

Julian Abraham “Togar”: “Too good to be OK” Exhibit at SculptureCenter, LIC

The artist’s first solo exhibition, works that incorporate sonic elements, in a U.S. institution



Run, Maluku, Indonesia, 2023

“Too good to be OK” continues and builds upon Julian Abraham “Togar”’s long term work with sound, ranging from percussive signals in urban spaces to shared communication through music, bands, and jamming. Sound has been both a central medium in Togar’s individual practice and a feature of his socially-directed and collaborative projects. The exhibition in New York incorporates sonic elements from works first generated in other social and political contexts, underlining a stance of global decolonial solidarity derived from the artist’s position

living and working in Indonesia. With newly-commissioned musical instruments, audio works, kinetic sculptures, video, painting, and live events, *Too good to be OK* is Togar's experiment with the "ongoing-ness" of his expansive form of artmaking. Moving forward, his work will develop new sounds, recompose itself as it shifts contexts, and distill ideas and methods from past endeavors to open the potential of new shared acoustic spaces.

Togar's ongoing *OK Studio* (2020–present) is the core of his exhibition at SculptureCenter. *OK Studio* describes both a physical place for music and events and a more theoretical space concerned with the function of art in imagining what to do with public space. Set up in SculptureCenter's lower level galleries, it is a participatory environment that offers visitors the chance to "co-exercise, co-experiment, co-instigate, co-investigate, co-practice, co-produce, co-distribute" what can be learned through active listening. Since its informal beginnings during the 2020 pandemic lockdown at the Rijksakademie residency in Amsterdam, the project has organically evolved and transformed with each iteration, making the studio, in the artist's words, "an instrument with its own potentiality." At SculptureCenter, *OK Studio* will appear as an open, self-playing composition, with an instrumental system of automated ocean drums, shruti boxes, gongs, megaphones, and other devices, along with new ideas integrated into regular jamming and live programming within the larger timeline of the exhibition.

Other new and newly-realized works contribute to the larger sonic installation, including sculptures that deploy the signature percussive sounds used to attract customers by some Indonesian food vendors, and others that draw attention to the sounds of fermenting juices. For the exhibition, SculptureCenter has commissioned a new installment from Togar's ongoing video series *Drummer's Gonna Drum* (2017–present), in which the artist visits various built and natural environments and drums on various surfaces. His new work connects the Dutch colonization of Indonesia to an acutely impactful moment in New York's own colonial history. Togar filmed *Drummer's Gonna Drum #03* on Run, a tiny island toward the eastern side of the Indonesian archipelago. In 1667, Britain traded Run for the Dutch-controlled Manhattan, capitalizing on the soon-failed Dutch desire to dominate the nutmeg trade in Southeast Asia. Togar's new video work highlights the interconnectedness of strikingly disparate places—two small islands on opposite sides of the world, one a fishing

village and one now a locus of global finance—and the blunt colonial transaction that binds their histories together.

Julian Abraham “Togar”: Too good to be OK is a multifaceted, activated dive into the artist’s exploration of rhythms and systems, made elastic by exhibiting across international contexts. Initiating, supporting, and questioning the connections between environmental sounds and musicians, as well as the dynamics between musicians and audiences. *Julian Abraham “Togar”: Too good to be OK* invites the public of New York, in Togar’s words, “to be with it, play with it, sit with it, and move with it.”

Julian Abraham “Togar”: Too good to be OK is organized by SculptureCenter.

Public Programs

Julian Abraham “Togar”: Too good to be OK includes a schedule of formal and informal programs to be held at SculptureCenter from Sep—Nov 2023 with the artist present. These include performances, conversations, live sets, jam sessions, and films under the auspices of *OK Studio*, hosted in collaboration with fellow artists, musicians, new friends, and other collaborators.

A full schedule of programs will be announced on SculptureCenter’s website and social media.

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