



# The Opposite of Now

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Mira Calix  
 Faye Claridge  
 Mike Harvey  
 E. Jackson  
 Tyler Mallison  
 Nika Neelova  
 Tom Smith  
 Dylan Spencer-Davidson  
 Thomas Whittle  
 Laura Wilson



Syllabus II  
 22-28 may 2017

Guest Projects  
 Sunbury House  
 1 Andrews Road  
 London E8 4QL  
 guestprojects.com

Syllabus II invited Emily LaBarge to produce a text under the title 'The Opposite of Now' for their residency at Guest Projects. A week of production in response to the text culminates in a public presentation of new works, talks and music. Participating artists are Mira Calix, Faye Claridge, Mike Harvey, E. Jackson, Tyler Mallison, Nika Neelova, Tom Smith, Dylan Spencer-Davidson, Thomas Whittle and Laura Wilson.

## The Opposite of Now

Emily LaBarge 2017

1.

For months now, I have been repeating this phrase to myself. Or what I had *thought* to be this phrase, which turned out, in fact, to be its opposite. What I had been saying to myself, in my head and out loud, was: *the opposite of the future*. Imagine my consternation, sitting down to write and realising that I had fundamentally misunderstood the task to the extent that I had mentally supplanted the subject of the sentence with its antonym. Though to be fair, I thought, staring at the page, blank but for its title, the sentence is not quite complete. There is no predicate or modifier. It is just a phrase; a dependent clause. One could then perhaps forgive the words for acting upon themselves: *opposite*, a noun, verbs *now*, the subject, into the future, and back, and beyond. For it is always the opposite shore that beckons; the fragment that frustrates and asks to be completed.

And of course opposites come in degrees. Now could also be later, eventually, or even — the past. Though the latter, the later — the furthest back — seems too finite for something that ribbons and unfolds in such curious eddies.

2.

In *The Power of Now*, Eckhart Tolle says, and I don't believe him, *at the deepest level of being you are one with all that is*. My mother gave me this book for Christmas, having forgotten she already gifted a copy of it to me years ago; the power of now being so powerful that it occludes memory. I have not read this book, though it sits next to my bed, sandwiched between Emily Witt's *Future Sex: A New Kind of Free Love*, which I like but cannot identify with, and William Finnegan's *Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life*. I try to read democratically, but each night find myself in the wake of Finnegan's waves, whose preface reads: *He had become so caught up in building sentences that he had almost forgotten the barbaric days when thinking was like a splash of colour landing on a page.*<sup>1</sup>

Live in the moment, my mother is always saying. But writerly subjectivity is a difficult beast: it demands that one be present, while also at a distance, in order to glean meaningful critical insights from one's own life and behaviours.

<sup>1</sup>Edward St. Aubyn, *Mother's Milk*.

Syllabus II artists  
 annotations, notes and thoughts

MC [title: the opposite of now]  
 "Quantum theory dictates that a very tiny thing can absorb energy only in discrete amounts, can never sit perfectly still, and can literally be in two places at once." Perhaps Einstein was right when he thought he was wrong and not they way he intended. #theoppositeofnow

TM I am. I will be. I was. Moving through time and space, being real-time. 'This is not something we do just one or twice. Interrupting our destructive habits and awakening the heart is the work of a lifetime.' — Pema Chödrön

EJ this makes me think about reactive writing and embodied words. In the context of art writing (historical, theoretical and critical) what does it mean to move between theoretical subject and embodied being during a writing process?

Writing eschews the now so as to understand it more wholly, and to preserve it in full for all the future nows that will inevitably arrive, time marching on as it does. Language is an elegy for all the nows that pass me by as I sit here trying to give word to these thoughts.

3.

I can hear my upstairs neighbour as she walks across the floor. No, I can hear her as she *pounds* across the floor. She bangs; she tramps, stamps, careers. I have seen her in person and I have observed that for such a slight and slender woman, she carries herself with inordinate heaviness, heels beating patterns fast and erratic across the wooden boards. Each time — sitting at my desk, lost in words and thought — the noise jolts me out of the present. My mind ricochets uncontrollably into the future and runs through all the things I have not done, have yet to do, and might never, and my skin starts to crawl.

In these moments I sometimes hear a loud humming noise. Although it passes, after a time; it has passed. I curse her, my upstairs neighbour, silently, sometimes a low muttering, damn damn *damn* — I've lost it now — the focus — the crucial thought that is yet to arrive — as the windows in my flat rattle in their casings in time with her footfalls. I could die tomorrow, I sometimes want to say to my neighbour upstairs. The opposite of *tableau vivant* is *nature mort*. So would you stop banging around, already? Would you stop ticking and tocking knocking and keeping track of every — single — second — minute — hour — day? I know, I know — I want to say — *oh believe me I know* — that it is not finished — that there is so much more to do. This incessant scraping and banging and clanging and pounding, it is oppressive, it is deafening. I feel like you are, I want to say, holding a gun to my head, do see?

I must admit, if pressed, I would agree that this statement about the gun makes little sense within the context. I would also concede that I have lost nothing at all. And on a good day, I might allow that I am responsible to enact changes in my life should I wish to no longer feel this way; so rattled and barrel-skulled. Instead, I put in ear plugs and I say to myself: *I'm sure everything will be fine. It's okay. You're okay. We're okay. I'm — just keep — putting pen to paper —*

3.

Most of this — none of this — some of all of part of this — is about time as fear as fear as time as a mechanism for avoidance. It is also about writing, which is sometimes synonymous with confusion and misunderstanding, and how even the simplest statement — title, phrase — can be about something else entirely. It is about how thinking this way for too long might very well lead a person to say something along the lines of:

*You do not do, you do not do*<sup>2</sup>

OR

*The stars are not hereditary*—<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Sylvia Plath, 'Daddy', *Ariel*.

<sup>3</sup>Emily Dickinson, Letter to Charles H. Clark, 1883.

TW Time isn't holding us

Time isn't after us

TS '...the photograph has been taken, the recording made; all that is left is the moment of development, of playing back.'

– Mark Fisher

LW Dough is never static. It is constantly growing and morphing. It refuses to behave, it moves under its own weight, it relaxes, it gives over to gravity.

NN To replicate something is to translate it into another medium, to decode it and to recode it into its new reality, to perform the process that was used to shape it in the first place, to recruit its structure and introduce it elsewhere.

DSD I wanted to lean over and hold you

MH 'ok, k. but the edge-edge cutting up thru u & the neighbours downstairs bathroom is a way, sure. its a way across the /land that eats itself/ but not one i wanna take.'

OR

*We are, I know not how, double within ourselves.*<sup>4</sup>

OR

*I have wasted my life*<sup>5</sup>

OR

*Human speech is like a cracked kettle on which we tap crude rhythms for bears to dance to, while we long to make music that will melt the stars.*<sup>6</sup>

OR

*I crossed the ocean for a heart of gold*<sup>7</sup>

OR

*He thinks the moon is a small hole at the top of the sky, proving the sky quite useless for protection.*<sup>8</sup>

OR

*That night it rained on the boxcars, explaining The thought of the pensive cabbage roses near the boxcars.*<sup>9</sup>

OR

*The minor fall, the major lift*<sup>10</sup>

OR

EVEN

*How now brown cow, what's new with you?*

BECAUSE

*Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being from genus to species, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.*<sup>11</sup>

AND

*Words do not look like the things they designate.*<sup>12</sup>

AND FINALLY

*You can never know enough, never work enough, never use the infinitives and participles oddly enough, never impede the movement harshly enough, never leave the mind quickly enough.*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Michel de Montaigne, 'On the inconstancy of our actions', *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*.

<sup>5</sup>James Wright, 'Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota', *Above the River: The Complete Poems and Selected Prose*.

<sup>6</sup>Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2011), p.146.

<sup>7</sup>Neil Young, 'Heart of Gold'.

<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth Bishop, 'The Man-Moth', *The Complete Poems 1926-79*.

<sup>9</sup>John Ashbery, 'A Boy', *The New American Poetry, 1945-1960*.

<sup>10</sup>Leonard Cohen, 'Hallelujah'.

<sup>11</sup>Aristotle, *Metaphysics*.

<sup>12</sup>Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Cezanne's Doubt', *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*.

<sup>13</sup>Anne Carson, *Plainwater* (London: Vintage, 2000), p.29.

FC This links to my interest in pas(t)imes, performing roles and dominance or compliance in those acts. Do bears ever dance for their own amusement?

TS And I'm getting old

FC [OR,OR,OR EVEN, BECAUSE]

This resonates with the role of research in my practice, constantly hypothesising and asking works to perform where language struggles.

Syllabus II artists

[miracalix.com](http://miracalix.com)

[fayeclaridge.co.uk](http://fayeclaridge.co.uk)

[mkhrvy.com](http://mkhrvy.com)

[atimeinplace.com](http://atimeinplace.com)

[tylermallison.com](http://tylermallison.com)

[nikaneelova.com](http://nikaneelova.com)

[tomsmith.info](http://tomsmith.info)

[dylanspencerdavidson.com](http://dylanspencerdavidson.com)

[thomaswhittle.co.uk](http://thomaswhittle.co.uk)

[laurawilson.me](http://laurawilson.me)

Exhibition 27th – 28th May 2017

open 12:00 – 18:00

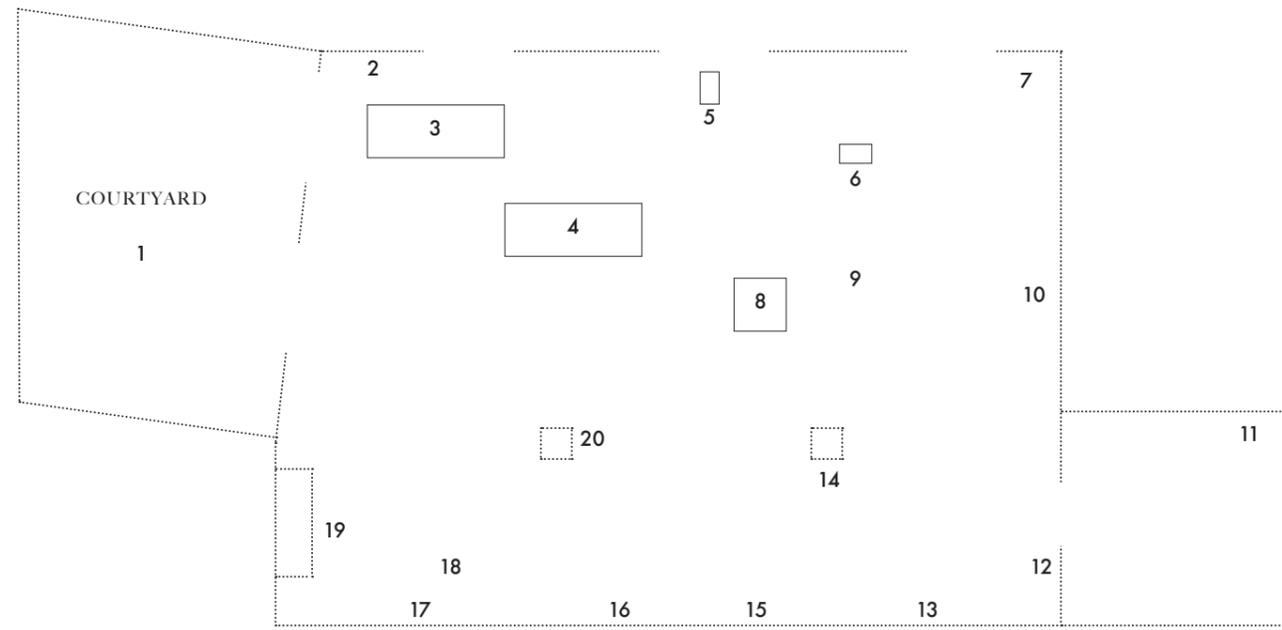
www.guestprojects.com  
#syllabusII

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Events 28th May

19:00 – 19:30  
performance  
**LOVESICKFUCK**  
Dylan Spencer-Davidson with  
Luke Bafico and Hannah Parsons

20:00 – 22:00  
**Slide Night #8**  
Patrick Cole, Mike Harvey,  
Tyler Mallison, Thomas Whittle  
and Laura Wilson



LIST OF WORKS

**1**  
Jim (unnerving me), 2017  
Morris dance tattercoat, Guest Projects  
brooms and table  
215x120x120cm  
FAYE CLARIDGE

**2**  
An evolving understanding of the  
diplodocus, 2017  
A2 Poster  
TOM SMITH

**3, 4**  
“I do a lot of art. I like it very much”  
1995-2017  
oil on paper, pencil on paper and silver  
gelatine print  
dimensions variable  
THOMAS WHITTLE

**5**  
Sky Accumulation, 25–28th May 2017,  
Sunbury House, 1 Andrews Road, London  
E8 4QL, 2017  
watercolour on paper, marble  
505x355x20mm  
E. JACKSON

**6**  
by beings in two places at once, 2017  
music, HD video, photographs  
MIRA CALIX

**7, 8, 9, 10, 12**  
notes for burb [1-5], 2017  
mixed media  
MIKE HARVEY

**11**  
I’m right ahead of you Danny, 2017  
Projection from looped .mov file  
TOM SMITH

**13**  
untitled (lithic), 2017  
NIKA NEELOVA

**14**  
untitled (crystals), 2013  
NIKA NEELOVA

**15**  
This is not something we do just once or  
twice, 2017  
Steel automotive barrier, rubber bicycle  
grips, USB cable  
132x46x38cm  
TYLER MALLISON

**16,17**  
Interrupting our destructive habits (and  
awakening\*) is the work of a lifetime, 2017  
‘9968 steps’ / ‘67 bpm’  
Steel, aluminium, rubber bicycle grips,  
smart phone case and holder, foam,  
acupuncture needles  
105x20x44cm / 101x20x44cm  
TYLER MALLISON

**18**  
\*(and awakening) some lines we fail to  
cross, 2017  
Glass mirror, wood  
Dimensions variable  
TYLER MALLISON

**19**  
Or, Or, Or Even, Because, 2017  
Photographic prints (showing Maske by  
Phyllis Galemba), vintage frame and drum  
185x70x35cm  
FAYE CLARIDGE

**20**  
With Inordinate Heaviness, 2017  
HD video on monitor, dough,  
3mins 7sec  
LAURA WILSON

