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THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY  
ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

THE  
RENAISSANCE  
SOCIETY  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2021-22





## 2021-22 SEASON LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

The 2021-22 season has been a remarkable time to work in service as President of the Board of Trustees of the Renaissance Society. Since Myriam Ben Salah joined us as Executive Director and Chief Curator in April 2020, I have had the privilege of working closely with her while observing her influence on every aspect of the Ren. This has led me to take a deep dive into our history, to better understand why, how—and for whom—the Ren came to be. I rediscovered the ways that Chicago artists chafed at the imposition of rules and authority in our city's rigid artistic ecosystem of the early 20th century. It is no wonder that luminary local artists like Gertrude Abercrombie, Frances Strain, Emil Armin, Morris Topchevsky, Fritz Brod, Macena Barton, and others, gravitated to the Ren to seek the safe harbor of free expression.

What *has* always been so special about the Ren, and how does it manifest itself today? How do we capture it, define it, label it? What is happening in this current chapter of the institution that is both tethered to the past and also completely new?

The following words are drawn from my own remarks at RenBen 2022, which was conceived by Los Angeles-based artist Piero Golia as a tightly choreographed cascade of experiences within the dramatic and truly unique context of the Mediterranean Revival-style South Shore Cultural Center (in fact, you can read more about this event on page 30).

In the world of blockchain and crypto-everything, there is the

concept of permissionlessness. Of participating in a system without requiring permission from an authority or adhering to predetermined conventions. This, I offer you, is a beautiful way to understand what we all hold dear about the Ren. Supporting artists and their practices without imposing a culture of permission—that is a rare and precious guiding principle. And we are all witness to the fact that this principle is as alive today as it was in 1915. So thanks to Myriam and her deep, deep understanding of what it means to be the steward of permissionlessness, we are able to be here tonight, together, participating in this extraordinary exhibition, among kindred spirits.

And now, many months later, as you read about this year's dozens of exhibitions, programs, and publications—made possible by the very stakeholders listed on these pages—I hope you remember that the Ren is helping to embody what *permissionlessness* might look like for an institution today, saying yes where others might want to say no.

It might look like the artist Diane Severin Nguyen assembling a crew of teenaged Polish dancers in Warsaw to perform original choreography and lyrics set to K-Pop music co-written by the artist herself for a newly-commissioned 19-minute video. Nguyen cast her film's main character by searching Instagram for a combination of a common Polish name for girls with her own Vietnamese surname. On its face, the film's concept sounds like an unlikely mashup, but as

Diane daringly weaves together these different elements, she draws out the complex diasporic history between Poland and Vietnam, and the tangles of pop culture, propaganda, and self-image.

It could also be the unscripted, dynamic collaboration between artists Lydia Ourahmane and Alex Ayed for their exhibition *Laws of Confusion*. With the Ren's blessing, they followed an ever-shifting set of leads through multiple countries and turned the gallery into a closed environment, full of haze and scattered with objects from disparate places. It's not every show that embraces the idea of "failed objects" and remakes things that were not possible to bring to Chicago—such as soil from the Nile River. Remarkably, you could find raw lithium, a highly reactive metal, sealed safely (yes, safely!) in its original package as part of the artists' haunting and immersive installation.

Or sometimes an artist models an alternative to our culture's sticky thresholds of permission by using their work to open the doors to others. For his *Intermissions* performance *Disguise as Dancefloor*, Beirut and London-based artist Joe Namy invited Chicago-based collaborators—dancers, sound artists, and musicians—to join him on a custom-made dance floor for two days of improvised performance. As other artists brought the dance floor to life, Namy described a generous kind of open-endedness: "I set out to embrace the unknowns or the magic that occurs when you can't plan for everything. I use certain parameters or sparse rules of engagement—like the platform itself in this case, which is just a bunch of copper tiles—but you can create many things from that. A kind of trust is key."

These are just a few examples of a year—*of a long history*—shaped by trust and a belief in artists' agency. All of us—supporters, followers, collaborators, members, and believers of the Ren—are living in an economic, cultural, and political climate that is indelibly marked by the events of the last twenty-four months. A global pandemic's aftermath, political upheaval in the United States, and a worsening climate crisis continued this year to shape the world as we know it. It is this commitment to artists on *their* terms and at their scale, that will help not only to chart, but also to imagine ways forward.

In gratitude,  
Nancy Lerner

## 2021-22 SEASON DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Nicholas Cannariato published a text in *The New York Times* about the lauded TV series “The Bear.” The show follows Carmen Berzatto, an accomplished chef who worked in the world’s most starred restaurants before coming back home to Chicago to run his late brother’s struggling beef sandwich stall. Cannariato writes, “Chicago, for ‘The Bear,’ is depicted—accurately—as a place where the goal is not necessarily to win status or acclaim so much as to create something great and original, ambitious without pretense, committed to excellence for its own sake rather than prestige or fame.” This line resonated, I like to think of the Renaissance Society as quintessentially Chicagoan in this sense. While it does have an international purview, it is without any doubt affectively and intellectually rooted in this city that is, per Cannariato’s words “resilient but vulnerable, ambitious but sincere, sophisticated but real, somehow too subtly original to be easily defined in the American mind.” A city I got to discover and appreciate while building and implementing our 2021-22 season.

After months of shelter in place and isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the season opened with an ode to friendship. For me, it was a way to set intentions. *Smashing into my heart* was a group exhibition that looked at friendship as a condition, a model, and a metaphor for art. The artworks presented engaged with regimes of care, structures of support, horizontal relationships. They were steeped in affection, desire, longing, jealousy, comfort, love. The tone was sentimental. Irony had left the building.

The program continued with an open invitation to artists Alex Ayed and Lydia

Ourahmane. It was an interesting segue from *Smashing*, since the two are friends and occasional collaborators, and at the Ren they developed their largest shared project to date. They effectively wrote a four-handed score for the space, taking cues from their travels to Barcelona, Tunis, and Cairo, gathering materials on the way, provoking chance and navigating legal, ethical, and practical contingencies. Alex and Lydia spent about six weeks in Chicago, too, occupying a studio at Mana Contemporary, turning their exhibition into a residency of sorts. Their interest in the hazardous materials behind our everyday technologies, such as lithium, lead them to conversations with the Amanchukwu Laboratory at the University of Chicago. The team at the Ren supported their ever-evolving process—embracing the unknown, the frictions, the failed experiments—and did what it does best: it nurtured a shift in their practice.

The same could be said of Meriem Bennani’s exhibition, since it allowed the artist to work on a bigger scale as she produced the third chapter of her film trilogy *Life on the CAPS*. In fact, it was the first time she expanded her process to work with multiple collaborators, including a director of photography (Alex Gvojic), a musician who composed the score (Fatima Al Qadiri), as well as a production company based in Morocco. The project was co-commissioned with Nottingham Contemporary and our colleagues there Nicole Yip and Olivia Aherne. It then traveled to B7L9 Art Station, the experimental art space of the Tunis-based Lazaar Foundation.

This season was rich in fruitful collaborations since we also co-commissioned

a new video work by Diane Severin Nguyen with our colleagues at New York’s SculptureCenter. Our teams jointly navigated the pandemic-related difficulties that Diane faced in order to shoot her film in Poland. The presentations of the work in both spaces spoke to each other while creating different contexts to appreciate the installation. The exhibition subsequently traveled to Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, where it took yet another shape. Diane’s film, itself, offered another striking vision of kinship and collective action, as an orphaned Vietnamese girl joins a group of teenage K-Pop fans to dance and sing about (for?) the revolution.

This year also marked the return of our *Intermissions* program, after a pandemic pause. It’s hard to overstate the good feeling of being back in a room together with other people for performances in our gallery space. In the fall, Paul Maheke presented a tender solo dance performance, his own deeply personal testament to vulnerability and resilience. In the spring, Joe Namy brought a copper dance floor to life for two days, joined by dancers, a sound artist, and a DJ. Fittingly, Namy’s project was vitally collaborative in spirit: its energy and scope grew as the London-based artist invited various artists from Chicago to be the central performers, recognizing the wide-ranging talent that this unique city has.

This season marked the debut of a new form for our annual benefit, or RenBen, embracing an artist-conceived approach in lieu of more traditional forms like an art auction. Pushing further the ethos of the Ren, as well as the Wildcard model started by Solveig Østvebø, I decided to bring art outside of our

exhibition space and give carte blanche to an artist to design every feature of the event. The first iteration was brilliantly orchestrated by the Italian-born, LA-based, “sculptor of situations” Piero Golia who plotted a magical evening with emcee Stephen Galloway, artist and chef Laila Gohar as well as The Cavaliers, Chicago’s leading drum and bugle corp.

The entire season unfolded as we were collectively recovering, or rather trying to make sense of a new reality. I’m always wary of asking too much from art itself, as I don’t think it offers an inherently positive impact by default, or solutions for a collapsing world. But I will say that continuously witnessing what art can actually be, and what art can actually do, is life-affirming. It can open up possibilities outside of normative frameworks, generate ideas, contribute to dissonance, but also shake our souls, shatter our hearts, and move the hell out of us. At the Ren, we are proud to allow artists to experiment and make a mess, and to collaborate in all sorts of ways. We are proud to offer them resources, support, and companionship to do so. Sometimes we know where we’re going and sometimes we really don’t. But every single time we are humbled by what they give us in return.

—Myriam Ben Salah

## SMASHING INTO MY HEART

*I want to acknowledge the depth of the exhibition's conceptual and literary framework . . . Not that the exhibit cannot be enjoyed in its sincerity, sensuality and physical exuberance without the footnotes—but the rigor of attention to the nuances, poetics, and political resonances of care expanded the scope of its reach.*

—Noa Micaela Fields, *Sixty Inches from Center*

The word “friend” describes a way of relating to each other that exists beyond typical kinship and institutional relations. Potentially opaque, asymmetrical, or impolite, it’s a form of alliance that can bear heart-wrenching passion, ambivalence, or even the absence of feeling.

*Smashing into my heart*, the first group exhibition staged by Myriam Ben Salah at the Ren, looked at friendship as a condition, a model, and a metaphor for art. Favoring the sentimental over the ironic, the artworks engaged with regimes of care, structures of support, and horizontal relationships, steeped in affection, desire, longing, jealousy, comfort, and love.

As Ben Salah observes: being a good friend signals an inclination to form unproductive bonds that exceed strategic self-interest. It’s not, however, an apolitical relationship. Rather, it is a framework for interrogating how we move through the world, offering the possibility for a new poetics of the Other.

*Curated by Myriam Ben Salah*

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SEP 12, 2021

Opening Reception

OCT 28, 2021

Lecture/Performance: *Pool Party*

Lily Scherlis

SEP 27–OCT 31, 2021

Editorial Project: *Deadlines and Divine Distractions*

Co-edited by Negar Azimi and Pati Hertling

Contributions by Kaveh Akbar, Miranda

July, Eileen Myles, Ariana Reines,

Natasha Stagg, Audrey Wollen

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*Smashing into my heart featured: Nairy Baghramian, Neïl Beloufa, Camille Blatrix, Xinyi Cheng, Tita Cicognani, Laurent Derobert, Ceal Floyer, Hervé Guibert, Park McArthur, Ebecho Muslimova, Julia Phillips*

LYDIA OURAHMANE & ALEX AYED  
LAWS OF CONFUSION

*The curators were interested to see what the artists could create specifically for the space of the Renaissance Society, and as such, the exhibition was not a traditional show of existing work; it was as much about process as product, creating an open-ended show that evolved all the way up to the opening day.*

—Ellen Wiese, *UChicago Arts Blog*

For *Laws of Confusion*, the individual practices of Lydia Ourahmane and Alex Ayed converged in what they described as a “choreography of movements.”

The exhibition took shape through an intensely collaborative, and sometimes chaotic, working process, as the artists responded to the unplanned results of traveling together, as well as to practical or legal obstacles and failed attempts. The unfolding project contended steadily with the friction between individual paths and wider narratives—geopolitical, mystical, speculative, technological.

Sealed off from the outside, the Renaissance Society’s space was filled with haze and muted light, becoming a closed environment where objects from disparate places were scattered throughout. These materials, all gathered or made by the artists, brought out conceptual undercurrents such as blocked communications and hints of ancient pasts and pending futures, all embodied in a mix of primordial elements, like water, clay, and wind, and newer technologies.

*Curated by Myriam Ben Salah and Karsten Lund*

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DEC 11, 2021

Opening Reception and Artist Talk

JAN 24, 2022

Video/Performance

JJJJJerome Ellis

JAN 29, 2022

Lecture

Emanuele Coccia

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*Special thanks to the Amanchukwu Laboratory at the University of Chicago and the Arts, Science + Culture Initiative at the University of Chicago.*



LYDIA OURAHMANE AND ALEX AYED, LAWS OF CONFUSION

Installation View, 2021. Photo: Useful Art Services.

MERIEM BENNANI  
LIFE ON THE CAPS

*Paired together, coolness plus humor offer an irresistible approach to topics otherwise treated with the cold sobriety of news commentators or the solemn sincerity of so much social justice art-making.*

–Lori Waxman, *Chicago Tribune*

Meriem Bennani’s *Life on the CAPS*, the final chapter of a film trilogy, is set in a supernatural, dystopian future surrounding a fictional island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. This newly commissioned work was rooted in Bennani’s research and reflections on the histories of island societies, biotechnology, and vernacular music. Bennani’s exhibition at the Ren marked the premiere of this electric yet melancholic consideration of what it is to live in a state of limbo.

As Bennani layers live action footage and computer-generated animation in *Life on the CAPS*, she intuitively adapts editing techniques that evoke documentary, science-fiction, phone footage, music videos, and reality TV. With a guiding spirit of emotive and formal experimentation that refutes boundaries, the film moves fluidly from the imaginary to the geopolitical, while weighing the power of individual experience and power of collectivity.

*Curated by Myriam Ben Salah*

FEB 26, 2022

Opening Reception and Artist Talk

MAR 3, 2022

Screening and Artist Talk

Meriem Bennani

*Presented in partnership with the Gene Siskel Film Center and the Open Practice Committee in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago, as part of the Conversations at the Edge series.*

MAR 31, 2022

**Screening: *Live from the CAPS***

Featuring Meriem Bennani,  
Omar Berrada, Amine El Bahi,  
Kamal El Jadid, Emily LaBarge

APR 10, 2022

**Screening: *The CAPS Trilogy***

Meriem Bennani

*Life on the CAPS was a co-commission with Nottingham Contemporary, UK where it was presented May 7–September 4, 2022.*

*This exhibition is made possible by Marilyn and Larry Fields. Additional support has been provided by Sherry and Courtney Reum, Dalal and Zack Arnold, and Miyoung Lee.*

DIANE SEVERIN NGUYEN  
IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS

*Underpinning Nguyen’s video is the theme of the individual and the group: the need to belong versus the cruelty of the clique, the threat of loneliness versus the anonymity of the crowd.*

–Lloyd Wise, *Artforum*

*IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS*, Diane Severin Nguyen’s first solo museum exhibition, presented a newly-commissioned video of the same title and four photographs in a total installation resembling a theater and its backstage. Set in Warsaw, Poland, the film follows the character of an orphaned Vietnamese child who grows up to be absorbed into a South Korean pop-inspired dance group. Popular within a Polish youth subculture, K-pop is used by Nguyen as a vernacular material to trace a relationship between Eastern Europe and Asia with roots in Cold War allegiances.

For the project, Nguyen assembled a crew of teenaged Polish dancers who perform original choreography set to music and lyrics co-written by the artist herself. Spilling over from first-person narrative into near-abstraction and pop music video, Nguyen’s film traverses the complicated beauty and forms of propaganda that underpin cultural- and self-image making, where processes of building personal identity and forming a shared nation space meet.

*Curated by Myriam Ben Salah*

MAY 14, 2022

Opening Reception and Artist Talk

JUN 1, 2022

Discussion

Anna Kornbluh and Diane Severin Nguyen

JUN 9, 2022

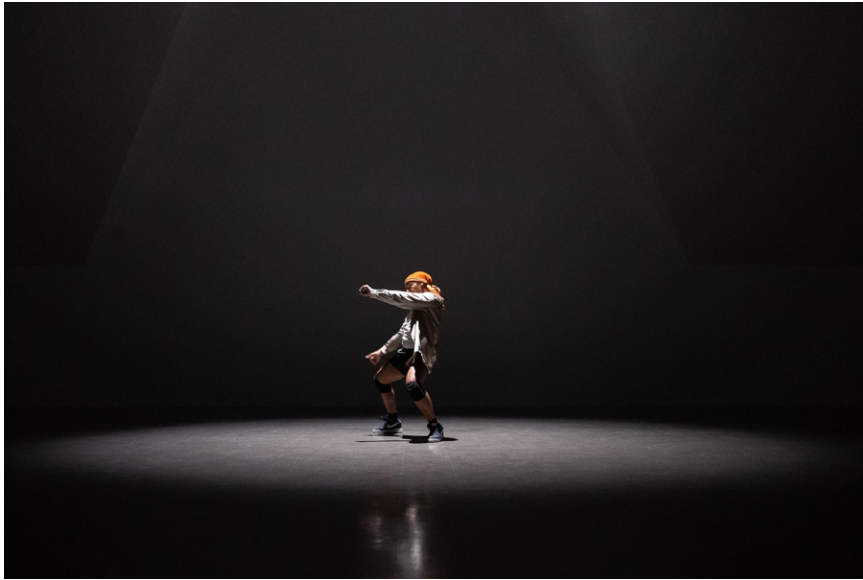
**Screening: *Juste un Mouvement***  
Vincent Meessen

*The project is co-organized with SculptureCenter, New York, where it was on view from September 13–December 13, 2021.*

*This exhibition is made possible by J. Patrick Collins. Additional major support has been provided by the David C. and Sarajeane Ruttenberg Arts Foundation and the Perić Collection. Additional support has been provided by Sherry and Joel McQuin.*



# INTERMISSIONS



NOV 13–14, 2021

## Paul Maheke

Paul Maheke uses dance as a focal point in his performance practice, which weaves together movement, sound, and language to reconsider personal and collective histories. His solo performance *Taboo Durag* moves through different narrative and choreographic registers to explore experiences of vulnerability and resilience.

For the U.S. premiere of this work, at the Renaissance Society, Maheke adapted *Taboo Durag* to this unique context in various ways. He introduced the projection of text on the wall, accentuating the work's confessional, intimate voice, and the work's swelling bass-heavy score, written and recorded by his brother Simon Maheke, filled the resonant space.

*Presented with the support of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in Chicago.*

*Curated by Karsten Lund*



APR 23–24, 2022

## Joe Namy

Joe Namy's live projects focus on the social constructs of music and organized sound. For this new work, *Disguise as Dancefloor*, the Beirut and London-based artist invited a number of local collaborators to join him at the Renaissance Society for two consecutive days of improvised performance—each of which had a different staging and sonic texture.

*Disguise as Dancefloor* was influenced by the range of experiences that can unfold on the dance floor, the subversive politics of bass, and the effects of sound on the body. At the center of the project was a custom dance floor made of copper tiles. The copper dance floor became both a shared space, where Namy's collaborators performed, and a charged surface that captures every touch, visibly revealing its own history.

*Disguise as Dancefloor* featured dancers Zachary Nicol and Cristal Sabbagh, DJ/producer Ariel Zetina, and sound artist Norman W. Long. Soundsystem provided by Bless This Mess.

*This project was part of the Consortium Commissions, an initiative of Mophradat. It was also staged at Portikus in Frankfurt, in February 2022, with different collaborators.*

*Curated by Karsten Lund and Michael Harrison*



FEB 1–6, 2022

**Jordan Strafer: *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER***

Jordan Strafer’s new film *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER* (2022), which had its digital premiere with a weeklong screening on Renaissance TV, is based on a true story of kinship and betrayal aboard a transatlantic air ambulance from London to Miami. Including life-size dolls and starring live actors Marti Wilkerson, Jim Fletcher, Alexandro Segade, and Cammisa Buerhaus, Strafer’s video is a psychological thriller that takes place in flight—while time moves glacially, reality becomes suspended.

FEB 6, 2022

**Discussion**

Jordan Strafer, Sohrab Mohebbi, Alexandro Segade

*Renaissance TV is an online platform created to produce and host artists’ projects. It focuses on moving image and occasionally expands onto performance and sound work. Over time it also becomes a means to help produce new film and video works, at times in collaboration with other institutions.*

Jordan Strafer, *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER*, 2022.

OCT 9, 2021

**claire rousay**

claire rousay’s music zeroes in on personal emotions and the minutiae of everyday life—voicemails, haptics, environmental recordings, stopwatches, whispers and conversations—layering them with electronics in patient, poetic arrangements and exploding their significance. Personal relationships suffuse their records, revealed through specific sounds (an intimate letter read aloud, an excerpted field recording from a backyard hangout) and forming the basis for the collaborations and experiences that fundamentally shape each work. This concert coincided with *Smashing into my heart*.

FEB 24, 2022

**Hanna Hartman**

Hanna Hartman is a Swedish composer, sound artist, and performer living in Berlin. A meticulous weaver of sound, she draws on a huge catalog of hyper-specific recordings she creates as the working material her compositions—she describes, for example rolling a ball in potato starch, noting that you need “exactly the right weight” to get the right effect, to say nothing of an excellent contact microphone. For her Chicago debut, presented in partnership with the Frequency Festival, Hartman presented two works live in person: *SOLO*, for amplified and moving objects, and *FRACTURE*, originally commissioned by Deutschlandradio Kultur.

JUN 4, 2022

**J. Pavone String Ensemble**

Jessica Pavone has been active in the New York improv scene for years, well known for her prolific collaborations. But it may be her solo viola music where she has most deeply concentrated her long tone practice, her interests in repetition and song form, and the physicality of playing her “somewhat larger-than-comfortable” instrument. Pavone expands on these themes from her solo work with the J. Pavone String Ensemble. The group explores what she calls “the tactile experience,” while incorporating research into the effects of sonic vibrations on human physiology and emotion. Presented in partnership with Lampo, this concert featured new compositions *Hidden Voices*, *Done and Dusted*, . . . of *Late*, and others.

**OTHER EVENTS**

MAY 5, 2022

**Lecture/Performance**

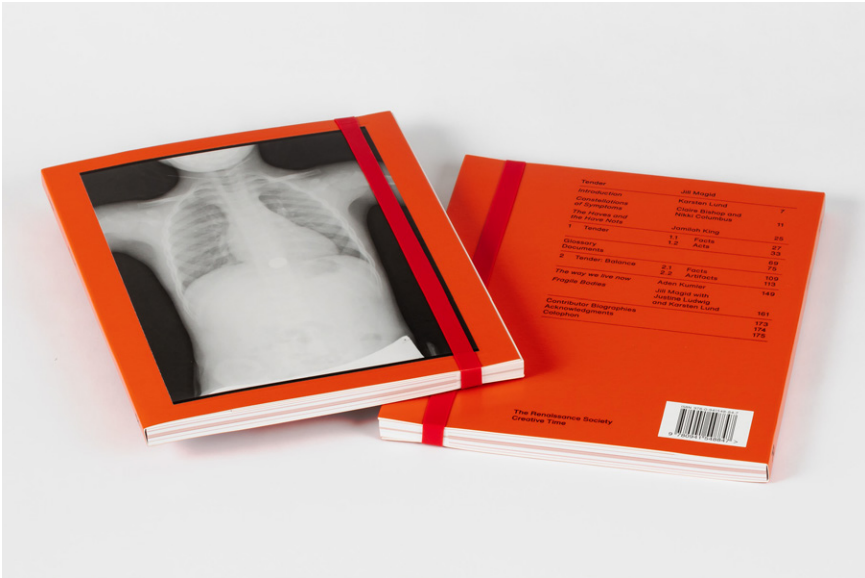
**Slavs and Tatars: *I Utter Other***

Co-presented by the Ren and the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society, in collaboration with the Oriental Institute, this lecture-performance by Slavs and Tatars considered the study and conception of the “East” in 19th and 20th-century Russia and the USSR against bodies of scholarship on Orientalism. As the artists asked, “What does it mean for one east to look to and at another one? Can the romanticized romanticize?”









Above: Jill Magid, *Tender*, Publication, 2022. Below: Matthew Metzger, *Heirloom*, Publication, 2022.

***Jill Magid: Tender***

This book focuses on two parts of a larger project by artist Jill Magid in which she explores the circulation of pennies against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through *Tender*, a public artwork in New York City produced by Creative Time, and *Tender: Balance*, an exhibition at the Renaissance Society in 2021, Magid both observes intimate financial and social transactions and delves into broad economic systems that are harder to see, intervening in the flows of currency in subtle, poetic ways. Along with visuals from these two parts of the project, the book offers insights into Magid's extensive research process, and three new essays provide greater social and art historical context for her work. Essay contributors are Claire Bishop and Nikki Columbus, Jamilah King, and Aden Kumler. The book culminates in a conversation between the artist and curators Justine Ludwig and Karsten Lund.

Contributors: Claire Bishop and Nikki Columbus, Jamilah King, Aden Kumler, Justine Ludwig, and Karsten Lund

Softcover, 175 pages  
Edited by Karsten Lund  
Designed by Arno Baudin (ZOLO)

**Book Launch: MAY 7, 2022**

*All Renaissance Society publications are made possible by the Mansueto Foundation Publications Program. Additional support for this publication was provided by Nada and Michael Gray, and Nancy Lerner Frej and David Frej.*

***Matthew Metzger: Heirloom***

Published on the occasion of Matthew Metzger's exhibition *Heirloom* at the Renaissance Society, this is the first book dedicated to the artist's work, which explores various kinds of abstraction as well as tensions related to language, color, and objecthood. Anchored by the new paintings Metzger made for *Heirloom*, the book also features four other recent series of works, further charting his unfolding aesthetic and conceptual concerns.

In a lengthy curator essay, Karsten Lund closely observes the paintings in the exhibition and their site-responsive installation, and Metzger shares a series of studio notes that reflect on each of his projects in his own words. In five shorter essays in the book Kris Cohen, Fumi Okiji, Jan Verwoert, McKenzie Wark, and Anna Zett consider how abstraction functions more broadly in the world at large—whether as psychological tendency, a social effect, or in relation to technology.

Contributors: Kris Cohen, Karsten Lund, Matthew Metzger, Fumi Okiji, Jan Verwoert, McKenzie Wark, and Anna Zett

Softcover, 218 pages  
Edited by Karsten Lund  
Designed by David Khan-Giordano

**Book Launch: NOV 16, 2022**

*All Renaissance Society publications are made possible by the Mansueto Foundation Publications Program. Additional support for this book was provided by r/e projects and Alan and Sherry Koppel.*

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 Essex Street  
 Ceal Floyer  
 Francois Ghebaly Gallery  
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**\$100,000 and above**

247  
The Mansueto Foundation

**\$50,000 and above**

The Andy Warhol Foundation  
for the Visual Arts

**\$25,000 and above**

J. Patrick Collins  
Marilyn and Larry Fields  
Illinois Department of Commerce  
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Meriem Bennani, Life on the CAPS, Video Still, 2022.



*Elegantly wrought, at times brassily bombastic, with moments of shimmering magic, humor, and just the right amount of romance, this evening was all those things I like about Golia and his work truly.*

—Andrew Beradini, *ArtForum*

RenBen 2022 was conceived by Italian-born, Los Angeles-based artist Piero Golia, a “sculptor of situations.” His works—which at times take physical form, often at an architectural scale, and at others are immaterial—are statements aimed at expanding the possibilities of art. His practice is heterogeneous and unpredictable, employing objects, language, actions, or events to create total works of art. The evening Golia designed unfolded across the building and outdoor grounds of the Mediterranean Revival-style South Shore Cultural Center. Pushing the boundaries of a traditional benefit,

RenBen 2022 was a tightly choreographed experience, taking place against the backdrop of Chicago’s lakefront.

To support the Ren, Golia orchestrated a series of unexpected encounters in partnership with prolific creative figures, among whom are New York-based artist Laila Gohar who is known for intricate, edible installations that fuse the worlds of food and art, and creative movement director Stephen Galloway, best known as principal dancer at the Frankfurt Ballet, a choreographer for the Rolling Stones, and costume designer for the American Ballet Theatre, the Paris Opera, the Théâtre du Capitole and La Scala in Milan.

From Gohar’s abundant and poetic food displays serving in full as the event’s dinner, to the marching band sounds of the Chicago-founded Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps, Golia created a knowingly exuberant spectacle that hit a range of notes, filling the space with surprising textures.



All images on this spread: RenBen 2022: Conceived by Piero Golia. Photo: Adriana Glaviano.



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**In-Kind**  
Stephen Galloway  
Laila Gohar  
Piero Golia  
The Study at University of Chicago

Rebuild Foundation and the Renaissance Society teamed up to host a Friendsgiving fundraising dinner prepared by Ghetto Gastro in collaboration with South-Side chef Erick Williams.

After a two years hiatus, the iconic Ghetto Gastro crew returned to the kitchen for this exclusive evening. Guests enjoyed a multi course meal, and musical performances in a spectacular warehouse studio environment.

**\$5,000**  
Heiji Choy Black and Brian Black  
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Anne Van Wart and Michael Keable

**Up to \$500**  
David Levin





DIANE SEVERIN NGUYEN, IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS

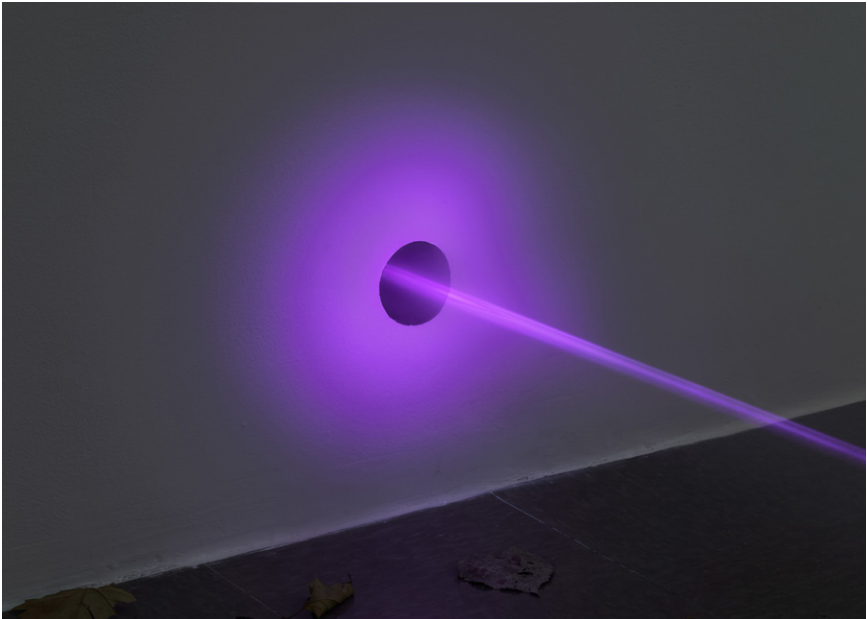
Installation View, 2022. Photo: Useful Art Services.

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2022 AND 2021

| ASSETS  | 2022                | 2021                 |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| Current assets:   |                     |                      |
| Cash  | \$ 604,605          | \$ 549,151           |
| Accounts receivable   | 3,130               | 600                  |
| Contributions and grants receivable – Current portion         | 374,132             | 280,197              |
| Inventory   | 27,076              | 27,076               |
| Prepaid expenses  | 15,175              | 9,415                |
|   | <u>1,024,118</u>    | <u>866,439</u>       |
| Total current assets  |                     |                      |
| Property and equipment – Net                                  | 768                 | 2,309                |
| Other assets:   |                     |                      |
| Investments, at fair value                                    | 7,176,901           | 8,779,928            |
| Contributions and grants receivable, net – Noncurrent portion | 544,894             | 708,908              |
|   | <u>7,721,795</u>    | <u>9,488,836</u>     |
| Total other assets  |                     |                      |
| Total assets  | <u>\$ 8,746,681</u> | <u>\$ 10,357,584</u> |
|   |                     |                      |
| LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS                                    |                     |                      |
| Current liabilities:  |                     |                      |
| Accounts payable and accrued expenses                         | \$ 102,966          | \$ 76,786            |
|   | <u>102,966</u>      | <u>76,786</u>        |
| Total current liabilities                                     |                     |                      |
| Net assets:   |                     |                      |
| Without donor restrictions                                    | 7,855,715           | 9,401,816            |
| With donor restrictions                                       | 788,000             | 879,000              |
|   | <u>8,643,715</u>    | <u>10,280,816</u>    |
| Total net assets  |                     |                      |
| Total liabilities and net assets                              | <u>\$ 8,746,681</u> | <u>\$ 10,357,584</u> |

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS  
YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2022 AND 2021

|  | 2022                             |                               |                     | 2021                             |                               |                     |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
|  | WITHOUT<br>DONOR<br>RESTRICTIONS | WITH<br>DONOR<br>RESTRICTIONS | TOTAL               | WITHOUT<br>DONOR<br>RESTRICTIONS | WITH<br>DONOR<br>RESTRICTIONS | TOTAL               |
| Revenues   |                                  |                               |                     |                                  |                               |                     |
| Grants   | \$ 170,844                       | \$ 50,000                     | \$ 220,844          | \$ 168,419                       | \$ 70,000                     | \$ 238,419          |
| Grant – Paycheck<br>Protection Program   | –                                | –                             | –                   | 143,096                          | –                             | 143,096             |
| Contributions  | 452,836                          | –                             | 452,836             | 278,327                          | –                             | 278,327             |
| In-kind contributions  | 91,950                           | –                             | 91,950              | 49,880                           | –                             | 49,880              |
| Benefit revenues, net<br>of direct donor costs<br>of \$39,983 in 2021 and<br>\$141,116 in 2010 | 215,766                          | –                             | 215,766             | 189,609                          | –                             | 189,609             |
| Editions and portfolios  | 114,530                          | –                             | 114,530             | 55,225                           | –                             | 55,225              |
| Educational trips  | 154,314                          | –                             | 154,314             | –                                | –                             | –                   |
| Exhibit touring fees   | 20,000                           | –                             | 20,000              | –                                | –                             | –                   |
| Publications   | 14,001                           | –                             | 14,001              | 25,392                           | –                             | 25,392              |
| Investment return  | (1,158,001)                      | –                             | (1,158,001)         | 2,043,946                        | –                             | 2,043,946           |
| Net assets released<br>from restriction  | 141,000                          | (141,100)                     | –                   | 409,100                          | (409,100)                     | –                   |
|  | <u>217,240</u>                   | <u>(91,000)</u>               | <u>126,240</u>      | <u>3,362,994</u>                 | <u>(339,100)</u>              | <u>3,023,894</u>    |
| Total revenues<br>and support  |                                  |                               |                     |                                  |                               |                     |
| Expenses   |                                  |                               |                     |                                  |                               |                     |
| Program services   | 1,307,407                        | –                             | 1,307,407           | 989,939                          | –                             | 989,939             |
| Management and general   | 276,462                          | –                             | 276,462             | 179,280                          | –                             | 179,280             |
| Fundraising  | 179,472                          | –                             | 179,472             | 246,906                          | –                             | 246,906             |
|  | <u>1,763,341</u>                 | <u>–</u>                      | <u>1,763,341</u>    | <u>1,416,125</u>                 | <u>–</u>                      | <u>1,416,125</u>    |
| Total expenses   |                                  |                               |                     |                                  |                               |                     |
| Change in net assets   | (1,546,101)                      | (91,000)                      | (1,637,101)         | 1,946,869                        | (339,100)                     | 1,607,769           |
| Net assets, beginning of year  | 9,401,816                        | 879,000                       | 10,280,816          | 7,454,947                        | 1,218,100                     | 8,673,047           |
| Net assets, end of year  | <u>\$7,855,715</u>               | <u>\$ 788,000</u>             | <u>\$ 8,643,715</u> | <u>\$9,401,816</u>               | <u>\$ 879,000</u>             | <u>\$10,280,816</u> |



Lydia Ourahmane and Alex Ayed, Laws of Confusion, Installation View, 2021. Photo: Useful Art Services.

Cover: Diane Severin Nguyen, IF REVOLUTION IS A SICKNESS, Details, 2022.



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