



THE  
SPROUT  
STUDIO

TREND 2026  
**SURREAL HEDONISM**

Cover photography: Steve Johnson and Diego Carneiro.

DEEP DIVE REPORT TREND 2026  
SURREAL HEDONISM  
THE SPROUT STUDIO

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Weird Sensation Feels Good: The World of ASMR. Photo: Elsa Soläng, ArkDes.



# SURREAL HEDONISM

**People will act guided by an exacerbated hedonism, the need to experience visceral pleasure in every act, as a response to an increasingly uncertain future.** There is a conviction that the normality—and with it, the certainties— thrown into disarray by the pandemic, will not be back. On the contrary, a stressful, disconcerting and hostile reality will be extended in time, shaken by other unprecedented events. It will not be possible to think in the present actions for the future, everything will be materialized and consumed in the absolute present. Thus, the future will be postponed again. **A contradictory nihilism will emerge, torn between the desire to fulfill whims wholeheartedly and the obligation to make responsible decisions in a world in crisis.** Ways of life will be reorganized, lacking in expectations by celebrating instantaneous well-being. A social era characterized by a lack of personal ambition begins.

In the midst of an uncertain environment, individuals will try to find consistent, reliable and regular pleasures. **There will be a search for instant and permanent gratification, where consumers will be unwilling to delay expected benefits.** People face major existential problems and prioritize the enjoyment of simple joys. Over indulgent attitudes will be encouraged by the need to enjoy products, services and experiences to the fullest, in order to obtain an immediate return that will help to cope with an unstable daily life. Incentives will alleviate the state of alertness and collective uneasiness.

The enshrinement of indulgence will not be free of tensions. People are aware of environmental, economic and social issues. They understand that all consumption choices affect the environment and can create an even more critical future. **The desire to experience excessive indulgence in a landscape marked by the end of resource abundance will lead to a constant feeling of conflict among individuals.** Public guilt will be a key factor limiting the urge to

boast about consumption and shaping a selective exposure.

The feeling of living in a strange and irrational reality will take over the scene. Accepting nonsense will be a useful strategy to get through the years to come. **Far from ambitious goals, people will rely on a constellation of small and random senses that will allow them to cope with day-to-day life.** They will explore new meanings in fictitious and ingenious universes. They will build alternative narratives that allow them to make sense of chaos and reduce uncertainty. A flexible, ironic and practical mindset, guided without transcendental expectations, will permeate different audiences, particularly the younger ones.

The need to improve health indicators will continue to play an important role in decision-making. **Healthy hedonism will be consolidated through offers that guarantee maximalist indulgence as well as individual well-being.** Consumers will be loyal to brands that provide psychological comfort by being reliable, transparent and safe in a distressing environment.



The Mr. Remember exhibition by Alex Da Corte explores the constantly changing identity, confusedly shaped by things we consume. Photo: Malle Madsen, Louisiana.

**EMOTIONAL PRACTICALITY**

**IMMEDIATE CONVENIENCE**

**PERMANENT ENJOYMENT**

**EXISTENTIAL WHIM**

**RELIABLE BENEFIT**

[VALUES THAT WILL GUIDE DECISIONS AND BEHAVIORS]



Bompas & Parr created a gourmet entertainment experience with a menu of sushi and cocktails made with bioluminescent natural ingredients that take on surreal colors to provide extra enjoyment. Photo: Bompas & Parr Studio.

# FUNCTIONAL, IDENTITY, AND EMOTIONAL DEMANDS

Obtaining instant and permanent gratification through products, services and experiences.

Exercising an extreme hedonism to alleviate anguish in the face of an uncertain environment.

Adopting original narratives to give meaning to chaos.

Incorporating indulgent solutions that simultaneously help to reduce the environmental footprint while suppressing guilt.

Avoiding unnecessary risks to reduce the fear of losing control.

Trusting brands that provide psychological comfort because they are reliable, transparent and safe.

Connecting with surreal, hybrid and disconcerting experiences that challenge the mind.

Finding consistent, reliable and regular pleasures that are easily accessible on a daily basis.

Expressing identities through one's own codes to increase the feeling of freedom.

Reorganizing priorities to have a life that brings concrete emotional benefits in the present.

Finding new meanings, real or imaginary, that provide personal motivation.

Adopting proposals that can adapt to the continuous and unpredictable changes of the context.

Seeking new purposes outside the professional sphere, favoring leisure to enhance daily enjoyment.

Better manage the sobriety requirement with immediate whims.

Celebrating healthy hedonism with products and services that ensure indulgence as well as personal well-being.

Considering the convenience of the offer in terms of accessibility, affordability and immediate benefits.

Enjoying entertainment to the fullest in order to let off steam and distract oneself, prioritizing fun, socialization and authenticity.

Remaining in social comfort zones that contribute to mood stability.

Better measuring exposure to information on social networks so as not to lose understanding and compassion.

Participating in more intimate and trusting environments where feelings can be expressed honestly.



Image: Ameer Hamza and Diego Carneiro.



SURREAL HEDONISM

# TREND ASPECTS AND INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES

By analyzing in depth how the Surreal Hedonism trend will influence people's choices in the marketplace, three key facets can be defined:

1. OVER-GRATIFICATION
2. RANDOM MEANINGS
3. INDULGENT FREEDOM

For companies, each of these facets will represent an opportunity to innovate by proposing products, services, communication and experiences that specifically respond to people's new desires and behaviors.



Nike Deconstruction por UV-Zhu. Photo: UV-Zhu.

SURREAL HEDONISM

# OVER-GRATIFICATION

[WORSHIP OF THE PRESENT] The idea of the future has never been as unresolved as it is today. The particular combination of health, environmental, economic and political factors, configures a critical context that cannot be rationally explained. People are accepting that a high level of uncertainty will be a permanent condition that will require that they adopt a new way of life based on the lack of expectations. This entails a change: in the last two years since the outbreak of the pandemic, there was a need to combat the feeling of insecurity that was thought to be temporary; now, with the addition of the inflationary, climate and war crises (among others), what emerges is the resignation that very little will be able to be accurately programmed. Consumption choices will be driven by immediate convenience. Ambitions will fade away as the horizon of social progress becomes more distant. There is disappointment to the current situation for being far from what was imagined. As a result, a period emerges where everything will be thought and consumed in the present. A flexible and practical mentality, guided without substantial yearnings, will permeate the different audiences, particularly the younger ones. There will be a quest for instant and permanent gratification, where consumers will be unwilling to delay the expected benefits.

[BEWILDERED NIHILISM]. An attitude of over-indulgence will be encouraged by the need to enjoy products, services and experiences to the maximum, in order to obtain an immediate enjoyment that helps to cope with an unstable and meaningless daily life. But far from patiently accepting what is offered, a disconcerted nihilism will guide the decisions, characterized by a share of distrust, irreverence, irony and maximalism. A desire to live by one's own rules will emerge in the face of a context that is difficult to interpret. Fun, connection with others, and authenticity —understood as a stripping of artificial and unnecessary attitudes— will be prioritized. All kinds of experiences and content will be processed as entertainment that provides relief and distraction.

[CONTRADICTORY DESIRES]. We are entering an era where it is no longer possible to accomplish all dreams because many of them

involve leaving a negative ecological footprint. The desire to experience excessive hedonism in a scenario marked by the end of resource abundance will provoke a constant state of conflict in consumers. Aware of the potential impact of consumption on the environment, individuals will be torn between the desire to choose freely and escape any deprivation to achieve a momentary indulgence, and the intention to have a more austere and conscious consumption to avoid the guilt of creating a harmful future. However, it will still be difficult for people to judge how much will be enough in terms of consumption. Sobriety as a requirement will be a factor of disputes in a scenario of social inequity. Increased surveillance and public scorn on individual polluting practices will increase tension and the feeling of loss of freedom.

[SATURATED EMOTIONS]. The exaltation of hedonism will be able to unfold beyond the critical events that will take place in upcoming years. Generally speaking, people are aware of the economic, social and environmental issues occurring around them, as they consume a considerable volume of news on a daily basis through different media and formats, with an omnipresence of social networks. However, a kind of “compassion fatigue” has spread, a feeling of saturation when watching an infinity of distressing scenes that produces a psychic numbness and loss of empathy. A feeling of discomfort will be experienced as a result of emotional coldness. The need to better measure the consumption of information will emerge in order not to lose the degree of understanding and compassion.



Designer UV-Zhu created a concept of inflatable slippers combined with everyday objects resulting in a eclectic sculpture. Photo: UV-Zhu.

## SIGNALS OF CHANGE

“The problem with the current economy is that the numbers don’t make any sense”

Kevin Duncan.

**EXPRESSIONS OF BEWILDERMENT.** Economics has become hard to explain and confusion has spread among analysts. “It’s harder than usual to read the economy because we’re still in such an odd period,” Karen Dynan, a Harvard economist and former Treasury Department official in Barack Obama’s administration, told The New York Times. The important takeaway is that pundits in the media no longer hide that difficulty in understanding what is going on and where the market is headed. “This economy is proving hard to understand,” said Jared Dillian in Bloomberg. “The problem with the current economy is that the numbers don’t make any sense,” stated Kevin T. Dugan in New York Magazine.



Libération, 06/07/22.



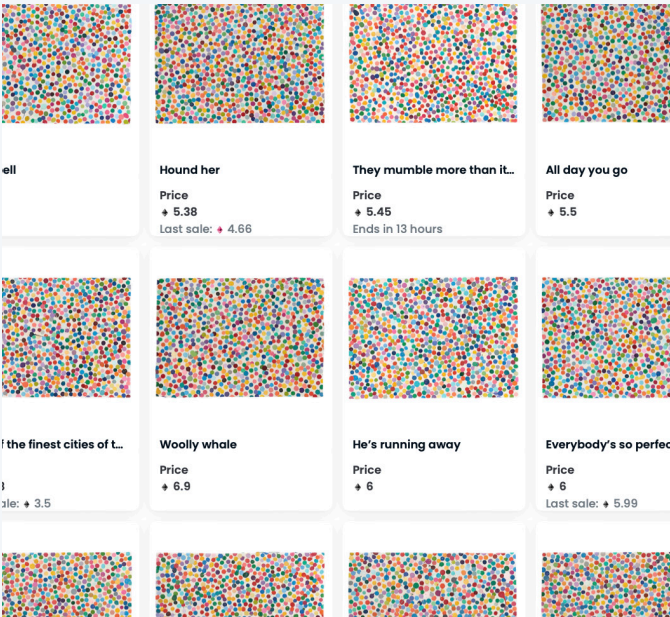
Collection Solo.

**GUIDES IN CHAOS.** In the absence of stable precepts, experiences emerge that provide small interpretations to guide us through the confusion. The Certezas podcast, created by the Solo collection, brings together artists’ visions and reflections on something as uncertain as certainty. Organized in different episodes that deal with topics such as time, reason, identity and utopia, among others, the series of audios was designed to accompany listeners in the search for certainty in a world of uncertainties.



Non-Alcoholic Mezcal, Superflex. Foto: Noemi Garcia, Ayer.

**MORE BENEFITS, FEWER CONSEQUENCES.** The need to enhance socialization rituals to reinforce entertainment with others will require finding options to reduce the negative effects on health. Changes around beverages are a sign of this. On the one hand, there is an explosion of new non-alcoholic beverage options, some with the same disinhibiting effects as traditional drinks. On the other, the offer of more sophisticated and better quality alcoholic beverages is growing, while different categories of products are infused with alcohol: hamburgers, flowers, candles, chocolates, teas and perfumes, among others.



Opensea.io.

**ALTERNATIVE VALUES.** Reflecting on the value of things is something that is beginning to spread. The Currency, the first NFT collection by artist Damien Hirst, challenges the concept of value by forcing buyers to decide between owning the physical artwork or the digital token connected to it, but in no case both. The project includes 10,000 different NFTs, each associated with a piece Hirst handcrafted. The tokens are sold through a lottery system for \$2,000. Collectors choose between the analog piece or its virtual version; if they choose the latter, its physical counterpart is incinerated. As of September 2022, 4,851 pieces had been destroyed.



On The Spot Parkour.

**ONE'S OWN SOLUTIONS.** The tension created between wasteful behavior and the advocates of resource restraint will continue to grow. Members of the "On The Spot Parkour" collective go out at night in French cities to turn off store signs, with the aim of contributing to energy sobriety. They use acrobatic and climbing techniques to climb the facades of buildings until they find the emergency switch that turns off the illuminated shop window.

**JUMPING INTO THE VOID.** The desire for change is in the air even though people are not clear where to go. The song “Break My Soul”, recently released by popular singer Beyoncé, is an ode to liberation with an emphasis on daring to quit your job to pursue a new life purpose. The piece empowers The Great Resignation phenomenon, initiated during the pandemic, whereby people quit their jobs in search of better conditions. In 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 47 million Americans voluntarily quit their jobs, many of them without having ensured a new position. A survey held by Microsoft in March 2022, found that 41% of workers were thinking about leaving their jobs.

“I JUST QUIT MY JOB  
I’M GONNA FIND NEW DRIVE  
DAMN, THEY WORK ME  
SO DAMN HARD  
WORK BY NINE,  
THEN OFF PAST FIVE  
AND THEY WORK MY NERVES  
THAT’S WHY I CANNOT  
SLEEP AT NIGHT  
I’M LOOKIN’ FOR MOTIVATION,  
A NEW FOUNDATION”

Beyoncé.



Artemio Narro.



Atelier Biagetti.

**A CASE FOR THE PRESENT.** The sense of fragility caused by COVID-19 has been deepened by other unpredictable threats exacerbating expressions of finitude and the feeling of “now or never.” The ideas that take relevance in artistic, intellectual and street manifestations fluctuate between the extremes: to be lucid in the face of the dangers that occur or to ignore everything to enjoy the moment because there is no future.

**SOOTHING DELUSIONS.** All paths will be valid to find refuge in the face of a disturbing environment. Pet Therapy, by Atelier Biagetti, in collaboration with the futuristic studio Labseventy, is a series of objects inspired by a dreamlike and childlike universe, including a series of large cat sculptures that are used as places of rest and emotional comfort. Users, when lying down, can feel in contact with “a pet.”





Rose In Good Faith.

**SUPPRESSING GUILT.** The goal will be to ensure maximum enjoyment while avoiding moral responsibilities for the potential negative consequences of consumption. People’s growing concern about the fate of waste encourages the exploration of options close to circularity. Misfits Market, an affordable grocery subscription service, offers fresh, certified organic and non-GMO produce at a reduced price (40% less). The brand partners with farms to save fruits and vegetables that might be wasted and distribute them to subscribers. Fashion brand Rose In Good Faith is collaborating with Doc Johnson to create footwear with recycled plastic from sex toys. With the exception of the cork insole, the entire shoe is made from a combination of plastic from unused, damaged adult items and unbleached ethylene vinyl acetate foam. The requirement of energy sobriety implies thinking of alternatives. The Jackery Solar Generator 2000 Pro is a transportable solar energy production and storage system that allows remote work from anywhere. Reducing the carbon footprint is another objective. The Évasion Scratch Ticket, from Loto-Québec, is a gambling card made from recyclable paper and water-based ink that makes it more sustainable.



Loto-Québec.



Jackery.



Misfits Market.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO INNOVATE

### INSTANT RETURNS

Conceiving brand experiences that provide instant and constant gratification. Devising a universe of micro-benefits that offer positive stimuli to consumers at every moment and through various channels. Developing customer service that can solve customer requirements instantly to avoid wasting valuable present time. Providing unlimited accessibility to supply from any point of contact to satisfy whimsical nihilism.

### COMPASS IN THE CHAOS

Offering uniquely curated guides to help interpret a chaotic reality and facilitating purchasing choices. Developing practical, powerful and authentic insights to analyze brand-related topics. Inviting key influencers who can provide advice on how to act in the face of surprising and uncertain events to alleviate public anxiety. Helping people measure their exposure to information to preserve their sensitivity and ability to be surprised.

### ANTI-GUILT SOLUTIONS

Offering exciting and sustainable products and services that satisfy the desire for intense enjoyment while suppressing the conscience of their impact on the environment. Designing solutions that help users measure personal consumption—how much is advisable, how much is excessive—to align aspirations with the demands of future deprivation: energy sobriety, CO2 reduction, waste suppression, rational use of water, among others.

### MENTAL BREAK

Offering comforting experiences where a mental break can be found. Creating sensory environments that reduce the levels of anxiety and anguish generated by a suffocating reality. Integrating some illusory elements to relaxation instances, so as to stimulate emotions from new perspectives. Designing therapies that merge philosophies, techniques and heterogeneous imagery so that they result in entertainment as well as cognitive rest.

### FUTURISTIC EVOCATION

Encouraging people to think creatively about the future, even if it may be difficult in the present. Motivating public invention by involving them in open-ended brand stories. Creating experiences that allow people to imagine different life options, from the most unusual to the most standard, to reconnect with expectations. Opening dialogs to define the qualities that future products and services could have to be pleasurable and satisfying to the extreme.

### ENHANCED QUALITIES

Ingeniously playing with ingredients, materials and product properties to satisfy the consumers' persistent indulgence, but with little or no negative health consequences. Applying the principle of "more benefits, fewer consequences" to the design of the functionalities of the entire offering. Making premium products of top quality more accessible to expand the benefits to a wide audience and multiply consumption occasions.

SURREAL HEDONIM

# RANDOM MEANINGS



Hyundai Moka Garden by Jaime Hayon. Photo: Hayon Studio.



[LOST REALITY] Accepting nonsense will be a useful strategy to get through the years to come. The feeling of living in irreality has not gone away since the beginning of the pandemic and will persist in time. The chain of extraordinary environmental, economic and social circumstances has turned the context into something fragile and strange, with no logical explanations. People will move from the initial bewilderment, resulting from the loss of sensible references, to the acknowledgement that they will be able to live with a certain lack of explanation. They will build alternative narratives that allow them to make sense of chaos. It will be time to design coherent and original brand narratives that provide a singular guide to navigate the turbulence.

[UNPRODUCTIVE IDENTITIES] People's identities have been threatened since COVID-19 shook up everyday nature and put the focus on quality of life. People will continue to reorganize their priorities, spurred on by existential questions. Work will continue to lose entity as an organizing axis and provider of meaning. In the absence of a belief in widespread social progress, the idea of moral duty or present sacrifice for future benefits will be abandoned. On the contrary, there will be a search for activities—whether labor or not—that satisfy the—always changing—desires of the moment and provide autonomy of action. There will be an increasing search for motivation and purpose in life outside the professional sphere. Leisure will become more important as a valuable time in which to enhance the pleasures that make life more livable. There will be a need for productivity-free experiences in which to connect with new cultural stimuli.

[MICRO SENSES] We will witness the final dismantling of the great cultural narratives that used to order reality and provide a frame of reference for people's actions. There is no longer an ethic that encompasses a majority, but one that has fragmented into multiple moral precepts and social beliefs that wage a regular battle with each other. Everything is debatable, everything is suspect, everything is manipulable. In this uncertain scenario, people will rely on a constellation of small and random senses that allow them to cope

with everyday life. A heterogeneity of philosophies, beliefs and affirmations —traditional or alternative— will serve to find transient purposes. References will be multiple and contradictory. Brands will have to have the ability to capture and play dynamically with these eclectic and transversal micro-senses to diverse audiences.

[UNREALISTIC EXALTATION] People are beginning to accept that living in an environment that escapes their understanding can be an opportunity to look for reading clues outside the known. In their eagerness to find incentives, individuals will explore new meanings in fictitious universes. The acceptance and celebration of the absurd, the extraordinary and the incoherent will open the door to previously forbidden reflections. Open-ended questions will drive the speculations of open minds. Consumers will be more receptive to connect with imagery, inspirations and novel formats that surprise and challenge perceptions. The creation of unusual products and services resulting from unexpected dialogs across industries and categories will tempt audiences.

Jaime Hayon designed Hyundai Moka Garden a series of cultural spaces that encourage literacy and imagination in the weary residents of Namyangju, South Korea. Photo: Hayon Studio.



## SIGNALS OF CHANGE



Eat the Rich, MSCHF.



Loafa, Tommy Cash.

**BITTER CRITICISM.** A distrustful, shrewd and ironic gaze extends to challenge reality. The art collective MSCHF designed Eat the Rich popsicles, featuring the faces of the world's wealthiest and most celebrated businessmen, so that people can symbolically eat them. Each wrapper details the image of an entrepreneur along with their brand logo, including Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Jack Ma.

**UNEXPECTED CROSSOVERS.** A scenario where inexplicable situations occur is apt for thinking outside the box and adding eccentricity to the everyday. Rapper Tommy Cash, together with artist Gab Bois, has created a sofa and a rug inspired by loaves of bread for a surrealist living room. The design, titled Loafa, has been publicly proposed on social media to IKEA for consideration for future production.



Lu Yang.

**SUBJECTIVE GAMES.** The need to make sense of the eclecticism of references and surrounding information encourages the emergence of narratives that integrate rational and mystical elements. Digital artist Lu Yang explores a world beyond reality by blending the science fiction aesthetics of anime and video games with Buddhist philosophy. The virtual becomes attractive for its ability to transcend normative ideas of self, i.e., gender, age, nationality, and provoke endless reinvention. Present in many of his works is the Buddhist idea that all things "will arise, remain, change and disappear," in other words, "all things flow."



Saikoro Kippu, West Japan Railway.



Doctor Mek Clinic, Hyper-Haus.

**RANDOM PATHS.** In an erratic environment, experiences arise that play with luck in order to obtain advantages. The Japanese train company West Japan Railway (JR West) offers “Saikoro Kippu” tickets, with random destinations that passengers learn about after they are purchased. The train ticket is purchased through a phone app and a virtual dice roll decides some of the 7 possible destinations. The tickets save between 45% and 82% off the regular price.

**STIMULATING ENVIRONMENTS.** Spaces that capture the public’s attention by disarticulating perceptions sprout. The Hyper-Haus studio designed the Doctor Mek Clinic in Bangkok as an art gallery where patients abstract from reality and dream of being “the best version of themselves”. The colorful, whimsical and absurd design provides a considerable amount of visual stimuli to keep the public entertained while they wait their turn for procedures that can be painful and anxiety-inducing.



Gucci Town, Roblox.

**SIMULTANEOUS UNIVERSES.** Evasive scenarios for cohesive experiences are gaining ground. Gucci Town, Gucci’s new metaverse destination in the Roblox video game, invites players to participate in activities and tours as well as learn about the accessories collections. Organized around a central square, the virtual neighborhood invites users to discover the history of the brand guided by the kaleidoscopic vision of A. Michele. After the successful “Gucci Garden”, an experience visited by 19 million players in 14 days on the same platform, the project continues the line of creating surreal, immersive and gamified stories to capture the public’s attention.



Human Nature, NewTerritory.

**ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES.** New solutions to restore cognitive and emotional health are being tested in different disciplines. Human Nature, by NewTerritory studio, is a futuristic concept of a psychedelic drug inhaler in microdoses, for when the substances are legalized for mental health treatment. The proposal explores how psilocybin, the psychoactive compound produced by hallucinogenic mushrooms, and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) could be consumed in small, regular doses to improve well-being.



Play, Urs Fischer. Photo: Elad Sarig.

**EVERYDAY ALTERATIONS.** Games that deliberately seek to disrupt routines are on the rise. Play, by Urs Fischer, is a kinetic art experience that invites viewers to interact with office chairs that react unexpectedly when they detect human movement thanks to A.I. When approached, the objects react with different personalities: one may move away and try to hide in the corner, another may accelerate towards the person or simply stand still, ignoring your presence altogether. The work encourages people to explore the unexpected behavior of reality inside an empty room at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.



Serie Selfie, Hasbro.

**UNLIKELY TRANSPOLATIONS.** The boundaries between fiction and reality are beginning to feel increasingly blurred. Hasbro and 3D printing company Formlabs, launched 'Selfie Series', a customization service that gives collectors the opportunity to create a six-inch action figure with their faces and physiognomic features. Through the 'Hasbro Pulse' app, fans can scan their face and customize their character. Once submitted, Formlabs 3D prints the figure in resin and delivers it to the home. The price is \$60 and includes iconic characters such as G.I. JOE, Power Rangers, Ghostbusters and Marvel characters, among others.





Jonathas de Andrade.



Jamian Juliano-Villani.



Zsófia Keresztes.



Jakob Lena Knehl, Ashley Hans Scheirl.

**EXISTENTIAL METAMORPHOSIS.** Critical reflections on the future of society have begun to emerge in recent times, encouraged by events that have shaken people, sowing confusion and debunking beliefs. The Venezia Art Biennial, curated by Cecilia Alemani, took the name “The Milk of Dreams”, a direct inspiration from Leonora Carrington’s book “The Milk of Dreams”, which explores the metamorphosis of the human being from a surrealist perspective. The themes addressed by the artists capture the current moment in which the very survival of the species is threatened: How is the definition of human changing? What constitutes life? What are our responsibilities to the planet and other people? And what would life be like without us? There is no unanimous answer but different ideas —some very discordant with each other— about the future.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO INNOVATE

### DYNAMIC PURPOSES

Capturing the diversity of small purposes that inspire and mobilize people to integrate them into communication strategies. Developing brand experiences that connect with multiple and eclectic cultural references, linking different audiences transversally. Associating products and services with novel —and even unusual— causes that encourage consumers and generate extraordinary meanings around the offer.

### MIXED CATEGORIES

Promoting the design of hybrid categories of products with diverse functionalities and occasions of use. Engaging in dialogs with other industries to create joint offers generating new typologies. Extending products to unusual fields to push the limits of creativity and surprise our own and potential audiences. Impregnating the collections with humor, irony, self-assurance and rebelliousness to empathize with the spirit of the times.

### UTOPIAN STORIES

Creating energetic and witty narratives that manage to weave stories, messages and extraordinary experiences to transport individuals to universes they have never experienced before. The brand can become a utopia in itself, capable of exciting the public. Combining rational, mystical and absurd elements to tinge products and the customer journey with an intriguing halo. Creating cohesive narratives with ramifications on a seam of touch points in the metaverse.

### HEALTHY CELEBRATION

Making the most visceral pleasure healthy. Introducing healthy benefits to product categories associated with occasions of celebration and fun. Adding positive functionalities to products traditionally associated with “guilty” consumption. Developing the idea of playful wellness that is compatible with moments of socialization. For those who prefer to continue with unhealthy habits, offer hyper-beneficial shots that help compensate for excesses.

### SURREAL FUN

Envisioning stores and events as surreal experiences that allow for limitless hedonism. Creating moments where consumers experience feelings of euphoria to bring the brand more vividly to life. Stimulating the senses in an unusual way to provoke unbridled emotions that allow people to release tensions. Developing virtual environments where customers can choose how to try the products through different fictional stories.

### TRANSGRESSING LIMITS

Motivating the desire for change and transgression by proposing extraordinary scenarios for product discovery and consumption. Creating multi-sensory environments to pull at every heartstrings and stimulate holistic experiences. Linking the offer with outdoor challenges to invite people to explore new places. Offering services that transform domestic spaces to accommodate special moments of entertainment.

'When the body says Yes' by Melanie Bonajo. Photo: Sydney Rahimtoola.

SURREAL HEDONISM

**INDULGENT FREEDOM**

[ANTI-RISK ATTITUDE] The recent period required a great emotional and cognitive effort from people in terms of adaptation to contingency, an exhausting practice that they undertook in the hope that time would return them to the normality they longed for. Convinced that equally difficult years lie ahead, which will demand constant alertness, individuals will avoid taking unnecessary risks for fear of losing control and will develop a more conservative behavior to ensure their own preservation. This will include remaining in restrictive social comfort zones that ensure maximum possible emotional stability, as well as surrounding themselves with like-minded individuals who will not question their decisions.

[RELIABLE PLEASURES]. Amid feelings of ongoing helplessness and anxiety, people will try to find consistent, reliable and regular pleasures. They will value offerings that can adapt to continuous and unpredictable change. There will be a desire to enjoy pleasurable, affordable, accessible and everyday experiences. In a turbulent and uncertain world, brand propositions must be fundamentally a state of mind, providing psychological comfort by being reliable, transparent, safe and personalized. Healthy hedonism will be consolidated through products and services that guarantee indulgence as well as personal well-being. Offerings that, in addition to being extremely indulgent, help to reduce the negative environmental footprint -allowing the suppression of guilt- will be preferred by the public.

[INTERMITTENT REBELLION]. There will be an increased awareness that communications are mediated by control and censorship, especially in social networks, which will increase the idea of a suffocating reality. The growing sense that there will be fewer and fewer moments and environments to develop in complete freedom will clash with the desire to feel a greater degree of independence, eliminate the feeling of oppression and choose with the least amount of restrictions (see the *Unruly Lives Trend* report). The feeling of suffocation will drive the desire for moments of extreme fun, euphoria and adrenaline, where restrained emotions can be unleashed. Traits of rebelliousness —mixed between the usual practices of

comparison and mimicry— will emerge encouraged by the desire to experience a feeling of autonomy and free will, but without taking great risks that endanger the precarious stability achieved.

[UNCERTAIN PRESENCE]. In an illegible world, the personal way of showing and expressing oneself will also become confused and inscrutable. Identities will adopt absurd features, disordered references and disconcerting aesthetics, to communicate an undefined and uncertain state of transformation. There will be a quest to find more intimate and trustworthy avenues and spheres in which to manifest human complexity with honesty. For younger audiences, the idea of the consistent and persistent personal brand will lose adherents as it will be associated with a non-existent and useless reality. A virtual presence will unfold, fluctuating intermittently between anonymity and public exposure, to build multiverse and non-linear narratives.



In 'When the body says Yes'  
Melanie Bonajo reflects  
on the concept of intimacy  
today and explores the body  
as vehicle connection  
and self-esteem.  
Photo: Sydney Rahimtoola.

## SIGNALS OF CHANGE

“I think it’s hard to be alive now”

Timothée Chalamet.

**YOUTH ANGUISH.** Expressions of discomfort among young people are multiplying, portraying the fragility of their mental health. *“To be young now, and to be young whenever —I can only speak for my generation— is to be intensely judged. I can’t imagine what it is to grow up with the onslaught of social media, and it was a relief to play characters who are wrestling with an internal dilemma absent the ability to go on Reddit, or Twitter, Instagram or TikTok and figure out where they fit it (...) I think it’s hard to be alive now. I think societal collapse is in the air,”* stated Timothée Chalamet at the Venice Film Festival, in September 2022.



Cor, Mès Lesne, Showstudio.

Leche de Virgen, Salón Sílcon.



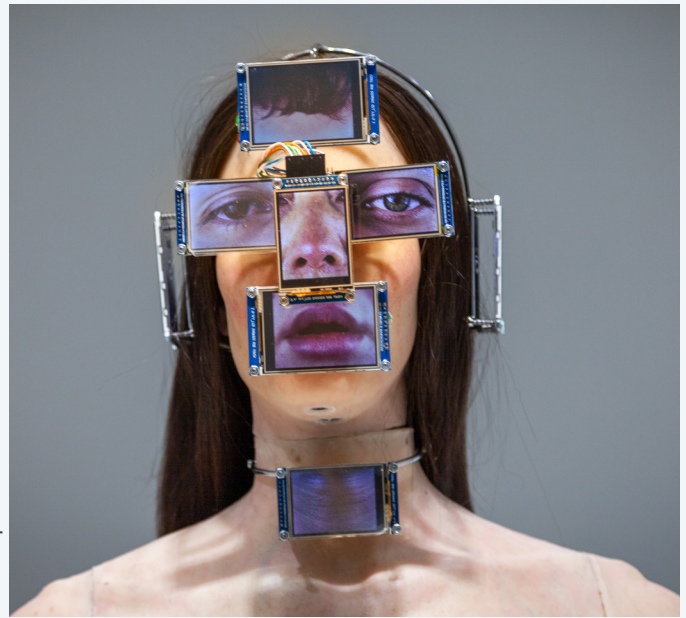
Jean-Charles de Castelbajac.



**GENERATIONAL LIBERATION.** Explicit manifestations of dissatisfaction with current conditions and the desire to find alternatives are everywhere. The short film Cor, by dancer Mès Lesne, manifests through choreography and aesthetics the “war cry of Generation Z” for freedom. Shot in a ravaged, mysterious landscape —the volcanic lands of Lanzarote— the dancers reproduce visceral and desperate movements that express the wild and stubborn search of today’s youth to be free, escaping from toxic archetypes and taking unknown paths.



Neo Collective, Claudia Rafael.



Pixel, Filip Cusic, Colección Solo.



You know who I am, Paola Pivi.



Eyedigo, Trashymuse.

**HYPER LANGUAGES.** The expression of a complex, indecipherable and frenetic existence is translated into hybrid aesthetic and symbolic languages. Paola Pivi's public artwork "You know who I am", presented in NYC's High Line park, is a bronze replica of the Statue of Liberty with several faces inspired by emojis. The masks represent individuals whose personal experiences of freedom are tied to the United States and change every two months. Claudia Rafael generates collective portraits by capturing the faces of visitors, digitally filtering and merging them to create a work that fluctuates between anonymity and exposure.

**DYNAMIC CHARACTERS.** The construction of flexible identities has been consolidated (see Identity Morphing social trend) only now they acquire more ambivalent and dynamic characters. Eyedigo, created by the agency Trashymuse, is an avatar created in the metaverse to explore the human and digital experience. The character models and lives adventures both in the virtual universe —he can be a NFT— and in the physical one —he is embodied in a work of art. He has no default configuration and changes his face regularly. The pixels of his body are ephemeral, i.e., his features and cultural background are dynamic, in order to adapt to a changing environment.

**ALL-TERRAIN WELLNESS.** Different industries are coming up with ideas for experiences that improve people's routines in heterogeneous and unstable environments. Forever Meadow is an app concept for walking and meditating through a sensory journey in which foot movements trigger the creation of a garden that envelops the user. By using augmented reality, people can exercise and relax in the indoor spaces while evoking the feeling of being in a natural, unreal landscape.

Forever Meadow.



**TEMPORARY ESCAPE.** The spaces incorporate different resources to lighten the mood and increase the chances of connecting with people. To improve the well-being and mental health of its customers, the luxury store Selfridges, launched a series of actions under the concept of “retail therapy”. On the different floors of its building in central London there are modules that offer a multi-sensory experience aimed at reducing stress. There are “quiet” shopping hours where music is turned down, screens are turned off and staff are careful not to make noise.

Selfridges.



**PERMANENT ENJOYMENT.** Services emerge with benefits that are accommodating, safe and 100% adaptable to users' changing requirements. Peninsula Hotels launched Life Lived Best, a holistic wellness program available at all of its hotels. Based on guests' health goals, guests can choose from a variety of healthy menus, exercise equipment and in-room online workouts. Each hotel incorporates typical therapeutic practices, local trainers and trail maps for jogging while discovering the landscape. The program includes an app to execute mental wellness routines anywhere in the world.

Life Lived Best, Peninsula Hotels.

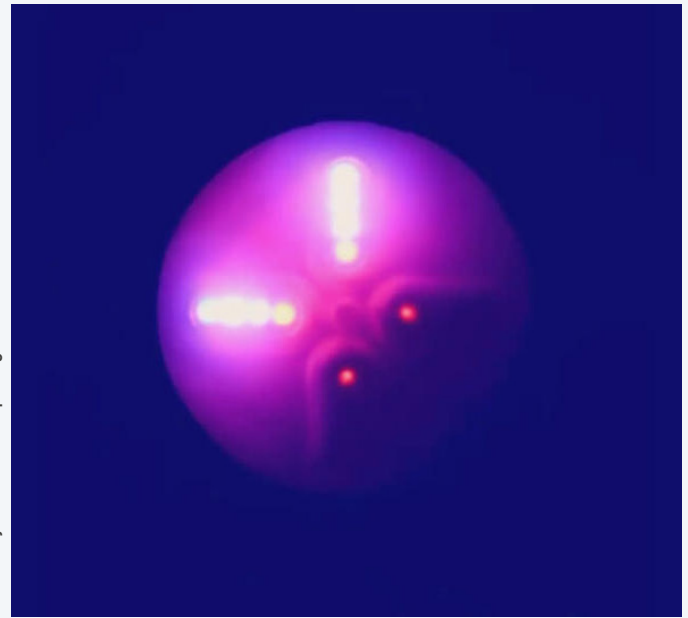






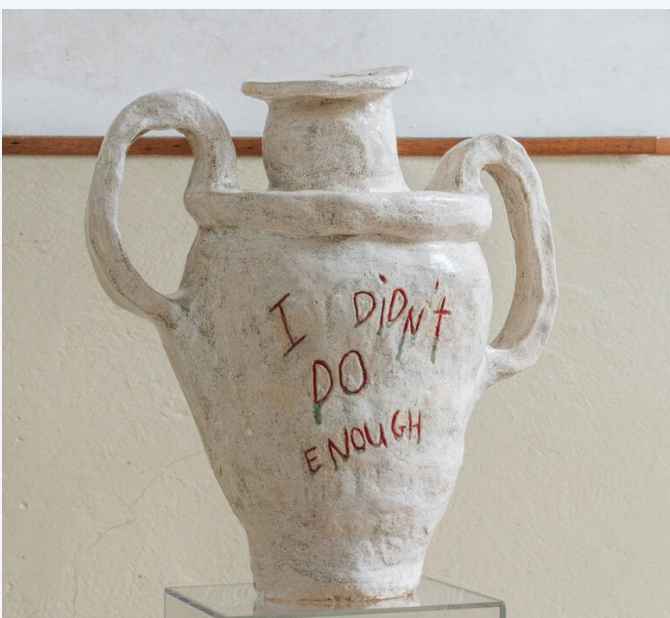
ArkDes.

**SENSITIVE TOURS.** The way we perceive space and objects is changing to capture other, previously unknown stimuli. “Weird Sensation Feels Good: The World of ASMR”, an exhibition developed by ArkDes (Swedish National Center for Architecture and Design) at the Design Museum in London, comprises a series of visual, auditory and tactile works designed to provoke physical sensations of euphoria or calm in the viewer through sound, touch and movement.



Stem Player, Kano Computing.

**MANAGEABLE CREATIONS.** Both the creation and consumption of art are dislocated. Stem Player is a music playback and audio remixing device developed by Kano Computing. The small, oval-shaped, neutral-colored device has four touch-sensitive haptic controls that adjust details of each track and allow effects to be added. An A.I. breaks down a song into vocals, bass, percussion and instruments, to be customized. There are artists interested in starting to make music exclusively for the device, which means changing the way songs are composed.



William Van Hooff.

**HUMAN OBJECTS.** Just as people are experiencing an existential crisis, objects echo that process. Designer William van Hooff explores male mental health and feelings of insecurity through the ceramic piece “I didn’t do enough”. It starts with questions, such as “Why do human beings doubt ourselves? Why do we feel we are never good enough?” to create a trophy, a “happy object” that accepts and celebrates the inner voice that fills him with doubt. The work was presented in an exhibition curated by Danish studio Tableau and the Post Service clinic, at Milan Design Week.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO INNOVATE

### SAFE MINIVERSE

Offering tools and tips to help people manage their desire for exposure and intimacy to improve their sense of security and self-esteem when interacting with their peers. Within the brand community, creating options for customers to interact from a creative anonymity that protects them while allowing them to express their uniqueness in the virtual world: convertible avatars, customizable characters, alterable figures.

### BLOWS FOR FREEDOM

Offering rule-free instances where young people can communicate in an authentic way and act without feeling judged. Encouraging absurd manifestations, random presences and meaningless speeches, allowing to reduce the pressure to create a personal brand. On social platforms, reducing the algorithms that filter and categorize interactions and content, to democratize relationships and make messages more spontaneous.

### RELIABLE RISK

Transforming the brand into a psychological state that gives people peace of mind by trusting that the philosophy, aesthetic criteria, attention to detail, traceability and quality standards of products and services will remain unalterable beyond contextual contingencies. Based on this assurance, consumers are invited to take risks by trying out new supply options that provide additional enjoyment.

### HUMAN AESTHETICS

Giving objects aesthetic and symbolic characteristics that express in a sincere way the complex feelings of human beings. Just as people feel their existence altered, products could acquire features that express these doubts and uncertainties. Exploring a concept of beauty outside the standard canons by combining elements—shapes, textures, colors, messages—dissimilar and even contradictory to each other that challenge the collective taste.

### INSTANT WELLNESS

Providing services that guarantee personal wellness routines executable in different environments and at all times. Facilitating the activation and application of the products by the users themselves. Creating offers with easily verifiable functionalities that allow users to experience the physical, cognitive and emotional health benefits in the present. Setting up profiles with wellness goals so that users can select and tailor solutions across industries.

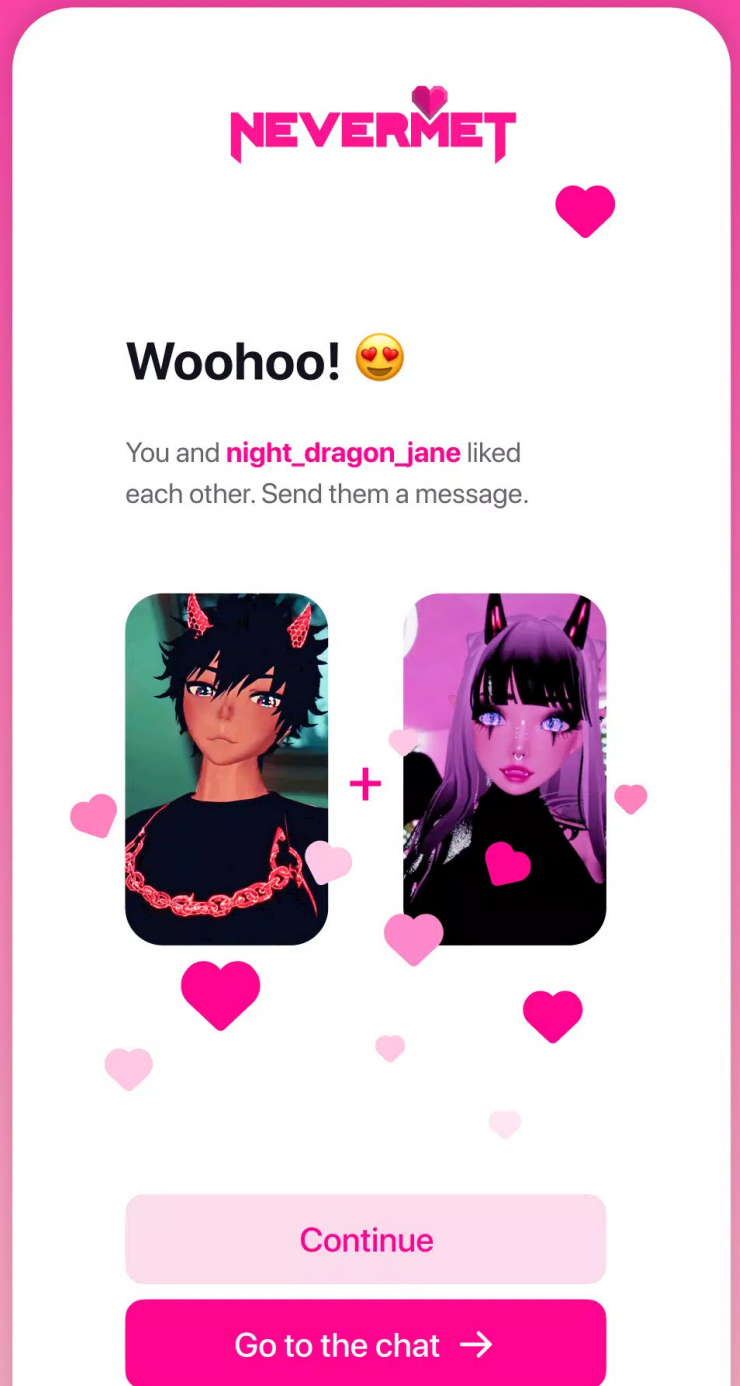
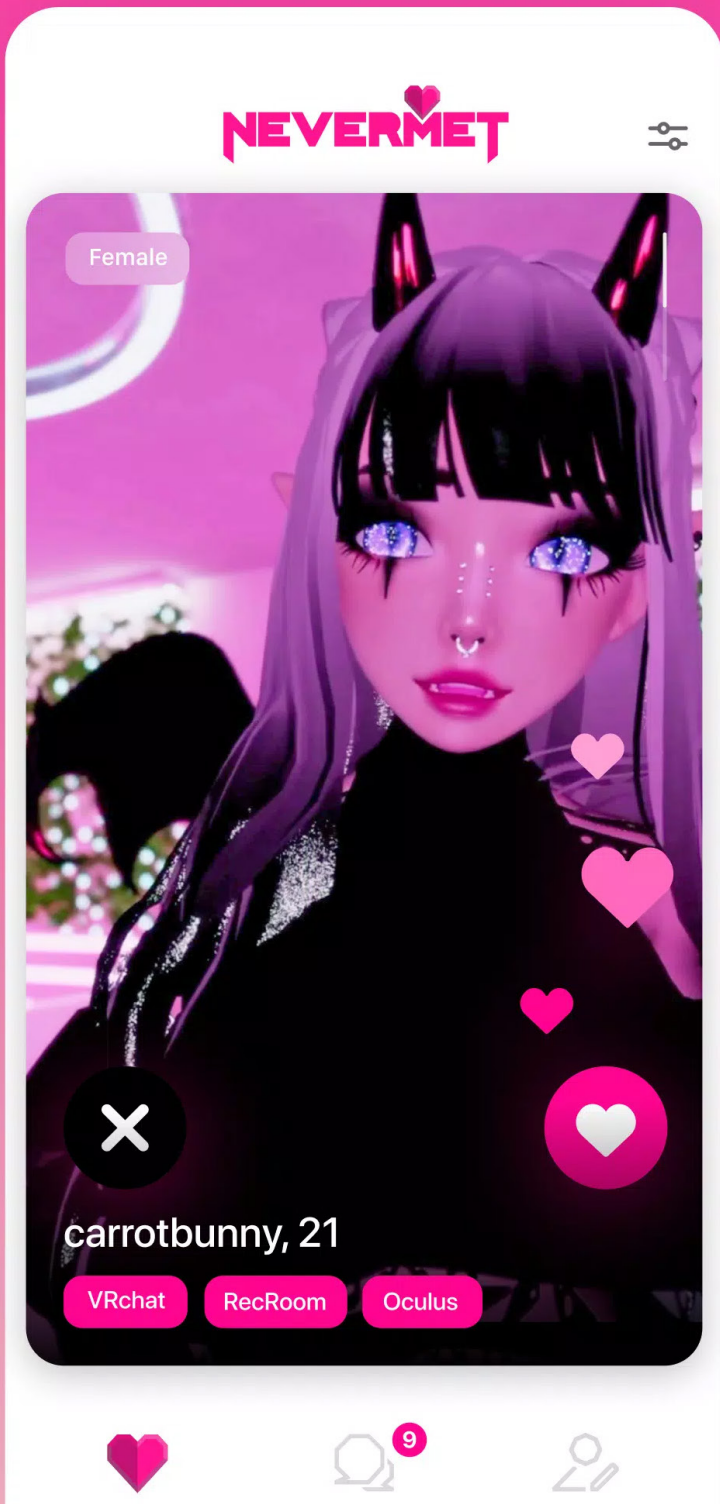
### AFFORDABLE PLEASURE

Developing affordable propositions that offer a wide variety of indulgent and entertaining experiences. Updating product formulas based on novel combinations of traditional ingredients and incorporate other unknown ingredients. Offering product information to learn about uses and combinations with each other for maximalist enjoyment. Partnering with brands from other categories to suggest pairings that enhance benefits.

Nevermet is a dating app that allows users to create fantastic avatars to socialize in virtual reality.

# Dating app for **virtual reality**

# **Connect** with people like you



# FACTORS THAT DRIVE THE SURREAL HEDONISM TREND

## 70 %

OF AMERICANS CONSIDER INFLATION TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FACING THE COUNTRY.

**Inflation has become one of the main concerns of people in many Western countries.** The rising cost of living —to historic levels— in inequitable societies, has undermined people’s hope for a better future after two years of pandemic. A May 2022 Ipsos survey concluded that about 52% of Americans consider inflation to be the most important problem facing the country, far ahead of political extremism, gun violence and climate change. Pew Research Center puts that concern at 70% of the U.S. population. The May 2022 University of Michigan (US) consumer confidence index was the lowest level since August 2011, expressing people’s mood about the possibility of buying homes and durable goods and their outlook for the future of the economy.

## 1 OF 3

PEOPLE IN THE U.S., RUSSIA, BRAZIL AND GERMANY, SAID: “I FEEL THAT THINGS IN MY COUNTRY ARE OUT OF CONTROL AT THE MOMENT”.

**A sense of loss of control over the factors that bring certainty to daily life is spreading among people, also encouraged by the perception that governments also do not have a good grasp of what is going on.** One out of three people in the U.S., Russia, Brazil and Germany, said: “I feel that things in my country are out of control at the moment” (Global Risks Report 2022, WEF). The recent economic crisis has had a particular impact on the younger generations who are starting their working careers with few material expectations to motivate their performance. The Bank of Spain has certified in 2022 that the majority of young Spaniards active in the labor market will not be able to buy a house in the future under current conditions; only 36% of those under 35 years of age are homeowners; in 2011 this percentage was 70%. **The suppression of the idea of social progress has consequences for other aspects of social life.** In France, there is a decline in support for democracy and free elections: only 51% of young people surveyed believe that having a democratic government is “very important”, compared to 59% of parents and 71% of older adults; a majority maintain the belief that voting is useful and “can change

things”, but for a third, “voting is not very useful” as they do not see a transformation in living conditions (Institut Montaigne, 2022).

# 1/3

OF YOUNG FRENCH PEOPLE CONSIDER THAT “VOTING IS NOT VERY USEFUL” SINCE THEY DO NOT SEE A TRANSFORMATION IN THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE.

Economic complications are added to other global events that alter reality, such as climate change, with hundreds of catastrophic scenes in recent months that have alerted the population (droughts, fires, floods); and the war in European territory, which produces a humanitarian crisis translated into shocking and painful news, as well as restrictions in supply chains, the consequent increase in prices and the rationing of energy consumption and other inputs. **For people, knowing that they will again suffer deprivation due to the rising cost of products and, at the same time, reducing consumption due to lack of availability, is frustrating after two years of restrictions and anguish.** In many countries, these situations are combined with local issues that generate a feeling of fragility and social tension that hangs in the air. In the United Kingdom and the United States, adolescent eating disorders are at alarming levels, which makes sense: food is something that young people feel they can control when the world feels threatened.

# 34 %

ON AVERAGE OF BRITISH PEOPLE HAVE FELT ANXIOUS ABOUT RECENT EVENTS.

**Two years after the first outbreak of COVID-19, we can see the psychological consequences of a pandemic that has completely upended people’s lives.** In the UK in 2022, the happiness index of young people has reached its lowest level in 13 years: 35% of 16-25 year olds say they have never felt more lonely, a quarter of young people believe they will never recover from the emotional impact of the pandemic and almost half agree that the pandemic has left them feeling “mentally burnt out”, a state known as burn out (Prince’s Trust NatWest, YouGov, 2022). A survey by the UK Office for National Statistics found that people aged 16-29 years feel considerably more anxious than the general population: 42% reported high levels of anxiety compared with 34% on average and only 29% for people aged 50-69 years.

Approximately 54% of French 18-30 year olds had a negative mood in the last year, according to the Youth Barometer 2022. **The pandemic has reinforced pre-existing disorders such as**

# 54 %

APPROX. OF FRENCH 18-30 YEAR OLDS HAD A NEGATIVE MOOD IN THE LAST YEAR.

**loneliness, anxiety and depression.** Four out of ten young people consider that their current life does not correspond to their expectations (Direction de la Jeunesse, 2022). This makes it difficult to project themselves into the future. In Australia, about 19% of people aged 15 to 24 have experienced anxiety and 14% depression in the last year, according to the latest National Health Survey of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In the UK, more than 400,000 children and youth are being treated for mental health problems each month, the highest number on record, prompting warnings of an unprecedented crisis in the wellbeing of under-18s (NHS, 2022). A Red Cross report reveals that more than half of the Argentine adolescents consulted (53%) had their emotional well-being affected since the beginning of the pandemic: the main signs are tiredness, moodiness and lack of concentration (Red Cross, 2022).

For many young people, socialization generates anxiety, after living an extended period of restrictions and virtual relationships. This has resulted in the loss of some basic social tools for bonding with peers in physical environments. Dating in the metaverse, driven by virtual reality, is on the rise. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, many people have become accustomed to spending time only with their closest social circle, which brings a sense of security, called the “friend shield effect” (Universidad Carlos III, 2022). 35% of Americans consider that socializing and going out has lost priority for them (Pew Research Center, 2022).

# 35 %

OF AMERICANS CONSIDER THAT SOCIALIZING AND GOING OUT HAS LOST PRIORITY FOR THEM.

**Different changes are taking place in the new generations that could introduce counter-trends in the near future.** Many young people are rethinking their relationship with alcohol by becoming teetotalers. An academic study, published in the British Journal of Sociology, claims that people under 26 say they drink less alcohol than their parents because they feel under pressure to perform academically, are more health conscious and do not want to lose control in an extremely uncertain context. Also, among those under 26, there is an emerging negative reaction to the sex-positivity installed by previous generations that has led to hypersexualization and exhibitionism of intimacy on social

# 15 %

OF THE YOUNGER POPULATION  
IS SEXUALLY INACTIVE.

networks. 15% of the younger population is sexually inactive and indifferent to sex drive. Likewise, the growing censorship of erotic and sexual content on social networks does not give young people - who spend a great deal of time online, the opportunity to create their universes of desires.

**The use of social networks as a source of information on economic, political and social reality has increased in recent times, transforming not only the format of the content but also the type of understanding of events.** Faced with a scenario that is difficult to understand, a fleeting and fragmented look —the result of the reign of short videos— does not help to offer people a deep understanding from which to act, but only entertainment that can increase their feeling of being lost in the unreal. According to an Ofcom report, Instagram was the most popular news source among teens, used by 29% of them in 2022, while 28% used TikTok and YouTube for current events data.

# 28 %

APPROX. OF TEENAGERS FIND OUT  
ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS THROUGH  
SOCIAL NETWORKS.

These daily battles are expressed through different media, according to Giovanni Carmine, curator of the avant-garde section Unlimited 2022 at the Basel Art Fair, there are increasingly a number of works that reflect the intense and contradictory era in which we live, a polymorphous chorus of voices singing in protest against isolation, loneliness and indifference; ever louder and more perceptible.

Image: Alexander Park y Elīna Arāja.





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ANTICIPATE THE FUTURE. INNOVATE NOW

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