

To invite an artist and a curator.

In announcing ERGO, an open call for artists and curators to collaborate, we aim for an exhibition where creative freedom reigns. There will be no constraints or predetermined guidelines—just creativity given freedom to flourish. This is an opportunity to disrupt, provoke thought, and reimagine perspectives, inspiring meaningful dialogue that resonates beyond the gallery walls.

Looking back, as we passed our five years as a gallery, we are humble and grateful for the friends we have made who also exhibited with us. But of course, we also had to ask what we could have done better and how to apply this in our upcoming venues.

Maybe we were a bit too controlling, perhaps a little nervous, and wanted our artists to excel in our space, so we gave unsolicited advice on this and that. We were clouding creative completion with monetary success. This feeling of taking up space in the creative process was disturbing.

Then, this text from a conversation between Rashid Johnson and Hendrik Folkerts came to mind.

**HF** - Cally Spooner, an artist and writer I have worked with frequently, said it succinctly recently: "How things travel when they are left alone." What that inevitably leads to, if you provide that kind of freedom to people as they're hosted in a certain situation, is agency. I think agency, if sincere and held well within in a space without overly fixed conditions and expectations, can lead to extraordinary things.

**RJ** - It's a much lighter touch than you might imagine. This holds true as a host in other aspects of my life too. For instance, when people come into my home, I give over the space: Go to the fridge and get whatever you like. I'm less of a present host and more of a host whose ambition it is to make you feel like the space is as much yours as it is mine. This translates to how I extend the invitations to and host artists in these installations, or any kind of institutional context, namely to say, Here's the space, and this is an invitation to amplify your voice inside that space, to contribute to a dialogue and a discourse inside that space alongside me and the other guests. I love that it's so undictated and it comes without expectation. As an artist, the thing I am least excited about is an invitation that comes with an expectation. That's true in my relationship to residencies, or invitations for exhibitions and speaking engagements. I want freedom. The reason I signed up for this job, for this task, for this responsibility of being an artist and a practitioner and a person who amplifies their voice and speaks truth to circumstances, is freedom—when I am brought into a space to say what it is that I want to do there. <sup>(\*)</sup>

With this easy-flowing truth ringing in our minds, we realize that we must practice it. Even - Why exhibit at all? Why should we do this if the trajectory of the artist-curator collaboration cannot take its natural shape and form without interference?

ERGO

Your way.

Not mine, not the audience, and certainly not the gallerist.

To achieve creative agency.

Lisbon in August 2024 JG

<sup>(\*)</sup>ON THE BLUE STAGE: A Conversation between Rashid Johnson and Hendrik Folkerts

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