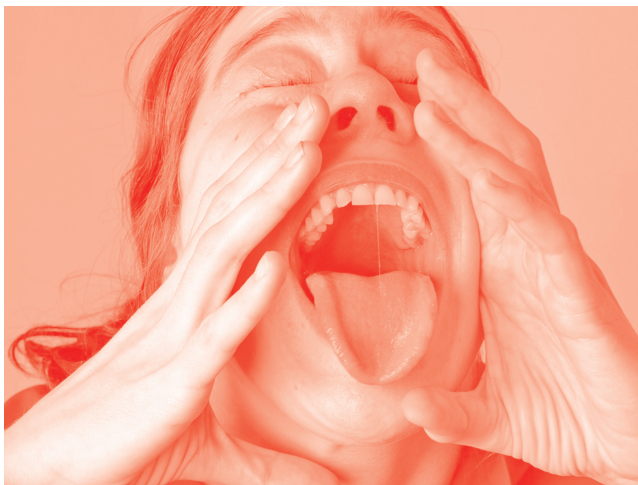


INSTITUTE OF
CONTEMPORARY
ARTS

NORA TURATO
pool7



9 April – 8 June 2025

For her first solo exhibition in the UK, Nora Turato (b. 1991, Zagreb) presents a new body of work across text, video, audio and performance. Turato has built her practice by mining the language of the zeitgeist. She culls text from the buzzing cloud of information that surrounds each one of us to examine how language reveals the subtexts, pleasures and failures of culture. This newest work, *pool/7*, is the Amsterdam-based artist's most personal to date. Turato looks to her own body, voice and words to confront a condition of disembodiment in communication today.

Turato is a performance artist whose primary medium and preoccupation is expression. The installation in the ICA's Lower Galleries deliberates on the distinct modes of human communication: language, movement of the body and self-produced sound. Each element carries Turato's characteristic incisiveness, relentless curiosity and radical subversion. The main gallery is lined with A4 sheets of paper that contain an unedited personal text, as if the artist hit print on her Notes app and over a thousand pages of inner dialogue unspooled in default sans-serif type. Along the corridor a new series of videos capture Turato enacting physical gestures, giving herself over to involuntary and habitual movements. A listening space in the back gallery resonates with the recorded audio of the artist's experiments with freeing her voice, mouth, and jaw.

At yearly intervals, Turato has created text *pools*, collections of found language she gathers and samples from a range of sources: media headlines, conversations with friends, literature, advertising, overheard speech and all manner of online content. With this non-hierarchical aggregation, Turato sifts out the words and phrases that gained weight, entered social currency or slipped into meaninglessness, thereby charting the defining currents of culture today. Each *pool/* becomes a book, a time-capsule of language which Turato excerpts in her performances and installations.

In past work, the artist has splashed text across walls and screens in bold graphics installations that capitalise on scale, colour, pattern and font to explore

the susceptibility of language to visual manipulations. She has been likened to ‘a glitching machine processing all this data’ and ‘a medium – a possessed being’, adopted the anxiety-ridden language of the wellness industry, channelled a slippery salesman, and highlighted the anonymous voices of the internet and advertising. The ineffable qualities of the particular moment are immediately recognisable through her lens, as is the persistent misogyny and commercialism that subtends it.

This new work, the seventh in Turato’s series, deviates from its predecessors in content and form. Personal disclosure and utilitarian formats replace found text and calculated design. This is in direct response to a recognition of the unprecedented speed of language circulation today and its effect: the disembodiment of language and the growing distance between what is true and what feels reasonable due to sheer repetition or social norms. Turato, in her vigilant tracking of the language of communication, observes text morphing into image as infographics and captions, becoming emblems of self-presentation on social media. Voices in podcasts are bodiless, reporters are talking heads in virtual rooms, vocal registers are becoming fixed tropes. As vocabularies quickly spread, the perceived impact of a word begins to supersede the specific nuance of its meaning. Language starts to collapse under the weight of the undue burden of doing more with less. With this exhibition, Turato asks: if the language we use to express our shared socio-cultural reality seems both unreliable and unmoored from the body, are those two things connected, and if so, how do we get back to stable ground?

Her proposal is *pool/7*, an embodied exercise in reclaiming language and personal expression. She attempts a series of tactics to short-circuit the overriding function of cultural conditioning: utilitarian design, unedited text, pared back video, involuntary physical movements, raw and intimate audio recording. For an artist whose bread and butter has been broadcasting the language of popular culture and subverting it using its own visual language – this is not a casual enterprise. Each component of *pool/7* is a result of process and material choices that cannot be

summarised as an image, suggesting that the place of image-making in art might be in question. Moreover, by necessity, the work asks what is at stake for art under today's cultural conditions? For artists? One note reads, 'fuck endurance art / ive endured enough'. There are no grand claims, no conclusive statements offered. Rather, in the work's directness and raw simplicity, what emerges is a kind of utter reason. An exposed, uncomfortable, sometimes wry appeal to sense: 'there is enough content out there', 'trying to find capacity / to perceive complexity / in the face of fear / not easy', 'its not meal prep, it's cooking'. It is a sincere attempt to locate meaning by a consummate trickster, fitting of a voracious researcher whose oeuvre has long appealed to common sense.

Nora Turato, *pool7 [text]*, 2025

Printed text on approx. 1,800 sheets of A4 paper.

The Main Gallery walls are lined with the entirety of text that comprises *pool7*. Over a thousand pages contain the words and sentences Turato has written down over the past year, predominantly her own personal writing, alongside found language. A4 pages are tiled up to a height of roughly two metres – the extent of the artist's comfortable reach and the familiar dimensions of a literal swimming pool. Unlike the artist's past work, which often featured billboard sized lettering, it cannot be taken in all at once. Each person enters the pool and reads whatever catches their eye.

Turato deliberately foregoes the custom typefaces of her past work. The font is the pre-set Arial of the application she used to type it out. The 'notes-to-self' spacing is perfunctory, the size default. The text itself is not belaboured. Syntax and punctuation be damned. In this attempt to forestall the editorial voice of cultural expectation, the words retain all the immediacy and urgency of their conception. For an artist who is obsessively deliberate with language, not editing a personal text – one she knew was destined for public consumption – is a feat of restraint.

There is a generosity in this risk. Turato ignores the social judge whispering about what sounds good or bad, or cool or cringe, and if you recognise yourself in her words, suddenly it becomes an option to do the same. The passages run the gamut from self-reflexive, revelatory, incidental, manic, to incisive, 'how words come / and whose words r these / that came to me now / when I said fuck/ ah fuck\fuuuck', 'I'm looking to art to save me / can it', 'youtube algorithm thinks im pregnant', reasserting the joy, nuance and discomfort of expressing the human experience in language today.

Nora Turato, *pool7: Logical Freeze*, 2025

Single-channel audio installation, approx. 15 min.

This audio installation focuses on the capabilities and unconscious habits of speech. As with all the components of the exhibition, Turato did not have a preconceived idea of what this work would become before she made it. Rather, following extensive research into movement therapies, vocal training and unconscious expression, she recorded herself as she rehearsed language from *pool7*. This raw audio file in which Turato attempts to liberate her jaw, throat and voice forms the blueprint script for her *pool7* performances.

We hear Turato's voice repeat words and phrases, moving the sounds from her head to her core, varying pitch, frequency, melody and speed with precision and focus. The work connects the way we speak to choices – conscious and unconscious – made within the body. As such, it asks implicit questions: where is tension formed? How do you hold your jaw? When does it struggle? What factors inform the volume or tone of your voice, which ones do you want to hold on to? How do you let go of the others?

As a listener, you can recognise the physicality of her voice, feel its reverberations echoed in your own body. We hear Turato's teeth chattering at a speed that cannot consciously be replicated. These involuntary movements, along with words and non-linguistic utterances, tap into core human emotions. Anxiety, pain, doubt, power and self-possession are louder than any one word. *Logical Freeze* is an exercise in recognising, locating and negotiating the nuances brought to language through the voice. What emerges is as much an intimate portrait of Turato as it is a reflection of the contingent and desperate nature of existence today.

Nora Turato, *pool7* [video], 2025

Multi-channel video on eight monitors, silent, duration variable.

This multi-channel video installation records Turato tapping into the experiential knowledge of the body. Understanding the way the body communicates is an integral part of the artist's investigation of the hollowing out of language today. The sheer amount and speed of virtual communication increases the distance between language and our physicality. Bodily gestures such as shuffling feet and hand twitching are generally kept out of frame in short-form videos of talking heads, to say nothing of AI. Conversely, we study the postures and mannerisms of celebrities, of cultural figures whose physicality we emulate, consciously or otherwise.

Turato is curious about the waning wisdom of the body and the unconscious tics of metabolised cultural expectations. We constantly negotiate the experiences that we've learned in our bodies and our nervous systems, by habit, imitation or expectation. The movement of our hands picking up and swiping on our phones. The way we hold our shoulders or sit in a chair. The body shows symptoms of more insidious mechanisms in the way we become smaller in certain circumstances, in a flinch or a clench.

In these expository videos we see the artist in front of a fixed camera, with no cuts or post-production to hide behind, guilelessly channelling and negotiating her body's scripted behaviours and movements. This process demands a trance-like letting go, a trust that the body will communicate without the mediation of consciousness. They offer viewers a moment to deliberate on what we internalise on the level of our bodies and the way we interpret physical gestures.

STAGE

Nora Turato, *pool7* [performance], 2025
Solo live performance.

5 & 6 June, tickets required.

At the end of the exhibition run, *pool7* will culminate in two live performances. The research and production of the installation components of *pool7*, the artist's exploration of language as text, bodily movement and vocal capacities all feed into the performance. It is the last stage of a deeply personal and uncompromising exploration of the embodied conditions of communication in this moment.

Commanding an audience alone on stage, no props or sets, her performances are a transfixing study in tone, pitch, delivery and gesture. This newest work is stripped down and raw; Turato channels the defining currents of culture today as they are evidenced within her own words, body and voice. With this work, she confronts a collective disembodiment, a cultural obsession with surface image that disregards the body and emotion. Reflexive and guttural responses – such as cries, screams or sobs – are incorporated alongside Turato's original writing, tapping into reactions we suppress with age and conditionally reserve for exceptional pain, danger, grief or ecstasy. In *pool7* she introduces an improvised way of shaping the performance, deviating from its script-based predecessors.

EVENT PROGRAMME

Monday for Members: Curatorial Tour

28 April, 6pm, Lower Gallery

In a special offer to ICA Members, exhibition curator Andrea Nitsche-Krupp leads a behind-the-scenes curatorial tour of Nora Turato's *pool7*.

Workshop: Body Language, Broken Printer

15 May, 7pm, Lower Gallery

Alessia Arcuri leads *Body Language: Broken Printer*, a text activation workshop in response to *pool7*. The session explores how language and meaning can be created through alternative means – gestures, sounds, repetition and performance.

Live Performances

5 & 6 June, 7pm, Stage

In an all-new performance that forms an integral part of the exhibition, Turato enacts *pool7* live in a virtuosic study of tone, pitch and gesture.

Artist Talk

7 June, 2:30pm, Cinema 1

Join Nora Turato and exhibition curator Andrea Nitsche-Krupp for an in-depth conversation about Turato's practice and her newest work, *pool7*.

Public Exhibition Tours

Exhibition tours led by a member of staff are offered regularly throughout the run of the show. Please see the front desk for today's details.

To book tickets and for information on educational and youth tours, please visit ica.art.

CREDITS

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