

## THERE, THERE Kate Sutton on Protocinema's "A Few In Many Places"



Young bike riders carry Michelle Lopez's 2020 *Keep Their Heads Ringin'* sound installation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, August 29, 2020.

### COINED BY THE ENVIRONMENTALIST

David Foreman in 1990, rewilding describes a preservation strategy that allows ecosystems to strike a new equilibrium after long periods of abuse and reckless overextraction. While certainly contentious in conservation circles, the promise of a clean slate at a moment when all other options seem exhausted has gained traction in the popular imagination (just think of how many "nature is healing" memes have floated around in the past year and a half). In their essay "Cur(at)ing for a Broken World: The Case for Collective Rewilding," the curatorial group Collective Rewilding (Sara Garzón, Ameli M. Klein, and Sabina Oroschi) turns to the conservationist term for its "implication that humans have a responsibility to other human or non-human species to restore self-regulating and self-sustaining ecological communities." It proposes a radical reorganization of the art world, one that prioritizes accountability over innovation. Its projects range from Adrian Balseca's *PLANTASIA OIL Co., 2021*, which converted oil-industry waste into a thriving indoor garden, to a guidebook to the artist studios of Venice, offered as a homegrown alternative to the big-budget exhibitions shipped in with every Biennale.

"A Few in Many Places" was rooted in the social networks Protocinema forged along the way. Spirito had originally contemplated a summit to convene colleagues and collaborators, but that plan was made untenable by the Covid outbreak. As the pandemic progressed, Spirito was forced to reckon with a question: How do we act together, alone? Her answer embodied many of the tenets espoused by Collective Rewilding. "A Few in Many Places" operated as a deconstructed exhibition, staged wherever the artists happened to be geographically, with nothing shipped or flown in, using as sustainable a model (and materials) as possible. For the inaugural 2020 edition, Abbas Akhavan took over the nocturnal hours of a storefront art space in Montreal, Burak Delier settled into a bakery in Istanbul, and Özgür Top invaded a bar in the Kreuzberg neighborhood of Berlin. In the port of Beirut, Stéphanie Saadé riddled a metal warehouse door with bullet holes (the work was later obliterated in last year's blast), while Michelle Lopez designed a sound piece audible in public areas where one would hear the Liberty Bell if it tolled.