

# THE HILLSIDE

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Matty Rimmer

*Pet Rock*

11 March – 28 May 2023

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*Pet Rock* is a new exhibition by Glasgow-based artist Matty Rimmer. The exhibition explores the phenomenon of aquariums through a framework of queer kinship that rejects heteronormative, human-centred perspectives.

Generally found in office buildings, shopping malls and hotel lobbies, aquariums are tamed, underwater worlds which indicate wealth and status: living bricks in an otherwise inanimate structure. The title *Pet Rock* also denotes a collectable novelty toy, whose purpose is to provide the owner with a pet that requires no care. This is in contrast to the reef aquariums that Matty considers, which require considerable maintenance, through vast and complex filtration systems hidden from public view.

Working with the aesthetics of a purposeless lobby, the gallery holds a free-standing aquarium wall with submerged vibrant sculptures, animated by filters and pumps. Partially concealed to the rear of the wall,

performing the care and maintenance is the ‘sump’ – the most important part of an aquarium system, populated by water plants that enact the main tank’s waste management.

Matty’s status-rich aquariums display the exploitation of a system of power built on the legacy of Phillip Henry Gosse. Hailed as the ‘inventor of the aquarium’, Gosse sparked an aquarium craze in early Victorian Britain: a craze which advanced humankind’s dominion over water, fish and coral. In *Pet Rock*, aquariums demonstrate the problematic rendering of ecosystems as architectural material.

Matty is a visual artist who predominantly creates sculptures and drawings that question the way capitalism domesticates ecosystems, and that challenge dominant narratives about toxicity and harm. Plastic toxicity is changing our natural world, as it occupies every living organism and ‘natural’ space. However, plastic has also provided real value to human beings.

Matty is an intersex person with silicone prosthesis, and this has spurred the use of plastic in the artist’s work. The submerged sculptures clinging to the lava rocks within the tank are made from Polycaprolactone (PCL), a biodegradable polyester that can be submerged in a body of water without chemically affecting the living organisms around it. The PCL components and qualities form a visual language to articulate Matty’s ‘coming out’ story; the sculptures, in captivity, are a reminder of the solace to be found in inhabiting and maintaining a secret.

Previously, Matty’s attraction to working with plastics has felt like something to work past, but PCL validates a space for plastic in a queer and ecological art practice, and allows him to reimagine it as a site for possibilities, potential queer futures and emergent ideas about nature and the climate.

COLLECTIVE

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## About the artist

Matty Rimmer graduated from painting and printmaking at Glasgow School of Art. He is concerned with the aesthetic and conceptual ideologies of Nature, questioning what can be classified as 'natural'. A feeling of containment runs through his work – an interest in the inherent containment of worlds in painting. As an intersex person whose gender identity was surgically molded and is maintained through hormonal intervention, he is fascinated by the use of plastic objects to define sex and gender and the ways in which plastics can cohabit with living things.

Previous exhibitions include: 2022; *The Alien Inside Us*, Anderson Contemporary, London; *Shocked Quartz*, Ugly Duck, London; *First Outing*, The Grundy & Abingdon Studios, Blackpool; 2020; *Air Diving*, 16 Nicolson Street, Glasgow; *Growth*, GOMA, Glasgow; 2019; *Viridescent Epiphyte*, The Briggait, Glasgow; *Hoovering (Enter the Vacuum)*, London, New Contemporaries, RSA, Edinburgh.

## Thank you

Dylan Esposito, Giulia Gentili, Alex Barkhouse, James N Hutchinson, my Satellites Programme cohort, the Collective team (a special mention to Rachael!), Emelia Kerr Beale, Toby Mills, MUCK (India Boxall and Niamh Moloney), Reef and Rock (Dan McKenzie), Ellie Whitworth, Jonny Walker, Jay Darlington.

## Satellites Programme

Satellites is Collective's development programme for emergent practitioners based in Scotland. Satellites aims to support diverse practitioners to produce a new commission and provides a critical development programme of retreats, workshops, studio visits and group discussions, public exhibitions, events and publishing. Practitioners are selected from an open submission by a new panel each year. The 2022/23 participants are Thomas Abercromby, Rabindranath X Bhowmik, Kaya Fraser and Matty Rimmer.