

The Berry Eaters

CTG Collective

28 February — 8 March 2020

Imparting the status of foreigner onto the members of the CTG Collective would not, at first, seem to be a stretch of the term. Coming from all different national backgrounds, most members of the collective either migrated from their home country as children; or are currently in migration. This foreigner identity could be further attached to the CTG Collective as a whole given its focus since its inception in 2015 on setting its members into far off contexts in Zimbabwe, Canada, Mali, Serbia, Nigeria, Finland, and even here, in the US of A.¹

For the Grand Opening of CTG Harlem, Catinca Tabacaru Gallery brings together a meditation on the emotional layers of the status of foreigner reflected through the works of six CTG Collective members and their local collaborators.

Natives to a land assume that their familiar world endures, that it is reproduced and that it will continue in the future. In this sense, the continuous familiar world is the main source of one's identity. There is a freedom enjoyed by foreigners, which is not available to natives, as they are not obliged to observe the norms and traditions of the host system. With their unfamiliar views of the world, their unusual behavior and coping strategies they might shake traditional and valid standards of living. Consequently, the world that has been taken for granted till that moment, might lose its obviousness and self-evidence. With insiders, even when willingly opening their doors, there is always a fear of a territorial hunger of the outsiders, of their eagerness and readiness for a violent occupation of one's own territory. [2]

"They will eat all our berries!" the Finnish rightwing screams in a country that annually picks only 3% of its wild berries. "They will take our jobs!" warns the German alt-right although its economy has needed the support of migrant workers for over four generations. Rachel Monosov's video and installation work *The Berry Eaters*, made in collaboration with all of the artists in this exhibition, poetically speaks to these politics while guests to CTG Harlem are invited to enjoy the bright taste of wild berries served in tiny plastic cups.

Yet... to be a foreigner everywhere... to pair itself to the insider experience in order for that friction in form and content to become loaded with social and political concepts reflecting broader local and geopolitical implications... IS to reject Foreigner as a term; to deny Otherness.

The exhibition, *The Berry Eaters*, is proposed as a rejection of otherness. Each work reveals the unique identity of the artist making it alongside the collective contribution of the show's namesake work... Ironically saying, "we are all foreigners and we eat your berries!"

¹ In each place, the artists and curators conduct research, integrate (or infiltrate) themselves into local communities, and reflect upon their findings and experiences.

² This text generously borrows from Manfred Bornwasser, *Social psychological reactions to social change and instability: fear of status loss, social discrimination and foreigner hostility*