



Lockdown Friend

Hello my friend
I see you there and then
myself

annoying

I want you here but
all I can
is draw some lines and scratch the waves
so blue, so whole, one moment

I look and almost catch your eye, a net across the water
fish jump and turn and gasp for air
and people tumble
over

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Lockdown Friend

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Ethnographic statement

During the pandemic, confronted with the “crisolation” (Podjed, 2024) of the first lockdown, I turned like many others to Skype, Zoom, and Teams to connect with distant relatives, friends, and interlocutors (Podjed, 2021; Svašek, 2022). Experimenting with various modes of digital hanging out, I began to paint the computer-mediated interactions (Svašek, 2023a, 2023b). The paintings explored the online relationality of pandemic life and were realized through concentrated bodily attention to the social dynamics of long-distance co-presence. While newly developed, the method of long-distance painting drew on pre-pandemic work by anthropologists who used sketching, painting, and graphic storytelling to reach broader audiences (Collordo-Mansfield, 1993; Afonso, 2004; Ramos, 2004, 2018; Causey, 2017; Dix, Kaur, 2019; Hurdley, 2019; Jain, 2021; Haapio-Kirk, Cearns, n.d.).

About a year after the completion of the paintings, I began adding poetic reflections. *Lockdown Friend* explores an encounter with one of my friends in the Netherlands in 2020. The picture visualizes the momentary link between our distant homes, connecting the two locations through wavy pen strokes. The accompanying poem expresses the sense of frustration I felt because of our inability to physically meet, and the last stanza refers to the deeply disturbing situation in which the infection and mortality rates rapidly increased across the world. As a united piece, the painting-poem is a focal point for imagination and free association between words and shapes.

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