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Reena Spaulings, *Life at Sea*, 20.03.2020 – 25.04.2020

The high-viz yellow image of two peasant girls is based on a Camille Pissarro painting we used to visit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The anarchist-Impressionist made many paintings and drawings of laborers shown in moments of rest, napping, spacing out, gossiping and just being there in bucolic landscapes. Awkward croppings and intimate angles make these figures of not-working workers float strangely against harsh, multicolored fields. Here, one figure sits wedged in the painting's lower left corner as the other leans on her hoe. They are seen chatting together against a tilted rectangle of cultivated land, with the horizon pushed back almost as far as it can go. The empty space between the girls – imagined now as a sort of viral gap, full of potential communication – is echoed by an extra area of blank neon yellow to their right. We named our painting *New Models* after the Berlin-based website and podcast.

“Podcast paintings” was one possible starting point for this show, although we never quite found a way to translate our thoughts about this chatty new platform to actual painting. Another impulse was to paint the entire show using only a very small quantity (500mg) of Tyrian purple, a precious pigment extracted from sea snails. The “fan” shape refers to a compositional format that trended briefly in the late nineteenth century as painters like Pissarro, Degas and Manet experimented with adapting impressionist content to this curved slice of visual space. Mallarmé meanwhile inscribed actual fans so that his poems could be activated within the intimate, fluttering, wing beat-like space-time of portable fashion accessories, which were offered as gifts to loved ones. *Fan* becomes a platform for free-floating stains of snail-purple. *Another Fan* presents printed-out fragments of the Pissarro image crudely pasted onto high-viz yellow.

The idea of the podcast, the shape of the fan, purple snail ink and viral contagion are the basic coordinates of *Life at Sea*, a show that was interrupted almost as soon as it began – in Berlin, in the early moments of the COVID19 outbreak. Two days into making these paintings, it was already clear that the show would not have an opening and that we probably wouldn't even have time to install it before we all disappeared into self-quarantines and “social distancing.”