

## Mélanie Matranga: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 & People (2021)

by Elle Farrell-Kingsley

“It's a bit like awkwardly watching an apartment through a secret camera — a little voyeuristic but mundane.”



French artist, Mélanie Matranga released her first institution solo show in the UK, showcased at Nottingham's Contemporary Art Gallery.

First, was a short video named *People*, a 25-minute black and white film labelled as presenting 'the gap between intimacy and feeling alone'. The concept of entering an art gallery and watching a film before seeing the exhibition is refreshing, innovative, and rarely used to display work in art galleries. However, I feel the content itself was lacking.

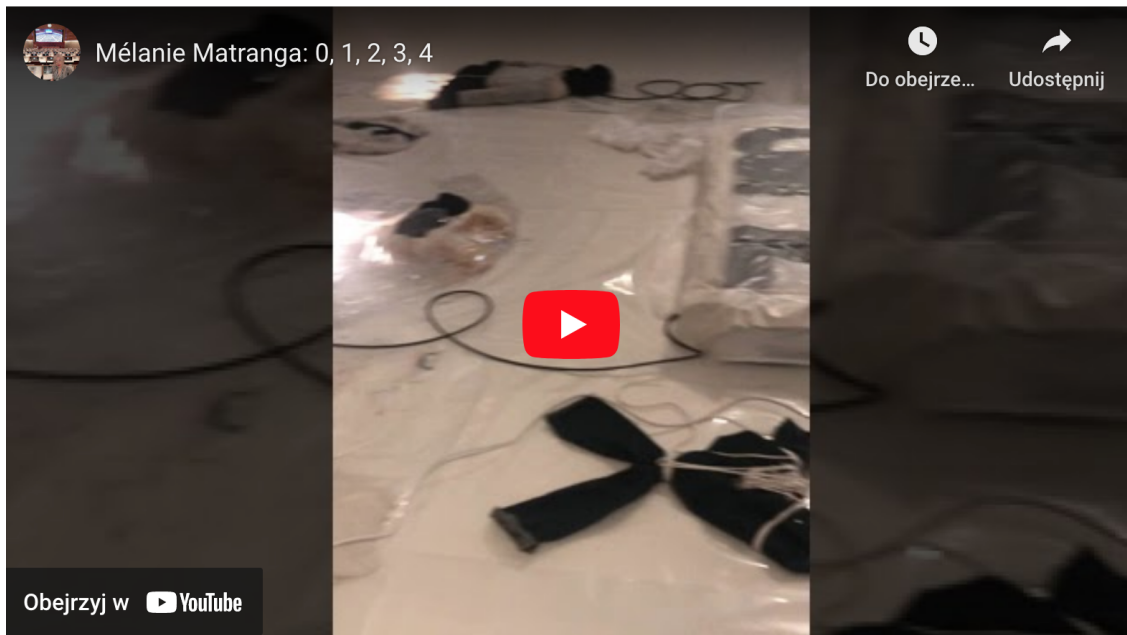
The description for the film states, 'People follows individuals from the artist's own life, playing themselves in front of the camera'. It was also all recorded in the artist's own apartment.

It's a bit like awkwardly watching an apartment through a secret camera. A little voyeuristic but highly mundane, *People* has you just watching how others interact, mostly non-verbally, with no plot or sequence of events. The low energy didn't help either. It was kind of like watching people the day after they've had too many drinks the night before, and they're hungover. The most energy seen is the lighting of a cigarette and smoking, which seems to take up 90% of the film.

I left feeling as though I was missing something, although I'm not quite sure what. There's very little speech within the film, and a lot of nudity, seemingly for the sake of nudity. It just didn't really contribute anything unless you were to say, 'well, it must be art because there's nudity'. I'm sad to say the exhibition was lost on me. Even my friend, who also studied Liberal Arts (which is always labelled as a pretentious, artsy-fartsy degree), couldn't make sense of it. But it just seems there was nothing really to make sense of.

It could almost provoke a sense of 'why have I wasted my time watching this', but the truth is, it wasn't even memorable or remarkable enough to spend that much time thinking about it afterwards.

Following the film, there's a curtain to the exhibition installation. I expected to see potential stills from the film footage or something related to the film. But instead, lay four different outfits, labelled 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, tagged with numbers that resemble crime scenes and bare mattresses — no written biography on the art, no explanation. The exhibition didn't even use the outfits from the film. Nevertheless, with the outfits laid out on cling film in an empty white room, it felt like I had entered the crime scene by TV serial killer Dexter.



Instead of art, the entire exhibition resembled one of the many sexual assault exhibitions, which have been popping up everywhere.

I certainly don't think that was the intention, but there's just no real way of knowing without any writing to inform viewers about the art.

What did the outfits mean?

What was the artist trying to say?

I have no clue.

Perhaps I'm just ignorant, but the entire exhibition was lost on me, and not in an open-to-interpretation or thought-provoking way either.