



Eduardo Navarro, *Breathing Drawing*, 2019, ink on paper, 9 x 12".  
LONDON

## Eduardo Navarro

GASWORKS

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Rasping respirations pound through the galleries that host “(breathspace),” Eduardo Navarro’s solo show here. At once oceanic and mechanical, the titular sound piece recalls both waves lapping at distant shores and the ominous pump of a ventilator. The Argentinian artist, who predominantly works in performance—his so called “treatments” have animated nonhuman entities from clouds to octopi—originally conceived of the gallery as a giant lung in which visitors could lie back and sync their breathing with that of other guests. In March, of course, Covid-19 made physical togetherness and breath itself precarious, and Navarro changed tack.

Transformed for the pandemic, this exhibition charts Navarro's experience of lockdown in eighty drawings, pinned to display boards, that were made during his period of self-isolation, and twenty others from the Before Times. Those on black paper depict sinister pastel helixes entwining with noses and lungs: grids of mesmerizing forms imbued with quantum logic. Meanwhile, the show's new centerpiece, an animated steampunk head, expands and contracts to the rhythm of the artist's own breath. This zoomorphic hand-drawn diaphragm is powered by spindly bellows that evoke the design of the early artificial respirators known as iron lungs.

While the wheezing animation is laden with Covid symbolism, rendering it grueling, an unexpected metamorphic quality simmers below the drawings, which together seem to constitute a kind of self-care (another version, perhaps, of Navarro's treatments). Amid the artist's cerebral grinding, skidding noses seem to offer lines of escape, pathways for change or adaptation—a reminder that while constraint might now suggest lockdown, obstructions can be conductive, providing surprising portholes to imaginative freedom.

— *Izabella Scott*