Clearly it was working.



I think only pictures can tell you how overwhelming this exhibition is. Total abundance. Snore? His films though, once you engage, are highly entertaining and absorbing, like brain-rot style and always volume loud. It reminds me of sitting next to boys I fancied as a teenager playing Grand Theft Auto, where prostitutes walk up to cars and punch things randomly. Rafman grew up on Tetris and Second Life. He's a classic Generation X. Between the boomers and millennials. How awkward. A lost generation. Nothing special about Gen X, although I have a book on my shelf called Gen X, read it, forgot it entirely. I feel like I want to wear something a little slutty and sit next to someone and have them pay me no attention. I want to sip a drink and puff on a joint and act like I don't care about male attention. But really this exhibit is sooo 17-year-old boy. It's like a fantasy playroom arcade mania. It's a bit nostalgic too, like retromania hitting hard. It reminded me of two guys' work on my MFA. How were they different from Rafman, what distinguished them, or were we all just caught in the same echo chamber of popular culture? Jon worked pretty hard it appears, had a slight age advantage and comes from money, apparently. Quite relentless the show. He's been using AI for years and has crazy budgets. The aesthetics of the show are pretty trashy and feel outdated to me. Most of the highbrow art people will snob the materiality, the sweaty plastics and the overload of screens. It's just a bit much, Jon, tone it down. I never had much respect for Jon, but it was lost even further after all the allegations, and to be frank I find it totally German standard right now to be hosting his mega solo show. I think he's pretty much cancelled everywhere else.

I went to Düsseldorf for a screening of the few and rare films of Fanny Howe, a writer (in a family of writers). The screening was the first part of Reruns, a new programme at the Kunstverein. It was programmed by Terrassen (<https://terrassen.bio>), a Copenhagen roaming cinema collective, and presented by Jakob Ohrt, who pretty much resurrected her films and has now been screening them since she died last year. The films are special, however they are just a fraction of Fanny's brain. Unfortunately I was late and had a terrible view at the back, but it didn't matter. The films were very inspiring to me, someone who sways between the art and film realms constantly. Here someone wrote about Fanny's films: <https://woodberrypoetryroom.com/?p=982>



After the screening I talked to Jakob and another person from Terrassen. I tried to buy a book of the films of Yvonne Rainer, which I've been watching and Terrassen showed last year in a multiplex cinema in Copenhagen. I told the guys from Terrassen I'm from [WET](#) (like it's a planet), which they know about since they were part of the OG social.life.of.film. It's good to connect, it's easy, even though I feel a bit scruffy and unsuccessful or self-doubting. I'm trying not to undersell myself or what we do, it's a constant battle for me.

Fredrik asks me if I want to join for dinner after. I accept even though I don't know if that's the right thing to do. I also started talking with another woman while buying the book. She's Inge. A performance artist, interested in the filtering of language through the hole that we call a mouth. She takes a walk daily and she says that's a big part of her practice. I think about movement being connected to creativity. She has a studio too. She's based in Düsseldorf but frequents Munich, as her partner lives there, but also she has a place in Brussels. She says she moves about a fair bit. Düsseldorf is too small and it's connected to so many other close cities.

We went out for dinner. First destination close by, they had stopped serving food, so the woman we're with, Gloria, orders a big Uber and we drive for five minutes making small talk about Fanny Howe. I'm aware I'm being quiet. I feel intimidated, I suppose, but I maintain a listening, curious face and ask a question in a quiet moment politely. I am aware I'm probably the youngest except for the assistant curator, who I introduce myself to. Not only am I younger but I feel inferior. I assume that's a knowledge/social-class thing that I haven't got access to yet. I'm on the peripheries.

At the rustic restaurant, there are other white people with big glasses from the event. They all say hi to each other and that they'll hang out after we eat. We start by ordering drinks. Gloria orders water for the table, one still, one sparkling, herself a pet nat. I know what that is from my days working behind the bar at Kaapse, so there are other ways of gaining access, like, to be on the other side of the bar. I order a Riesling, no idea why but feel I have to join in and not be a freak. I look at the menu not knowing the dishes' names. Before thinking I ask her what it is. She explains it's Sicilian pasta with something or other. Taste, experience and knowledge, all signifiers of where you come from or what you're on your way to or what you've cultivated. At one moment Gloria says she's the director. Oh! I responded (a bit surprised). I guess she might have thought I knew who she was. I didn't, of course.

When I got my FlixBus back, after a quick snack stop in Lidl. The bus arrived but the driver went off, apparently also to Lidl. When he returned after 15 mins, I had gotten into a situation with a woman who was standing on the road, clearly in pain. No one was going over to her, so I approached her. She was head down in her suitcase, sort of couldn't see her face, but the fact she was actually standing in the road was causing me alarm. After I asked if she was ok, she looked up and, with crying eyes, said not really, my back. She couldn't move. I asked what I could do and if she needed to lean on me and I'd help her onto the pavement. We did this and she slowly kneeled on the pavement. She was in a lot of pain and didn't know what to do. She said she was calling her mum in the end and didn't want me to call an ambulance. She wasn't German, she had just arrived off the FlixBus from Ghent. She told me the driver wouldn't help her get her bag from the bus and then she got this terrible pain. She has a hernia. It

made me think about how lucky I am and how vulnerable human bodies can be, and how it's a privilege not only in my white able-bodied body but also in my knowledge, experience and somewhat confidence and ability to travel alone. I left her talking to her mum on the phone in Russian crying. She was barely on the pavement but said her mum was on her way. I took my bus feeling the weight of my privilege. She said how nice it was that I came over and that no one else did. I said we live in a pretty hostile world, which is how I have been feeling for my 24 hours in Germany. Being checked on the border for drugs, also fined on the bus struggling to buy a ticket in time with the rain, people's bags ransacked, pretty humiliating stuff. I've been reading *The Netherlands Is a Bad Idea* by Rogier van Reekum, but being in Germany makes me think it's not so bad. Of course everything is relative.

The man I stayed with again from Couchsurfing is a full-time engineer and has an apartment full to the brim of his own pottery and paintings, he's constantly busy. He's using AI to build a website to sell crockery and pots. When I asked him about the ethical concerns of using AI he said, well, if you want to die alone. I think he has a point. Makes me question the refusal. Does it really do anything? Maybe not. Is it better to die alone with your comrades though?

[\(for previous editions\)](#)

[9](#)

[8](#)

[7](#)

[6](#)

[5](#)

[4](#)

[3](#)

[2](#)

[1](#)