


Student-led, non-profit art magazine in collaboration with the UCL History of Art Society

We have finally released our third issue on the theme of the 'Carnavalesque'. You can find it under the 'Issue #3' tab!



Zlata Mechetina  · 6 days ago · 7 min read



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# Riposte Interview: bananas and one techno wedding dress.

“I want to give a really BAD party. I mean it. I want to give a party where there’s a brawl and seductions and people going home with their feelings hurt and women passed out in the cabinet de toilette. You wait and see.”  
— F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*

*I’m not gonna lie, right now is the time of frustration, overthinking, binge-watching netflix and pathetic culinary experiments (but maybe there are healthier and more disciplined people among our readers, honestly, I am so jealous and you have my full respect). However, this time nonetheless provides us with potential to talk to people who are far away from us; or have always been quite close but because of the ‘deadlines’, ‘a hangover’ and other sorts of time-*



management banter, we took our proximity for granted. Now, here we are, together in this quarantined boat of isolation and hardship of the art and entertainment industries.

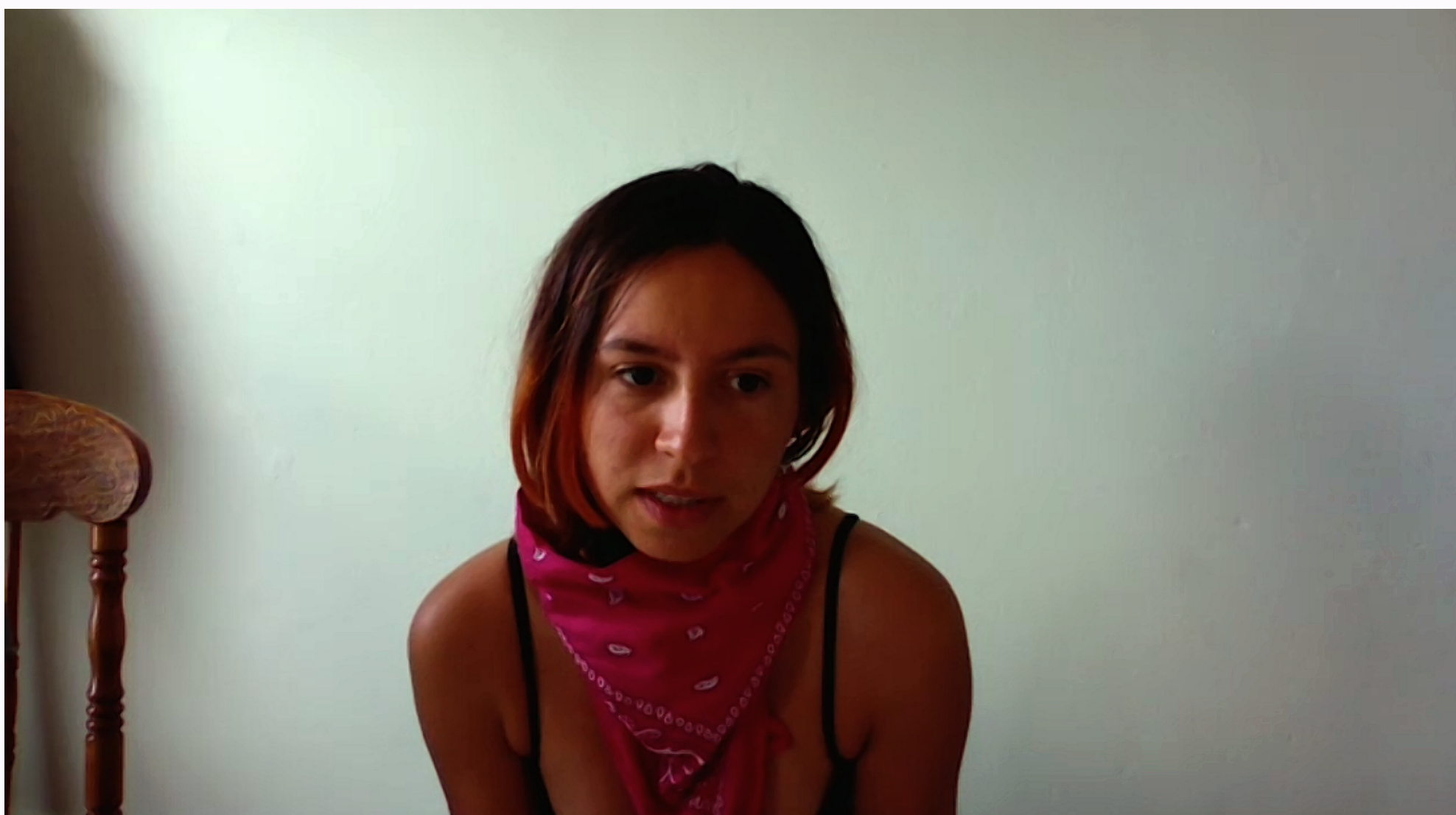
*I had a kind of out-of-nowhere zoom call with three members of the Riposte team (Eden, Ola and performance artist Robyn). Riposte is an amorphous art collective running queer parties and ephemeral exhibitions in London. We posted a review of one of their events at Grow Tottenham, which took place in January; and now we are exposing the backstory of the art collective. Also, get ready to encounter some of the artefacts the team has prepared for our virtual photoshoot: some of these objects were sources of inspiration, while others were acquired in the process of configuring and reshaping the formats of their events.*



What is your role in Riposte?

Eden: We have a few teams: music, visual art, performances, accessibility, social media and finances. Each person is part of 2-3 teams and this is how we split the work. I am a part of visual art (but Alex has the lead), music and social media.

Ola: I am part of the visual art curation team. We select and invite artists to show their work in a club/warehouse space. Sometimes the artists show their work for the first time, as Riposte is mostly an experimental platform demonstrating work-in-progress. I think it's reassuring to be set in an ephemeral nightclub where you can invite friends. The work can include soundscape design, sculpture, screenings, painting, photography and virtual reality sets.



How did you meet other members of the team?

Eden: In raves or activist groups. Started in 2012 in France but it was really different then, made by students as we had nowhere to exhibit art. We started in London in 2018, in our house.

Ola: I started by meeting Eden in a totally different context in Spain 7 years ago. We became friends with shared interest for art and queer identity. After visiting our friends in South London who organised the Mass Hysteria collective, we thought why not do an art party (the two things we like the most) at home! Conveniently, we live together.

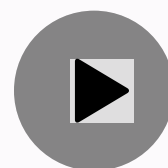
Robyn: I use a lot of music in my performance; sometimes it's like a small workshop where you do silly exercises and bring people together. We met a year ago at my Christmas show, upstairs in a Hammersmith hub. Margo read Eden's fortune using a magic fortune fish.

Eden: Oh yeah, that's how we met!

Could you share something about the art you make? Or any of your team members?

Eden: It's all about community. I try to create ways for people to talk. One of the concepts is to make people who come alone to feel well, and to ensure that people are going to talk to one another. So we create experiences, push people to connect. We try to make it chill, as often the techno scene is quite dark and violent. We want the techno intensity but with light and joy, not taking ourselves too seriously. Life is bleak enough, we wanna have fun.

Ola: I care about art, I like to observe and interpret; that's why I see myself more of a curator than a producer of art.



Have you thought that maybe collaboration is more powerful than separate art pieces?

Eden: Definitely. It creates links that open up more opportunities. We have the power to do more and motivate each other. Several brains on one issue create different ways of thinking.

Ola: Collaboration is the answer. That's also why we call ourselves a collective.



Sometimes it's hard to find a balance, communication can be complicated but there's nothing more important for Riposte than collaboration and union.

How do you choose the artists for the shows? Do you have an open call?

Eden: We have a long ass open call and a lot of submissions. You would be surprised to see how many people don't take it seriously. We try to prioritise queer people and minorities within the minority. We still work with plenty of straight people, so it's not a definite rule. We try to enforce diverse line ups.

Ola: We have an open call and we select from the projects submitted. We try to promote the most varied range of voices and artworks. Being queer and/or embracing queer culture and values is important for us. We want the pieces to talk to each other, and we want the artists to do the same. We try to reach an equilibrium between emerging artists and confirmed talents.



One of the catchwords is *ephemeral* exhibitions: do you document the works which are presented on the shows?

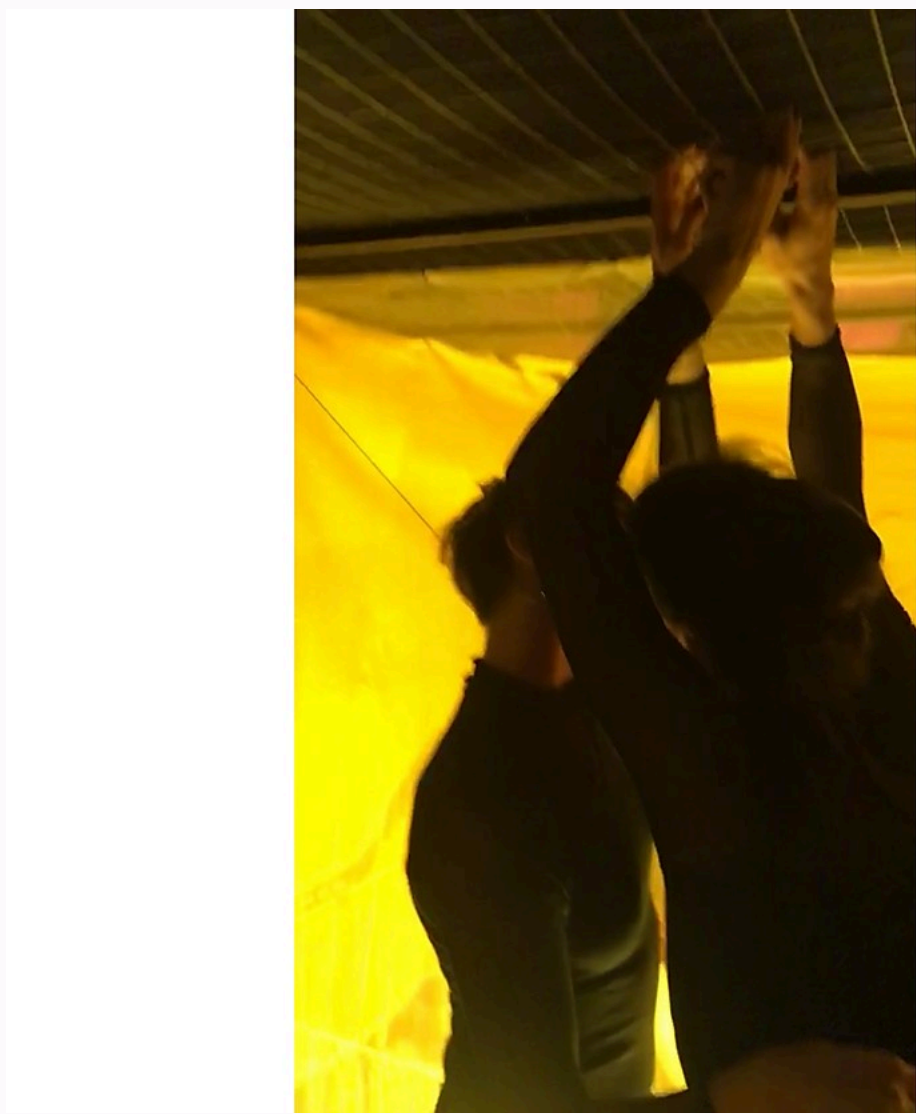
Ola: We are planning to run a zine about the artists whom we have presented.

What is your take on the London party scene? Do you think that you are filling a certain niche/lacuna that has been previously vacant?

Eden: Yes, mixing the art and the rave. Not just a certain kind of performance, but a whole bunch of different visual arts: from installation to cabaret acts. Putting access to the forefront. Having a strong political mindset.

Do you feel like there is competition between queer spaces?

Robyn: I think of all of the different parties in the London scene as different factions of one crazy church. They all have different kinds of ideas, rule-systems, uniforms and ways of being and we want to provide our own version of the community. There is some crossover; people come to Riposte and hate one night and love another one, identifying with the night they went to. It is more of a curious environment and a space to experiment, it is a mixture of the intensity of the techno club experience but, also, silliness.



Eden: The influence for Riposte is very broad as we come from different places. We have been familiar with the pretty dark Berlin-like industrial scene replicated in Paris and London. There were some things that we didn't really like, darkness, seriousness in it and lack of the carnival, messiness and fun. Maybe that's what makes us stand out, we don't take ourselves too seriously and people can feel it. It is techno but, at the same time, it is joyful. It is a space for celebration for curious people who are making a leap to come.

Ola: We have been working a lot on our intentions as we are a collective, a group of six people. It is still an ongoing conversation, even though we have found the identity of Riposte, the DNA, as Eden described. Usually we have a meeting every week discussing what we expect from the party and defining intentions.

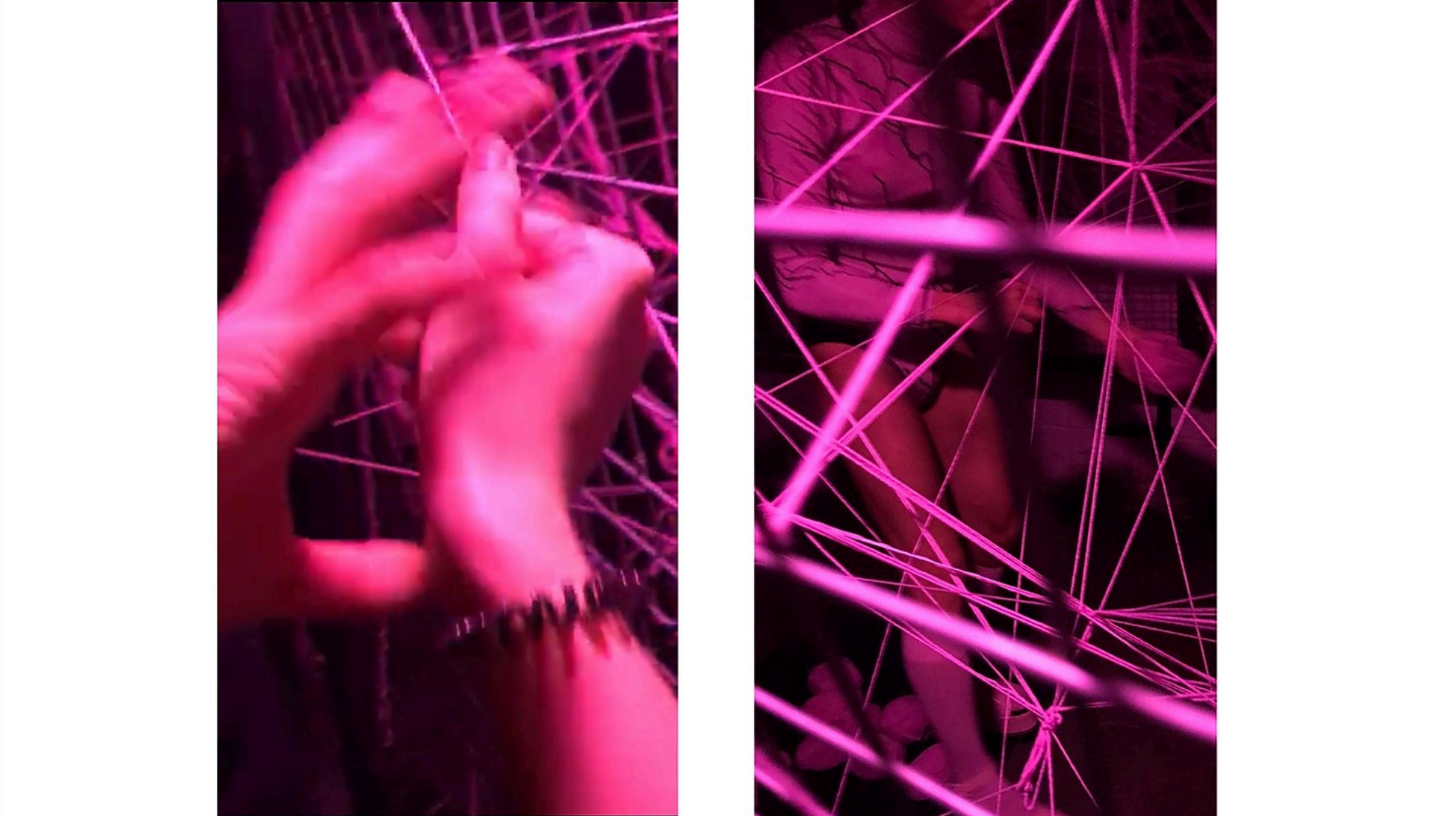
How do you feel about your latest offline event, Riposte at the Grow Tottenham? There was a lot of engaging content but, at the same time, there were a lot more people. Was it a kind of force majeure?

Robyn: We could not believe how many people came. It was quite an overwhelming experience throughout the night. It was really packed...even the bouncers expected a quiet January shift. And it was cold, so there was no moving outside, as everyone arrived at the same time.

Eden: We were expecting around 400-500 people and then we got 950.

Ola: I mean, if you imagine it, there are up to 20 artists and performers, who end up bringing friends and friends of friends and it gets really packed.





What kind of response do you get from people who come to your parties? Is it mostly positive or have you had any force majeure?

Eden: Mostly positive... even though we always have f\*\*\* ups, we are still learning and we move on extremely quickly. It's made by humans and with mostly a human component, so it's extremely unstable and hard to foresee what can happen. There are always people disappointed. But there are some people following us since the beginning and coming at every single event.

Ola: We always have lots of interesting messages after a party. Things like "I lost my strap-on" or "I want to meet this cutie I met during the party, do you know what's their name?". But most of all, we had people helping us shape and improve Riposte by spotting little things that we are missing while we are busy running around during the event.



Maybe there is a physical object that appeared in your life because of Riposte?

Eden: It is only at Riposte that you can wear rollerblades or a wedding dress and everyone will still think that it is normal. When we were doing the house concept, it was about queer relationships and how they are different from straight ones. We had a play about that and my role was to be someone who really wants to get married. We also had people who criticised the idea of marriage. So we were



talking back and forth about that for the whole evening while I was walking around in a dress and asking, 'hi, do you want to be my husband? my wife? partner?' It finished with getting with my friend and leaving in the car with chants, noise and shouting out of the window. We were going around the block, so people stepped out and could see us in the car just screaming, 'bye!' Riposte is the absurd, it is what you don't expect to see in a rave. But it is also about the silliness, not taking ourselves too seriously and making a mess.

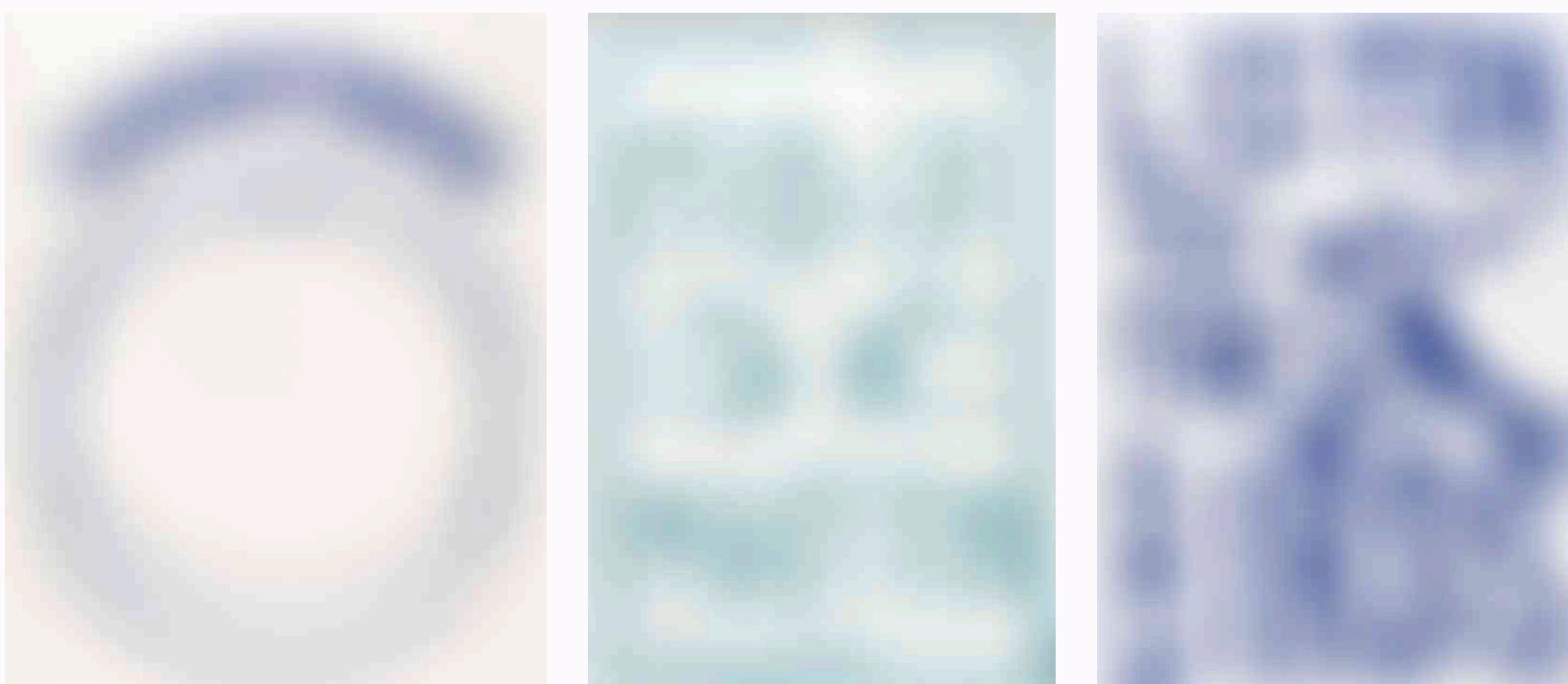


Robyn: Bananas. Sometimes there is not enough time to have breakfast during the day of the rave, so we have baskets of fruits. Last time, near the very end of Riposte, the DJ finished and I was at the end of my performance when I had two bananas in the gun holsters. I replayed the classical piece and peeled it. Stayed till the end, shared the bananas, made sure that everyone was happy, well-fed and staying healthy. So the banana was a kind of recurrent theme of Riposte.

Ola: Here is my object (nipple clippers). Got them at the Queer Central, and it reflects the spirit of Riposte as an accessible but intimate place for curiosity. A lot of underwear gets left in the bins in the toilets. But you know, we have 500 condoms, so we are definitely throwing another Riposte.

Eden: We actually have so many things left after the show. Like somebody forgot one shoe.

*Let's pause on this note of hope for the new roaring 20's, full of much expected debauchery. Back to the peculiar zoom times; currently Riposte runs online workshops on screen-printing techniques: you can find their posters both online and in the streets or care homes. Watch out and let our internalised extravaganza grow and flower.*



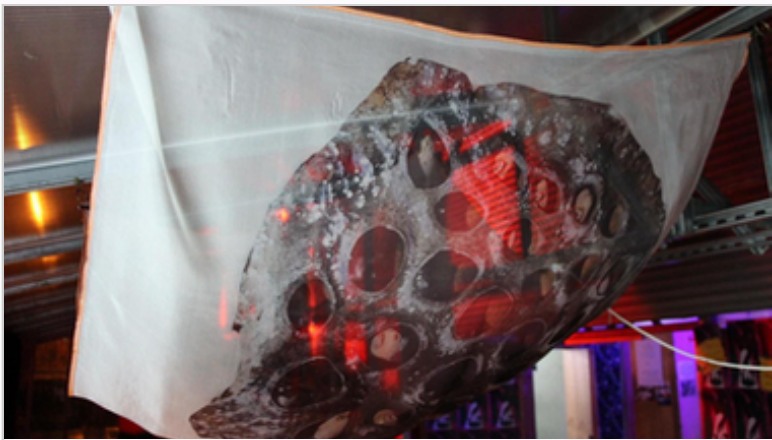
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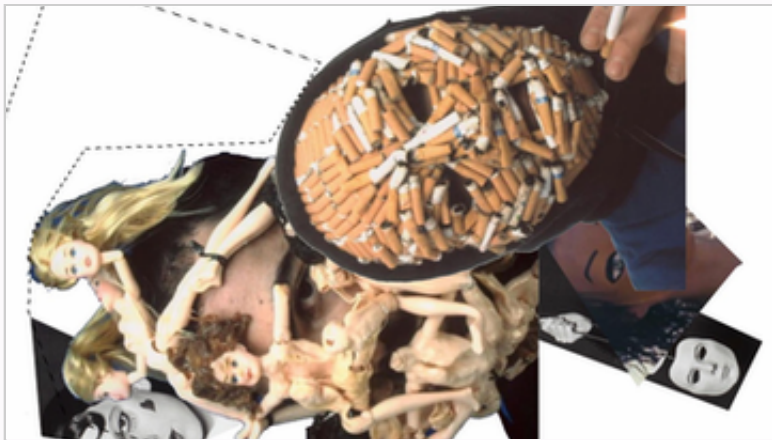
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