

## Press Release

### Nicole Zisman and Jeremy Keenan 'בטחון – *Tranquilla, Mami*'

Opening: Saturday, 09 April 2022  
(Private view: 21.30 – 23.30)

Further viewing appointments: 11 May (21:00), 15 May (21:00), 19 May 2022 (21:00)

1-3 Elliott's Place  
London, N1 8HX

Ein Sof Gallery unveils a new, collaborative body of work by London and Rotterdam-based artists Nicole Zisman and Jeremy Keenan, in בטחון — *Tranquilla, Mami*. This exhibition is the last of a series of events supported by Arts Council England, looking at mental health and its full breadth from a Jewish lens. The large scale installation combines film and fashion with real-time programmed light and sound, exploring perfection and its impossibility, illustrating the spiritual panic that this tension can unleash in the Jewish body (especially in the context of intergenerational trauma and survivors' guilt), and embodies the shattering heartbreaks that both artists have personally processed via this work.

Nicole Zisman's fragmented button-down shirts (made using a signature technique where custom sequins are laser-cut, UV printed and hand-stitched) hang amongst their fully shattered siblings to create an environment of suspended brokenness. Zisman frequently references the white button-down shirt in her work, reflecting her fascination with Jewish mens' uniform garments, their meticulousness with details and specifics, and how the simplest change can completely alter a garment's meaning and purpose.

בטחון — *Tranquilla, Mami* is to date, Zisman's most direct acknowledgement of the white shirt as a motif of spiritual ideality in her practice. It is also the artist's most direct confession of her craving for the shirt's symbolic presence within intimate male paradigms, and (ironically) its affirmations of her valour as a Jewish woman. The materiality of the pieces recalls her lifetime encounters with seas of white button-down shirts in shul, in her family home, and within her involuntary psychic obsessions, where clear, glittering shirts repeatedly shatter around her and eventually, her own body throws itself through and smashes a pristine pane of glass. In the physical realm however, the artists break their shirts intentionally,<sup>1</sup> so as to practice *tzimtzum*<sup>2</sup> in the cracks between the pieces of glass. Within the installation, breaking and brokenness become acts of Trust (*bitachon*, בטחון).

1 'There is nothing more complete than a broken heart' -R. Menachem Mendel of Kotzk | 'The whole world / Is a very narrow bridge / And the main thing is to have no fear at all' - R. Nachman of Breslov

2 Kabbalistic term for 'contraction' or 'concealment,' for the purposes of creating vacant space for new growth



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Jeremy Keenan's multisensory approach connects Nicole's sculptural work to an animated figure through a play of pulsating light and sound. As the piece unfolds and recombines its elements as permutations over time, the sculptures move, refracting the colour-shifting lights into spectral patterns on the walls. This play of light emphasises the cracks in the broken glass-like structure of the sculptures, functioning as a beacon which amplifies their contours. The motion, animation, and coloured lights occasionally stop, revealing their raw form. This juxtaposition between the work in motion and stillness symbolises the possibility of healed mental states, despite in some moments their seeming impossibility.

The audience's upward gaze at the screen recreates an ancient Israelite ritual described in Parashat Chukat, in which a brass serpent was placed upon a high pole, and all who gazed heavenward at it were healed from venomous snakebites.

**Nicole Zisman** is a fashion designer, visual artist and researcher addressing the complexity of stratified Jewish identity in the West within physical and digital culture. Analysis of her multiple identities (especially her Venezuelan Jewish-ness and her manufactured digital persona) is consistently woven into Zisman's work. She is especially interested in the visuality of assimilation, and explores this through print and image. She seeks to challenge the notion of a fixed truth that 'seeing is knowing,' that perception of a body in culture equals the real.

As well as having her own eponymous label (currently profiled with the British Fashion Council), Zisman is a collaborator with Feminist Internet. She completed her BA in Fashion Print from Central Saint Martins in 2019. Since then, her work has discussed and featured in the likes of Dazed, LOVE Magazine, SHOWstudio, The Face, Vogue Italia, Teen Vogue, Tatler, King Kong Garçon, Schon! Magazine, Culted and ODDA Magazine. In October 2019, she presented her first solo exhibition, יהי רצון / So Let It Be Your Will, hosted by Centre for Sustainable Fashion and Waltham Forest, London Borough of Culture 2019. In February 2020, she presented at London Fashion Week for the first time, as part of the Positive Fashion Exhibition at 180 the Strand.

**Jeremy Keenan** creates artworks using motion, sound, feedback, data, and light. He has exhibited and performed at venues like the Vienna MuseumsQuartier, the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), Monom in Berlin, CTM Festival, 4DSound in Budapest, Whitechapel Gallery, ICA, Shunt, Roundhouse, Rich Mix, and Cafe OTO in London, the Museum of Contemporary Art in A Coruña, Spain, FILE Festival in Brazil, as well as various galleries and venues in Europe, North America and the UK. He is a co-founder of the London, UK sonic arts collective Call & Response, through which he has worked with artists like EVOL, Jacob Kirkegaard, LINE imprint, Robert Van Heumen, James Dashow, Werkdisks, Steinbrüchel, Theo Burt, Mark Fell, Mats Lindström, and Kaffe Matthews.

His current line of practice involves generative audiovisual composition, compound physical/virtual worlds, and hybrid media environments. He is interested in working with real and imaginary signals, audible and inaudible feedback, the uncanny reconfiguration of familiar tools like speakers, screens, lamps and microphones, and the communicative possibilities hidden within ubiquitous sensory media. Jeremy has a PhD in studio composition from Goldsmiths College, London in Studio Composition and works at Willem de Kooning Academie in Rotterdam, Netherlands.



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