

Montessori, not sorry. On speed.  
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LinkedIn once told me that **'Collaboration is the key to success.'** The statement was underlined and in bold, so it must be true. Collaboration might also be antithetical to how the art world operates, where careers are still mostly built by individual artists, who work in their individual ways to sell the individual works. What then of individual artists reaching out to other individual artists? Are they self-destructive idiots that don't understand the rules of the game?

If we were to write an art history highlighting collective work instead of the individual artist, 'the genius', or the works of art, 'masterpieces', we would be blessed with a history containing much more fun, politics and queer joy. Collaboration is not the key to success, but the key to finding ways of working outside of the 'tyranny of the artistic genius.' That quote is not from LinkedIn, but from the Canadian collective General Idea, established by AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal in 1967. They chose the collective and collaboration to escape the norms.

The recent merger of the talents of artists Christophe Hamaide Pierson and Tor Erik Bøe, dubbed Montessori on Speed, is a personal dream combo of two artists who seem to thrive in collaborative mode. Both also seem to have chosen to deviate and operate outside of the norms of the art world, all the while making, collecting, archiving, organizing and hanging out. Both of them have worked in collaborative modes before. Both have survived the collaborative mode. And it seems that both have returned to collaborative mode to make... t-shirts!

Hamaide Pierson has spent many years working within another collective. The collective name, assume vivid astro focus, was a clear negation of the artistic signature of one person, and would also derive its titles for work and exhibitions from the combination of letters a, v, a, f. The work was decadent, opulent, political, colorful, and exciting. It contained ideas from many a sub-culture and blurred the lines between art, fashion, parties, decor, porn, human rights and politics. The work seemed to echo the political tone of the aforementioned General Idea, but also the work of Group Material, formed in 1979, around a body of students at the School of Visual Arts in New York City.

These collective forms of working in the art world would develop through the 80s and 90s, including not just the artist collective, but manifest itself in the structures of bands, fashion labels and design groups. But blurring the lines and being political does not make you money in the art world. It might not even secure you a place within art history. Félix González-Torres, once a member of Group Material, is known for his individual works, but the work with Group Material resonates like a deep bass through his oeuvre, not audible to the ear, but felt with your body.

Bøe has also many years of experience with Trollkrem, a collaboration with artist Jennie Bringaker. The work was hard to define, popping up in unusual places, full of humor and sweat. Together they organized a cornucopia of a festival, SOPPEN, in the forest hills in Oslo. Bøe has also been a longtime collaborator with fashion designer Siv Støldal and has been making a visual and conceptual impact on establishments such as

KIOSKEN in Bergen. While I believe Bøe could probably be one of the few artists to make a contemporary version to something akin to the artist-run restaurant FOOD, established in 1971 by Gordon Matta Clark, Carol Goodden, and Tina Girouard, he would probably add a bit more glitter and kitsch to the recipes.

Both artists are committed to sniffing up on a queer lineage that runs through their works, Hamaide Pierson, through an archival impulse that devours and collects images and movements from the recent past, and Bøe, through a love of anything camp, organizing salons not for the deep conversations of art criticism, but for the love of the Eurovision Song Contest. Together they have found the fuel to propel a project merging some of their common threads to make new threads.

The threads in question are sourced shirts that already exist and are in circulation. The extensive archive of Hamaide Pierson provides a well to dive into and in this case, their common interests filters out the images to hone in on. The doubling and the twinning of the selected images, might mirror the collaboration between the two artists, revealing their mutual attraction for 'repeated or paired elements, a touch of sexual melancholia, [or] goofiness.' The images are then paired with a slogan, a catchphrase, to add another reading or direction for the selected images. The combinations are then remixed and tweaked to transport these appropriated and collaged combos into something never seen or felt before.

The artists themselves embrace the ambiguity of their own process and the results: '[The works] form, we hope, not only graphic and visual contrasts—black & white bitmap effects over layered with sharper images from different sources and fonts—but possibly a confusing feeling as to what all this is referring to. No hierarchy whatsoever in the topic treated? What is underneath those slightly acid, joyful and poetic digital collages? What is the message?!

The title of this particular output, *Tendre Brute*, highlights this duality and how something is perceived, of old and new, original and copy, and between the two artists, pairing up for a collaboration to produce something for you to wear. The product? Something old, something new, something borrowed, smells like glue? The risk intact in any such collaboration, trusting in a process with another, is valuable and rare. LinkedIn, or some other platform, also told me that 'Collaboration is the driving force behind breakthroughs and high performance.' I believe collaborations in the art world truly can be a space of experimentation, but also for artists to be more personal than what they can be in their own practice. It might be easier to go out on a limb if you have company to push you over the edge.

Montessori on Speed is a perfect summary for the energy and mischief this project sets out to achieve. The radical pedagogy of Montessori, centering hands on learning and mixed age classrooms, point to the sharing between the two artists, and Speed is of course the pace at which the world is turning, spinning faster and faster, heating us up and leading to us all going up in flames. Or it could be drugs. You will find nods to these exciting ways of thinking in the new limited release by Montessori on Speed. And I hope you will find the excuse to collaborate and create with a stranger. Pick your speed.

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