

Eloise: Welcome to you both

Inga & Vivienne: Thank you

Eloise: This is the first interview we've done for this exhibition—perhaps the only one. It felt important to take a moment to talk with some of the artists in the show. Vivienne, could you begin by describing your practice?

Vivienne: My name is Vivienne Griffin. I switch between terms to describe myself—anti-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary—but I like “anti-disciplinary” because it contains “anti.” I don't like the idea of breaking things into disciplines. My practice changes media often: sound, music, sculpture, drawing, live performance. There's a consistent thread between what I call ancient technologies—language, drawing, the voice—and new technologies approached in a DIY way.

Inga: I could continue with this idea of interdisciplinarity, but more and more I return to painting and my background as a painter. I also studied restoration, which led me to engage with materials and methods that sometimes become more important than the painting process itself. The historical aspect is often present.

Jason: Historical in the sense of restoration?

Inga: As a reference point, yes. My works often rise from archives—images or ideas that emerge from them. I like engaging with archives, and that's how I came to Aby Warburg.

Jason: We're big fans. Warburg talks about a pre-conceptual space—something ancient beneath everything: language, sound, mark-making, the lullaby, mourning. Art tries to reach that reservoir.

Inga: It's analog in a way.

Jason: Yes, you're born into it and die into it. When you mentioned restoration, I thought: to return something to its original state—which can never really happen.

Inga: I agree. As a student I was against restoring to an “original.” I preferred conservation—stopping the aging or damage

An interview with Inga Meldere and Vivienne Griffin

Recorded by Eloise Sweetman and Jason Hendrik Hansma for the exhibition *Coalescence: Happenstance With All Due Intent* (phase four), curated with Paul O'Neill, Shimmer, Rotterdam in 2025.

Transcribed by Clara Maassen

where it stood, not making things beautiful again.

Vivienne: That's interesting. When you said that, I thought about decolonial dialogue. How can you return to something destroyed or changed? The state is permanently altered. Restoration as freezing time feels more honest.

Eloise: Do you know Marc Camille Chaimowicz? He spoke of the past folding into the present to prepare us for the future. We've been thinking about that, and about artists like Anne Tallentire who work with layers of memory.

Jason: Chaimowicz once made a performance at twenty-five, walking around a gallery listening to Brian Eno, smoking. He couldn't redo it later because he was no longer twenty-five. He asked younger artists to repeat it—restoring a performance through another body. It shows that restoration in art can't really happen; it transforms.

Eloise: Do you think being anti-disciplinary helps with that?

Vivienne: Yes. I've been revisiting Mark Fisher's thoughts on capitalism entering our psyche—how we're trapped in cyberspace and need strategies to get out. An anti-disciplinary approach feels like a kind of freedom. I'm not making a product or serving an institution. It's harder to sustain but more authentic.

Inga: For me, painting is story-making. It's structured, bound by unwritten rules. I

often feel I'm not a "real" painter

Jason: What's a real painter?

Inga: Someone for whom painting is part of the body. My partner is like that—he sees exactly how a work should go. For me it's always a struggle, a doubt.

Eloise: I think doubt can be great. Can you trust it?

Inga: Doubt can be a killer. When I was younger, things felt clearer. Now doubt is constant. It's a kind of quality but maybe also a reason one might stop.

Vivienne: I changed disciplines during my PhD—from art to music—and experienced intense self-doubt. Working with Zeena Parkins in New York, I told her, "I'm not a musician." She refused to accept that: "You are. You're doing it." I still hear that voice of doubt, especially without formal training. But allowing things to emerge, as in this show, helps. When I teach, I notice if I say "make a painting," people panic, but if I say "enjoy these materials," something opens.

Inga: Painting carries its long history and tradition. It's been declared dead many times, but it continues.

Vivienne: Not dead.

Inga: Exactly.

Vivienne: How do you set up conditions to work without that pressure?

Inga: I work slowly, not for exhibitions. During the pandemic I gave myself small daily tasks—breathing exercises, hand training. Oil on paper. It started unconsciously and became a story. Paper feels relaxed; canvas creates pressure with its frame.

Jason: Vivienne, why did you tell Zeena you weren't a musician?

Vivienne: Claiming it feels like making a claim to a structure. I'm drawn to DIY punk rather than conservatory training. That's also why I love drawing—it's free of that weight.

Jason: Like refusing the conservatory.

Vivienne: Yes. I like that Inga works without deadlines; pressure changes the work.

Inga: I love the in-between moments, like training for athletes. I try not to lose the grip, to let ideas flow, fixing them in material so I'm ready when something larger comes.

Jason: Canvas feels rigid compared to paper—you can't crop it freely. The frame prescribes it. Working without that format feels freer. Not working toward a show is a luxury; otherwise it becomes like tailoring to a body.

Eloise: That's how we approached Shimmer. We began with no plan, letting go of category, treating the exhibition space like a studio where doubt and failure were allowed. Over eight years we've grown more confident, but I know I'm on the right path if I'm scared. This show, curated by Paul O'Neill, feels like an artist's project.

Jason: It's pushed in ways other institutions wouldn't.

Eloise: The exhibition text doesn't explain every work; you have to experience it. That uncertainty was scary, but also freeing—to let meaning have multiple layers.

Jason: And redemptive. What you say today doesn't define tomorrow. Opinions can shift. There's a man in Berlin who cleans the U8 train though he doesn't work there. His motto is, "If you can't hire me, you can't fire me." I think of that as an artist's position: you show up regardless of commission or permission.

Eloise: Exactly. That's why we started Shimmer—to not wait for permission or invitation. It's a defense mechanism too. And yes, curating for me is anti-disciplinary. I like not knowing everything, being outside the pure category.

Vivienne: Then it becomes about a relationship to what you're hearing, rather than Western harmonic tradition—about tone in space, its reflection, its feeling.

Jason: It still requires attentiveness. I had a student from a strict jazz family, highly trained, almost oppressed by skill.

Vivienne: Yes. You set parameters like in jazz—who you play with, their history. “Do whatever” runs out quickly. You create conditions and meaning within them. I’m drawn to psychoacoustics—how we each hear differently. Ultimately we’re trying to process the experience of being human in this time, inner and outer worlds.

Jason: Something below articulation.

Vivienne: Yes, and when you try to articulate it, it dissolves. Meaning has to stay open. I like that in this show—things can move and change rather than stay static.

Inga: I just formulated something for myself. My professor is a real painter. But purity is something to run away from.

Vivienne: Agreed. Skill and de-skilling—by whose standards? Those measures are Eurocentric, white, male. Not aligning with that gives me confidence. Aligning with it causes panic.

[pauses for water]

Eloise: Could you each describe your artworks in the exhibition?

Vivienne: My work is Shrine of the Times. It’s a constellation of moving elements made over time. I first showed it at Somerset House in a vitrine containing acupuncture needles in a hand-carved alabaster head. The key piece is a CNC-milled alabaster hand of my son’s—he cast his hand in dental plaster, scanned it, and milled it in alabaster. Alabaster dust turns to mud; it clogs machines, so it’s rarely used. The bowl beneath was cast from one in my kitchen—I often work with pewter on my stove. Alabaster can be cut with wood tools; it’s soft. I love the labour of carving and thinking about where materials come from—who pulled the alabaster from the ground. Each element expands outward into unseen worlds.

Inga: My paintings here are part of a larger collaboration with a younger artist—twenty years my junior. I was invited for a solo show but wanted to share it. She’s an installation artist; I focused on painting. The theme was Latvia’s architectural heritage from the seventeenth century onward. We revisited archives, particularly

an online collection of spoken and written histories by ordinary people. One image came from an anonymous 1920s countryside school drawing of a bird—an Estonian national bird common around Latvian houses. It builds its nest between the door and roof. Including it in the exhibition felt like an invitation to lift one’s gaze, to embrace space vertically.

Jason: And the fabric in your work?

Inga: It refers to traditional building—packing gaps between beams with moss or fabric. In my grandparents’ house, cloth was used to stop the wind. The piece echoes that gesture—repairing, sealing, holding together.

Vivienne: Is the cloth always shown with this painting?

Inga: Yes. The first time I showed it, I realised compositionally it needed that element. Here, in the white cube, the print is active, and the cloth balances it.

[An audience member walks into the exhibition]

Eloise: I think we’re officially open now. Thank you both—it’s beautiful that the interview ends as the show opens.



VIVIENNE GRIFFIN (they/them) was born in Dublin, Ireland. Griffin studied fine art at Hunter City University New York supported by a Fulbright Scholarship. Moving between experimental sound and art, through the digital and the human voice, Griffin is an anti-disciplinary artist who uses video, sound, drawing and sculpture. Griffin aims to reclaim the emancipatory prompts that technology can offer us through vocal processing, live performance and video. Recent shows include Bureau, NYC, 2024, Transmediale, Berlin, 2024, Current Plans, Hong Kong, 2024, Assembly, Somerset House, 2024. Upcoming events and shows at Fact, Liverpool, and Standalone, London.

INGA MELDERE's practice emphasizes painting as a performative and expanded field. She adopts cross-disciplinary, speculative approaches that intersect conservation, pedagogy, and contemporary art. Her work explores impermanence, authenticity, social history, and micro-histories.

For one year, we have invited PAUL O'NEILL to curate a new iteration of his Coalescence, a project that has been challenging the exhibition format since the early 2000s. In the third phase of Coalescence: Happenstance With All Due Intent the exhibition moves between the gaps of serendipity and pushes out to the edges of the exhibition.

Coalescence: Happenstance With All Due Intent is a durational, accumulative and evolving exhibition-form featuring artists from all over the world to experiment with the exhibition format through collaboration, intervention, constellation and juxtaposition. Throughout the year, artists will respond to each other's works, creating new pieces inspired by or adapting existing ones. Such actions turn the exhibition space into a dynamic environment where artists' works merge into a collective assemblage. This exhibition challenges the boundaries of individuality and authorship, promoting a sense of cooperative and coalescent gathering.

Thank you to Culture Ireland, Cultuurfonds, Frame Finland for making this exhibition possible.

SHIMMER
Waalhaven Oostzijde 1,
3087 BM Rotterdam
second level
Open Sundays 13:00 - 18:00

✉ shimmerrotterdam@gmail.com
🌐 www.shimmershimmer.org
📧 @shimmer_rotterdam

PENSTANCE

WITH ALL INT

