

Exhibition: February 4 – March 11

Opening reception: February 4, 5pm – 7pm

Pollock Gallery at The Hughes-Trigg Student Center
3140 Dyer St. on the SMU campus, Dallas 75205

Gallery Hours:

Tues–Sat: 11am–5pm / Sun & Mon: Closed

Hacking the Common Sense:

Sessions every Friday from 5pm to 12am

The Pollock Gallery at SMU, Meadows School of the Arts presents Co-Work Space for Potential Dropouts by Avi Varma and curated by Pollock Curatorial Fellow Sofia Bastidas.

In 2016, over 500 co-working spaces sprang to life in Shanghai and Beijing, each geared towards bolstering a stagnating industrial workforce and revitalizing it through concentrating human energy on information and knowledge based production. But these spaces reproduced evolving forms of capitalism instead of critiquing them. What if co-working spaces were to be redirected towards creating new mental environments, re-creating the consensus notion of the common sense through speculative projects that envision a radically different future? and re-direct a critical mass of human energy and desire to recalibrate the disastrous directions of contemporary politics? These are the foundational questions and principles of the Co-Work Space for Potential Dropouts.

The Co-Work Space for Potential Dropouts is a debt and grade free experiment in education. It assumes the constructivist maxim that all art propagates the conditions of its own conception. The Co-Work Space for Potential Dropouts is an investigation into what philosopher Timothy Morton calls “ambient poetics,” encoding in the gallery space the physical, social, and aesthetic environments so prevalent and influential yet still below the surface of consciousness. The Co-Work Space will address issues having to do with advertising, global warming and the university. To this end, the main components of the project are a gallery installation modelled after a co-work space, including a promotional video, a fictional course catalog, a website and extended open hours every Friday during the run of the exhibition for the Hacking the Common Sense sessions.

As one engages the space of the Pollock Gallery one encounters a disparate series of artistic events: a text triptych, a sound piece, lilac-colored walls, political slogans, and a promotional video, all before entering the center of the gallery, where the co-work space itself is arrayed with the familiar accoutrements of a start-up company: desks, wifi, a library and refreshments.

Visitors and students are invited to sit comfortably, relax and bask in the sounds of the ocean and the pure tones of sine waves, as they peruse the course catalog of the Co-Work Space for Potential Dropouts. There they may find a variety of courses that may shock their consciousnesses from callow wavelengths of infotainment and financial pressure and turn their attention towards subjects such as shamanism, digital paternalism, algorithmic poetry, think tanks, planetary art, intuition, conflictual ecologies, and 22nd century architecture. These hyperstitional course offerings have been painstakingly compiled by artist Avi Varma and curatorial fellow Sofia Bastidas from an extraordinary roster of internationally acclaimed artists, curators, and academics.

Every Friday night the Pollock Gallery will be open from 5 PM – Midnight for a series of interactive performances entitled “Hacking the Common Sense,” during which students and visitors will be able to engage in independent research projects along the lines drawn out by the Course Catalogue in the collective situation of the Co-Work Space.

The Co-Work Space for Potential Dropouts expands upon movements of the avant-garde such as Kazimir Malevich’s Suprematism, the objet trouve of Marcel Duchamp, and the non-site of Robert Smithson, yet inserting them into corporate, tech start-up social forms. The Co-Work Space has the explicit aim of hacking consensus ideas of what is possible and commonsensical in art and politics.

About the artist

Avi Varma (b. Dallas, 1983) received his B.A. in romantic poetry from Amherst College and his M.A. in art history and experimental film from the European Graduate School. From 2010 to 2014 he was an advanced student of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela (whose Dream House was one of the original Dia Art Foundation site-specific works) at the Kirana Center for Indian Classical Music, where he studied art, composition and North Indian classical vocal music.

About the curator

Curator and art historian Sofia Bastidas (Ecuador, 1987) graduated from Florida International University. She founded and directed Dwelling Projects (2012–15) and co-organized TVGOV, a company that aims to direct government toward preservation of territory on land and at sea. In addition, she developed Port to Port, a curatorial endeavor facilitating multi- and interdisciplinary practices between global port cities. She is also assistant curator of the Meadows Prize-winning New Cities, Future Ruins and is developing an informal initiative, the society of something.

About the Pollock Gallery

The Pollock Gallery, part of the Division of Art at SMU’s Meadows School of the Arts, exhibits work by students and faculty members as well as emerging and established local, national and international artists, serving as a platform for the dissemination of ideas and discourse related to historical, modern and contemporary arts practices.