



# **SELINA TREPP**

***VIRTUAL EXHIBITION (IRL)***

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**April 15 - May 28, 2022**

**presented by LYDIAN STATER**

*“Welcome to Selina Trepp’s virtual exhibition. I’m the gallerist. I believe in art. And I believe in capital. The art that we sell must feel — it has to sell — more than just a thing — it has to sell an idea. Beautiful, smart, profound.”*

- The Gallerist



Selina Trepp, *Virtual Exhibition (IRL)*, Installation Documentation, 2022

Lydian Stater is thrilled to present *Virtual Exhibition (IRL)*, a solo exhibition of new NFT works by Selina Trepp. Through digital and physical artworks, *Virtual Exhibition (IRL)* explores ideas related to value, labor, objecthood, and the dis(connection) between virtual and material reality.

*Capitalism is shit.* This is the refrain about a third of the way into Selina Trepp's film *Virtual Exhibition*, the centerpiece of her exhibition of the same name. Sometimes, it seems that even proponents of our current version of hypercapitalist production wouldn't disagree with the statement. The system is working as designed. The shit is not a bug, it's a feature.



Selina Trepp, *Bench*, 2017, Wood, acrylic paint, yarn, plaster, plastic, nylon, fabric, 48 x 12 x 12 inches

Selina Trepp has been wading through that shit for years. Developing an ingenious and ecological model of artistic production, her overarching conceptual framework, *I work with what I have*, is a decade-long project dedicated to never bringing anything new into her studio, constantly using and reusing materials. Trepp also cares deeply about accessibility and shares her video work en masse via her website, Instagram and vimeo for anyone to consume (she even includes process videos, a generous behind-the-scenes look at her practice).

As one enters the gallery, they are greeted by The Gallerist, Trepp's fanciful main character, both on the screen but also in physical format. Aptly deconstructed into a bench for seating, viewers are invited to sit on the remains of the film's main character for the duration. Born out of necessity during the pandemic, Trepp created this virtual exhibition to showcase her paintings that would otherwise be unseen by anyone for who knew how long. In contrast to the lifeless viewing rooms proliferating at that time, Trepp's virtual exhibition was meant to function as a work in and of itself. Through lively colors, playful gestures, and clever dialogue, Trepp allows the viewer to reflect on what gives artwork value, the worth of an artist's labor, and how beautiful a painting can actually be.





Selina Trepp, *Pay What You Can*, 2022, Animated GIF, Looped

Now minted as NFTs, potential collectors can engage with the investment value of Trepp's work at whatever economic level they can afford. An open-edited series of vignettes from the film are available in a "Pay What You Can" format for the duration of the exhibition, the remainder to be burned upon closing. Also available for purchase are a smaller edition of animated GIFs, easily translated into a social media avatar profile picture if desired, or the film in its entirety, the first of Trepp's films to be sold in full as an NFT. The beauty of blockchain technology allows for the works to be accessible by everyone, but maintains ownership for those who would like to support the artist economically at a higher level.

One cameo-worthy painting is included in this exhibition from Trepp's *Dirty Drawing* series. The painting reminds us that all of the work began somewhere physical, from the artist's hands, to the paint on the brushes, to the computer where the film was edited. And while the original *Virtual Exhibition* film has landed again in the real world for a short time, it is concurrently being exploded onto the blockchain, continuing to blur the line between our virtual and corporeal realities.



Selina Trepp, Still from *Virtual Exhibition*, 2021, Digital Video, 6:41 minutes

## A CONVERSATION WITH SELINA TREPP

**Lydian Stater:** Your film *Virtual Exhibition* deals with a lot of ideas around capital, labor, and value. How do you relate to capitalism, as an artist and as a human?

**Selina Trepp:** Primarily I relate to it from within it. I'm in it, I live in capitalism.

In capitalism, money is the reason and the explanation for everything. The measure of success is how much money you can accumulate, but how you do that doesn't matter.

On a basic level it doesn't seem fair to me that one person's time is more valuable than another person's time. And because of that it also doesn't make sense to me that some people make much more money than other people. Time is time, we all breathe, live and then die. Everyone's time is equally important.

Art is also a luxury commodity, it endows the money with meaning, and the funders with prestige. In that space, my work is an investment value as much as it is art.

I think a lot about my position as artist in relationship to the art market, about what I am enabling and condoning by participating, it's complex. In the end I come back to these points:

1. I need to make money with the work, to be able to make the work.
2. I want my work to be loved by the people/institutions that purchase it.
3. I want more people to have access to living with art.

One way I try to deal with the dissonance between the market and my needs, is by disrupting the market mechanisms (and the resale values of my works) by making sure my work is financially accessible to those who don't have a lot of money. I do this by selling my work from the studio at income adjusted prices. Higher income people pay more for the art, and in the process, they subsidize buyers with smaller budgets, who pay less.

**LS:** Yes! One of the things we were drawn to about non-fungible tokens is the





Selina Trepp, Still from *Virtual Exhibition*, 2021, Digital Video, 6:41 minutes

disruption of market mechanisms, especially when it comes to video work. In the traditional art world, film and video is often hidden away inside institutions and museums. With NFTs, everyone has access to the actual artwork even if someone else owns it. How did this quality of NFTs affect your approach to producing the works in this show?

**ST:** That aspect of NFTs is very attractive to me. As an artist who often works with video, which is inherently reproducible and, in my case, usually resides online freely accessible, I have a difficult time making money off of my work from video sales. This is a problem, because the kind of animation I make takes a very long time to produce, and I have a life to finance and bills to pay.

What I like about the NFTs is, that if releasing a large edition, it makes it possible for this work to be accessible to anyone at a low price. In that way it operates similar to music sales, where because of the high edition the price can be low. And at the same time, I can also sell the work at a “fine art price” as a very small edition, but the film is still completely accessible to anyone and controlled by me, because what I am selling is the NFT, which makes that one unique file sold, not the film itself.

**LS:** We are really excited about the tiered pricing structure of the works in the exhibition as well, especially the “pay what you can” model.

In your writing about the paintings featured in *Virtual Exhibition*, you talk about how, in a moment of indecision, you finally tackled the undertaking of making paintings that were just paintings, rather than as part of your larger conceptual project “I work with what I have.”

Do you think that the secondary nature of your previous paintings allowed you the freedom to expand your painting facility to the point where you are now; where it’s absolutely undeniable that the paintings have their own resonance and point of view?

**ST:** Yes, I am also excited about it, and happy you are game for experimenting with different pay structures. This is an important part of the conceptual and process part of my practice, I link my ethics/ politics with real world consequence, on every level. This helps me to construct a financial system around my practice





Selina Trepp, *I have my own Tempo and Style of Doing It*, 2021, India ink, guache, chalk, oil pastel, acrylic paint and dirt on acid free matteboard, 33 x 24 inches

that is more equitable and realistic, and to test out alternative structures.

The paintings are still part of the larger “I work with what I have” performance, given that that project is ongoing and the subtext to everything I make. I still work with what I have. I still haven’t brought anything new into my studio. These paintings were made under those specific conditions. They reflect these conditions. The canvases are lumpy because I have been overpainting them for the past ten years, the color palette and the materials I work with are based on what I still have left, not necessarily my aesthetic preference. The paintings are an expression of the concept, of the condition of their production. In that sense these paintings are still very much part of that project.

What is different about these paintings, is that these paintings will not be overpainted anymore. They are done, this is their final state. What this means is that the paintings are allowed to exist as standalone paintings instead of being actors inside a film.

Although, thanks to the pandemic, in the end they ended up in a film after all. Which in itself presents a new dilemma- I now have two strong bodies of work featuring the same paintings. They reference each other; but take away power from each other when they are in the same space at the same time. That is why I don’t show the film and the paintings together. I love the paintings, and I love the film, so I have to decide, like in this exhibition- what do I show? Do I show the paintings, or the *Virtual Exhibition* which features these paintings.

But back to your questions. Yes, the previously secondary nature of my painting, really did free me up. Not having the painting be in the center of my practice while still being integral to it, took away pressure, so many pressures that come along with painting-- of the history of painting, in my case also my family history, the history of my family of painters. Having the paintings be actors in my lens-based work let me avoid all that, it allowed me to develop my skills and confidence as a painter without being identified as painter. But even if I now have outed myself fully as a painter too, it still felt very strange and risky to show the paintings all on their own, canvases on the wall, when I showed them for the first time a few months ago.

**LS:** We really enjoy when exhibitions include artifacts or objects from films





Selina Trepp, Still from *Virtual Exhibition*, 2021, Digital Video, 6:41 minutes

alongside screenings, but with *Virtual Exhibition*, we completely agree with your sentiment. Given the context of the film as a way to show the paintings when they couldn't be physical, what purpose would there be for the film to be shown with paintings or vice versa. And we enjoy the way you describe each of the iterations' power, as they both bring something into the physical space.

And speaking of showing your paintings on their own recently, it sounds like you've been embracing new ways of making, showing, and selling art (this exhibition included). You also mentioned that you inherited a studio's worth of materials from your mother. Will that be integrated into your current model of "I work with what I have," or is there a new or different production model you are thinking about? Basically, we're interested in where you see your practice headed from here in general from here.

**ST:** Yes, I am embracing new ways on all levels, always. I'm in slow motion flux, as I learn and my perspective shifts. When I am unsure about what to do next, I tend to go towards the thing I've been avoiding, the hard thing. The problem is the prompt.

The making of the work, and my engagement with the art world and art market, are all part of my practice as a whole. I believe art has the potential to be a space that models the way forward, a space in which the system itself is adjusted to enact the values most of us stakeholders have.

Art is where I actually have power, due to my work, and with that comes freedom. I am free to question the systems I am part of and I can come up with alternatives, I can try them out and model other options. When something doesn't work, then I try something else.

The new materials coming from my mother will be integrated in my "I work with what I have" mode, it will be a onetime material infusion.

My mother, also an artist, now lives in Switzerland fulltime, but up until recently lived in the US for part of the year. She gave me the contents of her studio here. I don't know what is in those boxes, I stored them unopened. I will bring them into my studio ecosystem in October 2022, when it will be exactly ten years since I last brought any art supplies into my studio. After 10 years, it is very exciting that



Selina Trepp, Still from *Virtual Exhibition*, 2021, Digital Video, 6:41 minutes

I will get new materials, and that I have no control over what it is, and that it is my mother's (!!!), which in itself is complex. Luckily, my mother is alive, so it's not complex in that way. I imagine my work will shift in response to this new material to work with.

Currently I am deep into animating. I have two large public art commissions due this year. Both site specific stop motion animations.

I will be performing more in front of live audiences again this year, here and internationally. I have some exciting things coming up with Spectralina, my duo with my partner in life and in the band, Dan Bitney; and with Tomeka Reid, with whom I have performances scheduled in Europe in late Summer.

As for the future in general- I really like showing my work in public settings, like the airport and lobby coming up, or the merchandise mart last year. It gives me great joy when people can encounter my work without seeking it out. My work is easily accessible, delighting, but then has much more going on below the surface for those to find if they spend the time with it, and so it works well in that context. Anyone can get something out of it, some get more out of it.

I also want to make more large, immersive video installations in art institutions, like the one that just opened at the Chicago Cultural Center.

In a nutshell, I'm in the mood to work big, inside and outside of the museum/gallery and to travel more again.

**LS:** Beautiful. It sounds like there are many great things on the horizon. Thank you so much for sharing some insights into your practice and how the works in this exhibition relate to your practice as a whole.

**ST:** It is good to be able to share my thoughts and this work with you. Thank you for creating a space for this all to happen.



**Selina Trepp** (Swiss/American b.1973) is an artist researching economy and improvisation. Finding a balance between the intuitive and conceptual is a goal, living a life of adventure is a way, embarrassment is often the result. She works across media, combining performance, installation, painting, and sculpture to create intricate setups that result in photos, drawings and animations. In addition to the studio-based work, Selina is active in the experimental music scene. In this context she sings and plays the videolah, her midi controlled video synthesizer, to create projected animations in real-time as visual music. She performs with a varying cast of collaborators and as one half of Spectralina, her long running audiovisual collaboration with Dan Bitney.

**Exhibition Works**



*Virtual Exhibition, 2021*  
Stop motion animation  
Edition of 3, 6:41 minutes



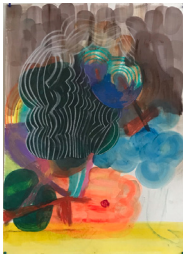
*Pay what You can, 2022*  
Animated GIF, Looped  
Edition of 18



*Bench, 2017*  
Wood, acrylic paint, yarn,  
plaster, plastic, nylon, fabric  
48 x 12 x 12 inches



*I'm the Visitor, I'm an Avatar, 2022*  
Animated GIF, Looped  
Edition of 18



*I have my own Tempo and Style of Doing It, 2021*  
India ink, guache, chalk, oil pastel, acrylic paint and dirt on acid free matteboard  
33 x 24 inches



*How And Weather And, 2022*  
Animated GIF, Looped  
Edition of 18



*I'm the Gallerist, 2022*  
Animated GIF, Looped  
Edition of 18



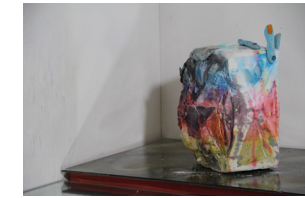
*You can't Fix what You can't See, 2022*  
Animated GIF, Looped  
Edition of 18



## Exhibition Works



*I'm the Gallerist, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:22 minutes, Open Edition



*Stay Free, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:40 minutes, Open Edition



*I'm the Visitor, I'm an Avatar*  
2022, Stop motion animation  
0:28 minutes, Open Edition



*How And Weather And,*  
2022  
Stop motion animation  
1:32 minutes, Open Edition



*I know You're not Here, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:31 minutes, Open Edition



*I See It, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:32 minutes, Open Edition



*Pay what You can, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:17 minutes, Open Edition



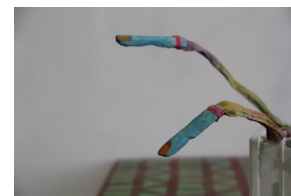
*Investment In Love, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:38 minutes, Open Edition



*Capitalism is Sh(it), 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:25 minutes, Open Edition



*The End The And, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:11 minutes, Open Edition



*You can't Fix what You*  
*can't See, 2022*  
Stop motion animation  
0:31 minutes, Open Edition

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