

# Networked Curatorial Practices\*

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*blue ocean*

An online digital art space for the  
presentation of digital-born artworks or  
online creative practices.

[www.blueocean.digital](http://www.blueocean.digital)

**“Contemporary internet art is no longer determined solely by its existence online; rather, contemporary artists are making more art about informational culture using various methods of both online and offline means, which results in a type of expanded internet art. For artworks that volley between networked data files and physical materials, the internet is not seen as the sole platform for the production of a work but instead as a crucial nexus around which to research, assemble, transmit, and present data, both online and offline.”**

**-Ceci Moss, *Expanded Internet Art*, 2019, p. 9**

*Blue Ocean* is an online digital art space intentionally created to display and allow artists to present internet art or digital-born, online creative practices. While it officially began in 2022, it was conceptualised in 2020. *Blue Ocean* has hosted one exhibition to date, *9 Colours*, with the intention to continue hosting group and solo reflections that exist solely online. *Blue Ocean* aims to create an online space where artists can experiment and create artworks or creative practice for the online medium and, in so doing, address contemporary issues around the internet and digital culture, from the context of the Global South/ Majority World, and with artists who are engaging with these issues. *Blue Ocean's* curatorial direction will be dependent on the artist network established during previous exhibitions on *Blue Ocean*, and will invite an artist or curator to propose the next exhibition.

The *Blue Ocean* platform displays both artworks and exhibitions, and any corresponding discourse. This was a crucial requirement of the platform – that is, to be able to present and showcase a creative practice and to have alongside its corresponding discourse. The primary intention of this is to enable a direct relationship between the creative practice of, and discourse on, internet or digital-born online art to develop more seamlessly.

*Blue Ocean* is not a replication of a traditional art gallery online. It is a unique space, which offers artists and creatives an opportunity to present their digital, online-based creative practice within its native space – the online medium; a website. The internet, and the web as a creative space, offers a unique way of connecting and hyperlinking diverse content and creating a network of thoughts and interactions. *Blue Ocean* leverages these intrinsic qualities.

The creation of *Blue Ocean* as an online space happened at the same time as the three iterations of the first exhibition, *9 Colours*. *9 Colours* is a group exhibition that has had three different iterations, with the final iteration presented on the *Blue Ocean* website, which was developed in collaboration with Brooklyn J. Pakathi. Throughout the development phase, a user-centred design (UCD) process was followed, with an information architecture and wireframes to support the organisation of information and structure the content, while ‘future proofing’ it for other exhibitions – considering the different types of exhibitions or creative outputs that the space could potentially host.

To view *Blue Ocean*, visit the [website](#).

# blue ocean

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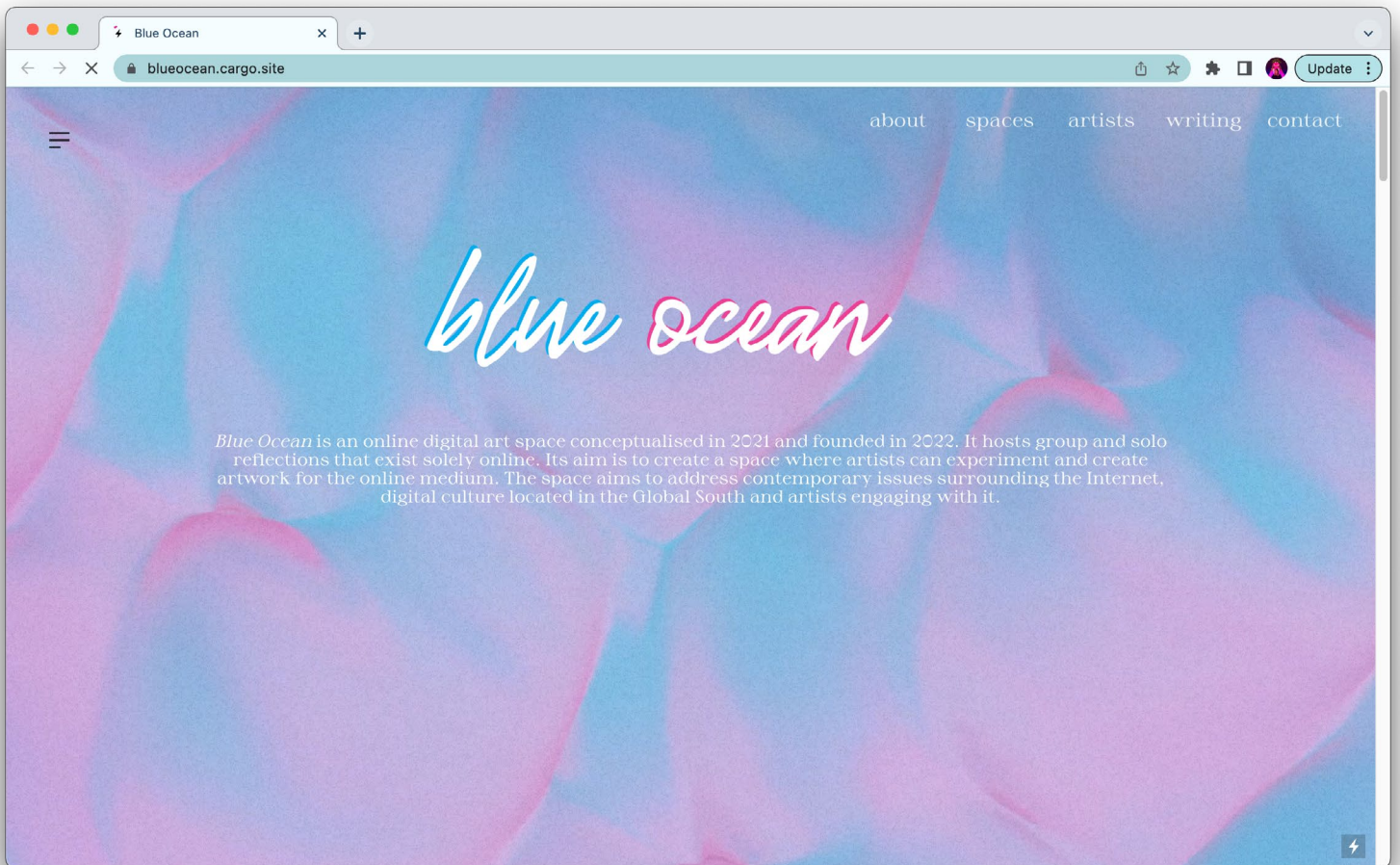
**EXHIBITION NAME**  
artists view journal

**9 colours**  
artists view journal

**EXHIBITION N.**  
artists view journal



Wireframe for Blue Ocean website (2022)



Screenshot of *Blue Ocean* website (2023)

# 9 Colours (2021)

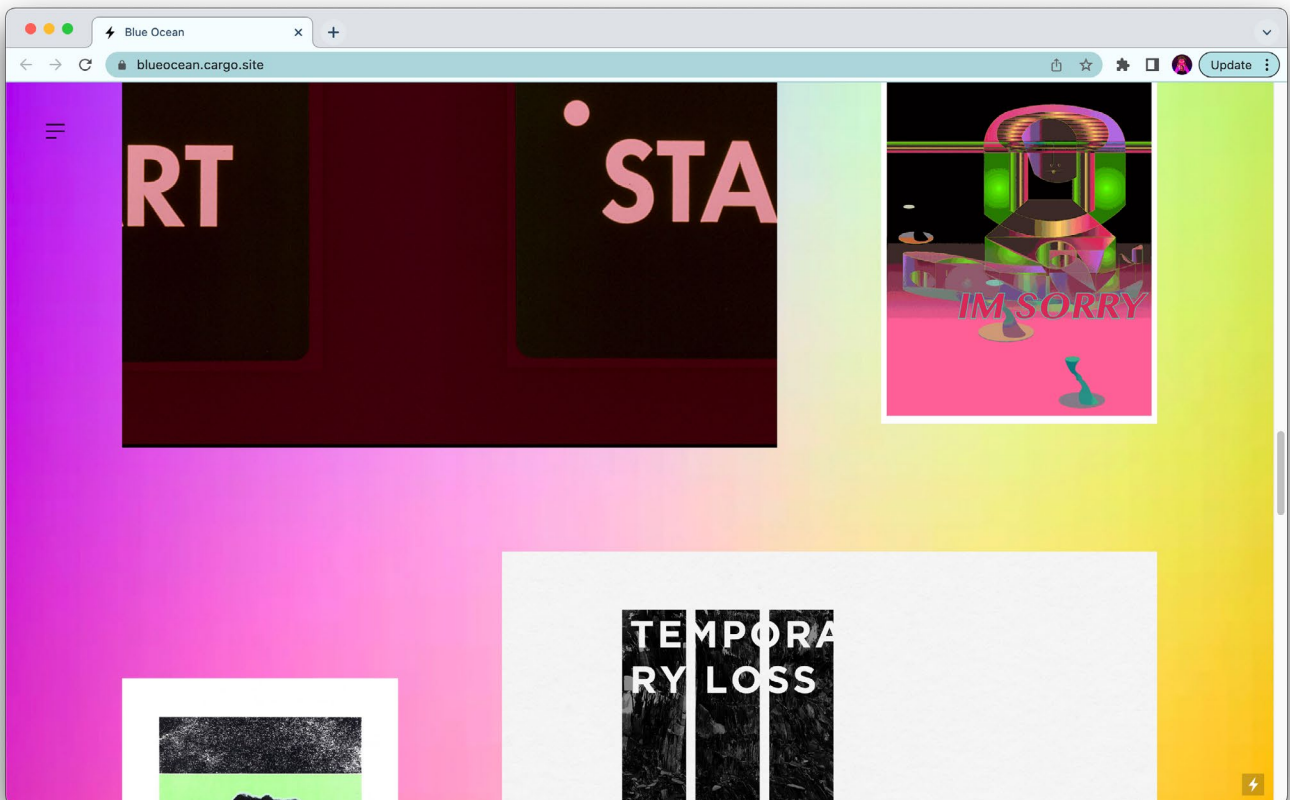
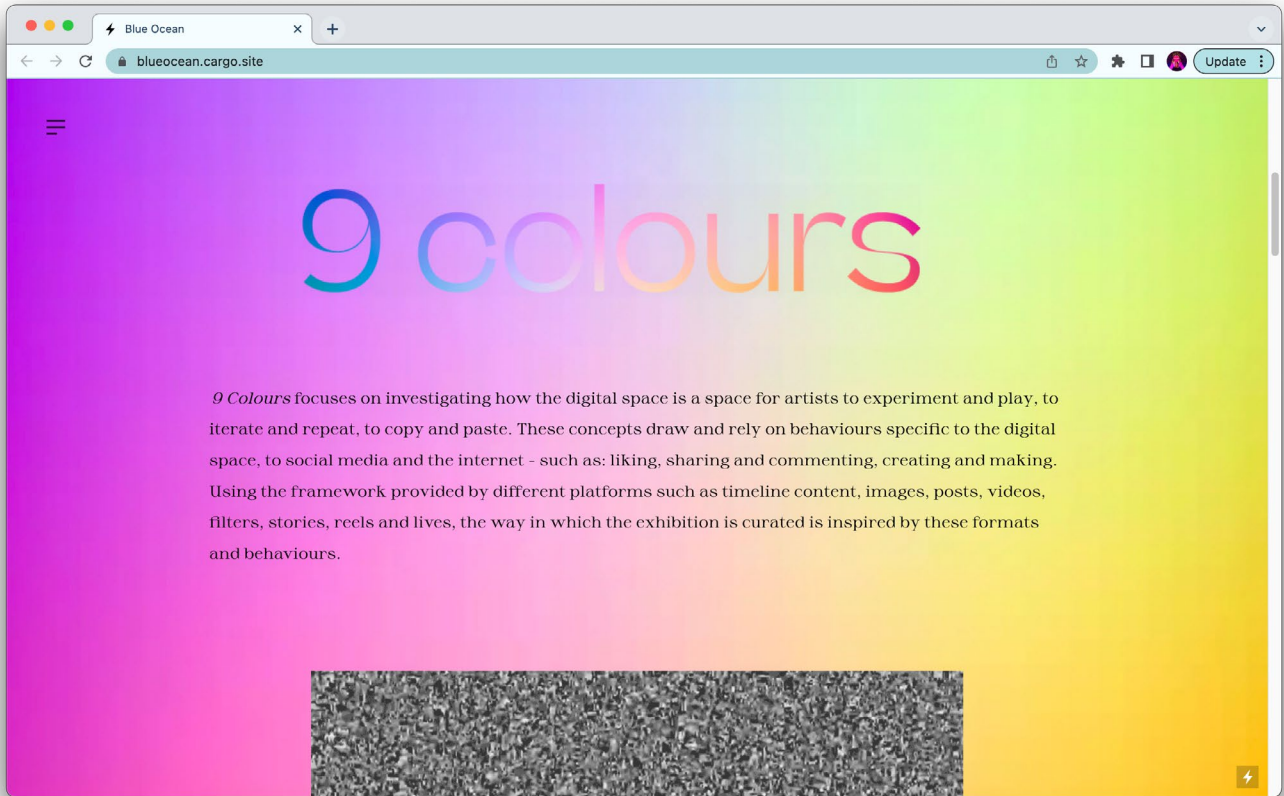


The exhibition *9 Colours* features contemporary artists from South Africa, and is the first hosted and exhibited online exhibition by *Blue Ocean*. *9 Colours* investigates how the digital space allows artists to experiment and play, to iterate and repeat, to copy and paste. These concepts draw and rely heavily on behaviours and aesthetics specific to the digital space, to social media, and to the internet – behaviours such as: liking, sharing and commenting, creating and making – while using the framework provided by different platforms, such as timeline content, images, posts, videos, filters, stories, reels and lives.

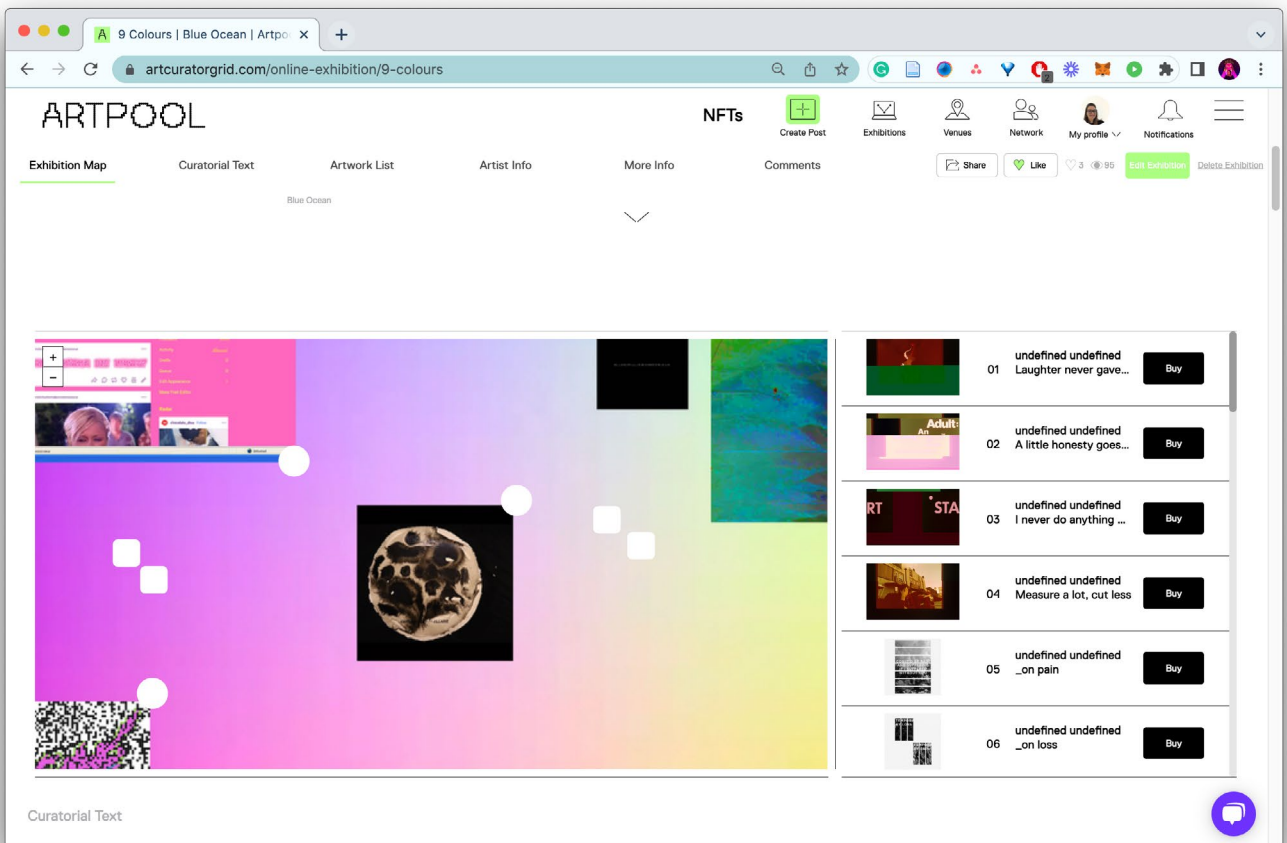
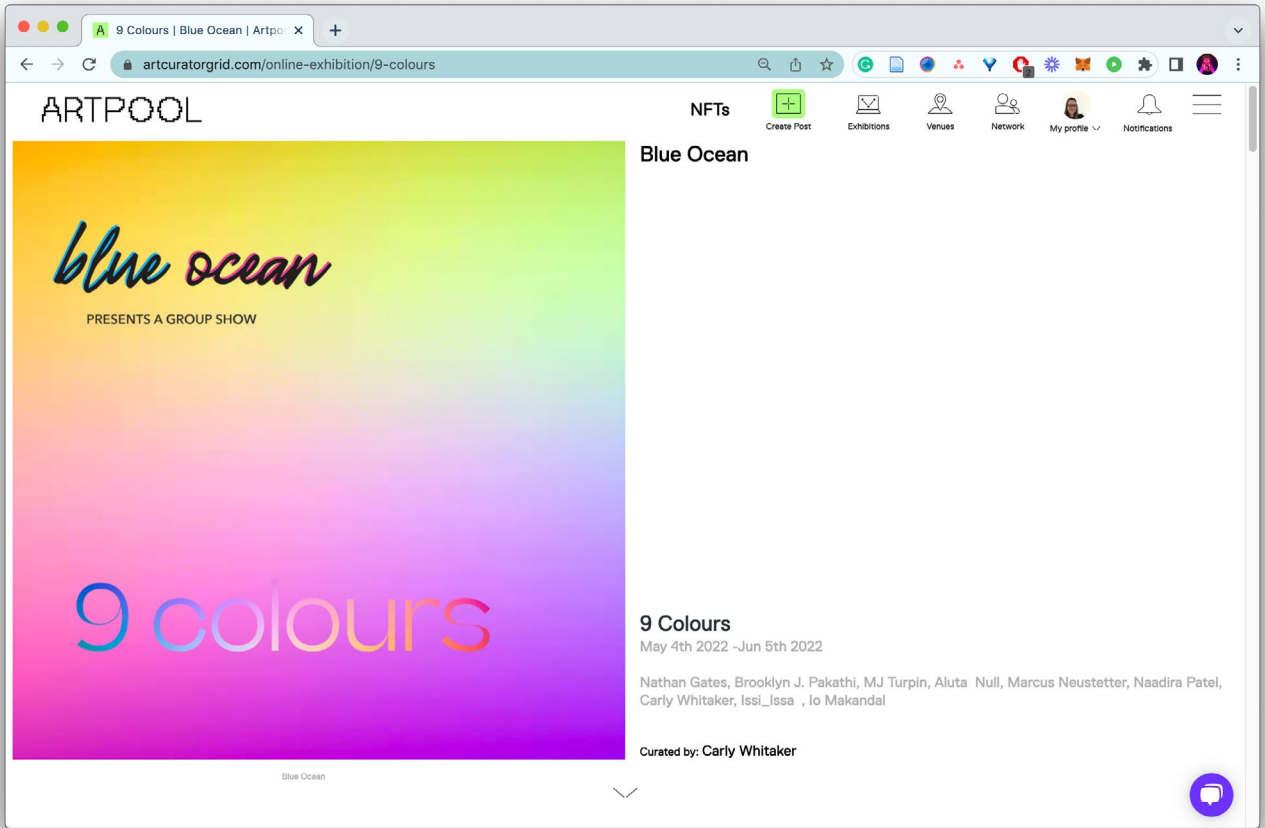
**“By embracing spread, circulation, and expansion artists are cleverly and self-consciously taking advantage of the means and conditions of digital communication. Expanded internet art is but one demonstration of the art of an informational milieu. As realities, experiences, and stories are increasingly structured by informational dynamics at greater speeds, art, like life, will morph and mutate accordingly.”**

**–Ceci Moss, *Expanded Internet Art*, 2019, p. 24**

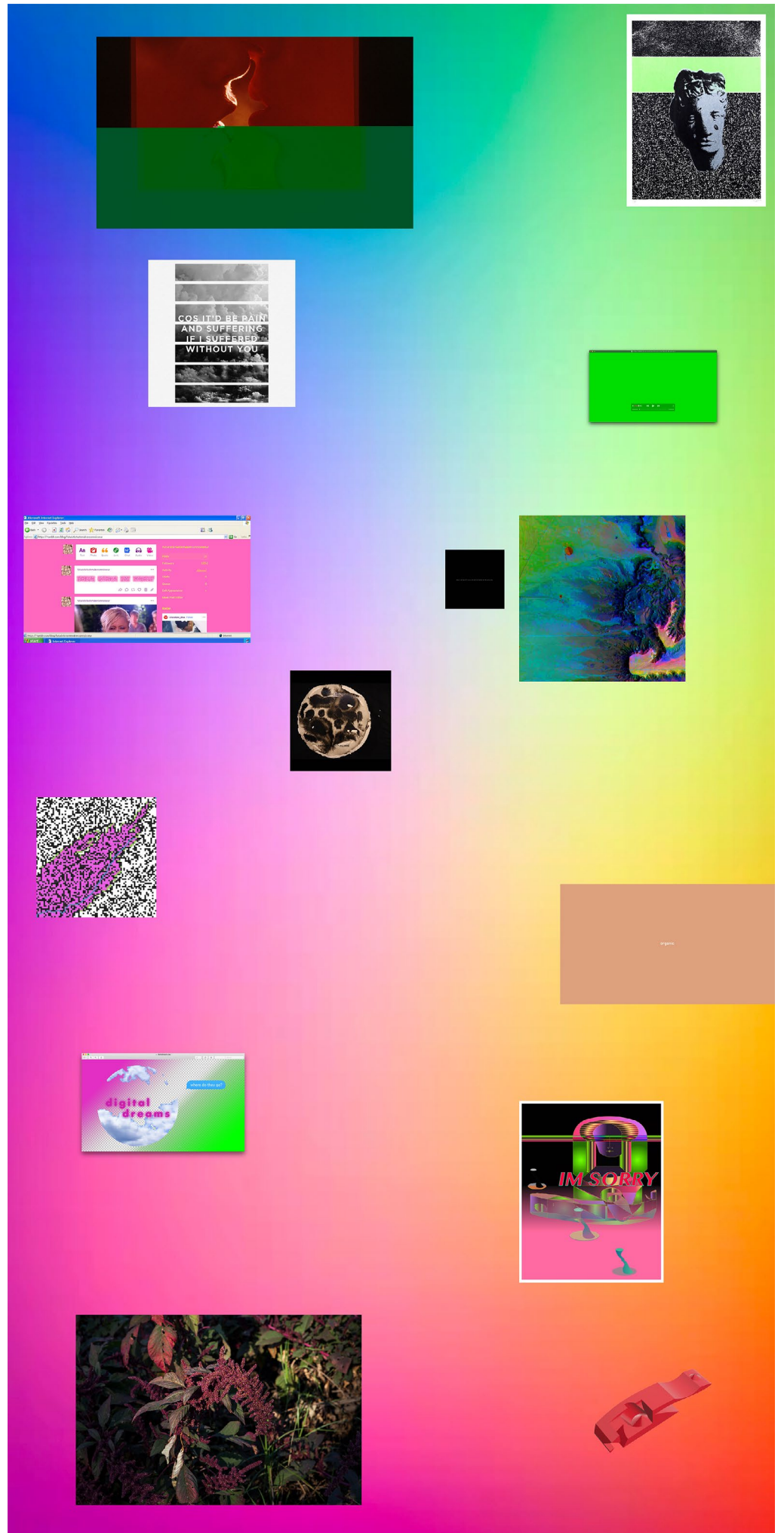
Social media poster for  
*9 Colours* exhibition,  
(2022)



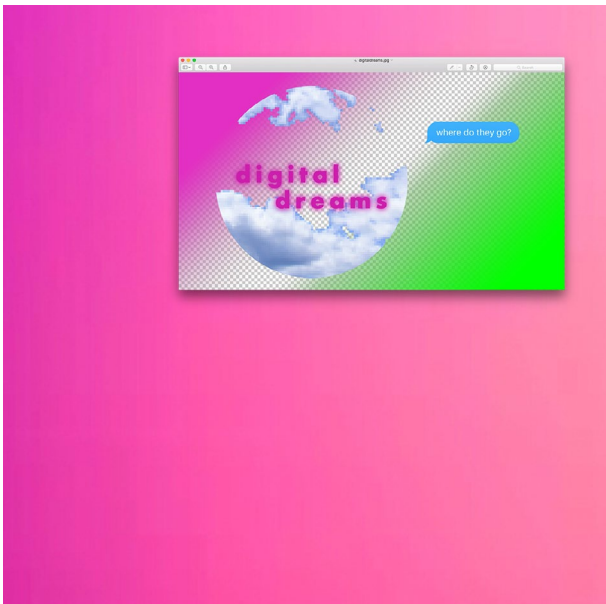
Screenshots of *9 Colours*  
on *Blue Ocean* website,  
(2022)







The design of the layout of 9 Colours (2022)



Screenshots of different components of 9 Colours on Instagram (2022)

Our presence online is heavily associated with these behaviours, which have become habitual, repetitive, contextual and performative for people using these platforms. In a curatorial context, these behaviours become part of a way of engaging with the artworks for both artists and viewers of the digital exhibition, as the works are revealed progressively. These behaviours also allow digital artworks to be simultaneously visible, accessible and distributable, while mechanisms such as NFTs (non-fungible tokens) facilitate their acquisition. *9 Colours* encouraged artists to respond critically to these behaviours and mechanisms as a system, to their processes and procedures. Artists were invited to select one colour and submit work in response to these ideas. For the first iteration, the artworks were presented and could be acquired as NFTs.

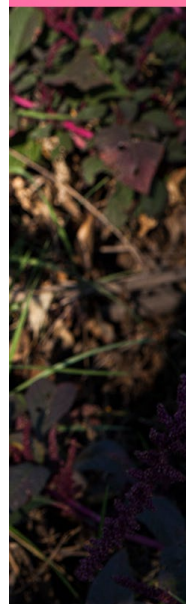
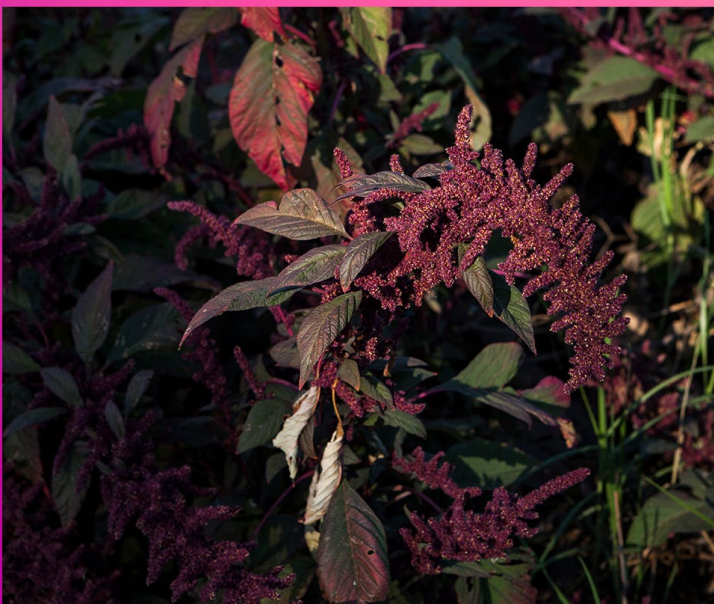


Screenshots of different components of *9 Colours* on Instagram (2022)

The *9 Colours* exhibition existed in three different iterations:

- The first iteration was on Artpool – an online platform for curators and artists selling and curating an NFT exhibition. The artworks themselves were available as NFTs. For many artists, this was the first time they had worked with NFTs or blockchain technology and, as a result, support from both the curator and Artpool was required.
- The second iteration was on Instagram, where the exhibition was tailored to the platform. Instagram was an inspiration for the design and aesthetic of the exhibition.
- The third iteration is on the *Blue Ocean* website.

These three different iterations were closely linked, with each iteration acting as another component of this iterative and networked exhibition. The same artworks were presented on each format, just in different instances, depending on the platform. In each instance, it was necessary to relay and communicate the artists' voices, and their own understanding of the artworks. With the support of Artpool (the first iteration), three online talks were hosted, involving discussions with the exhibition artists, and their artworks and NFTs. It was an opportunity to outline the artists' intentions and, as the curator, to speak about the exhibition, the different challenges faced for an online curating context, the complexity of NFTs, and the politics around artists working with NFTs in the Global South/Majority World.



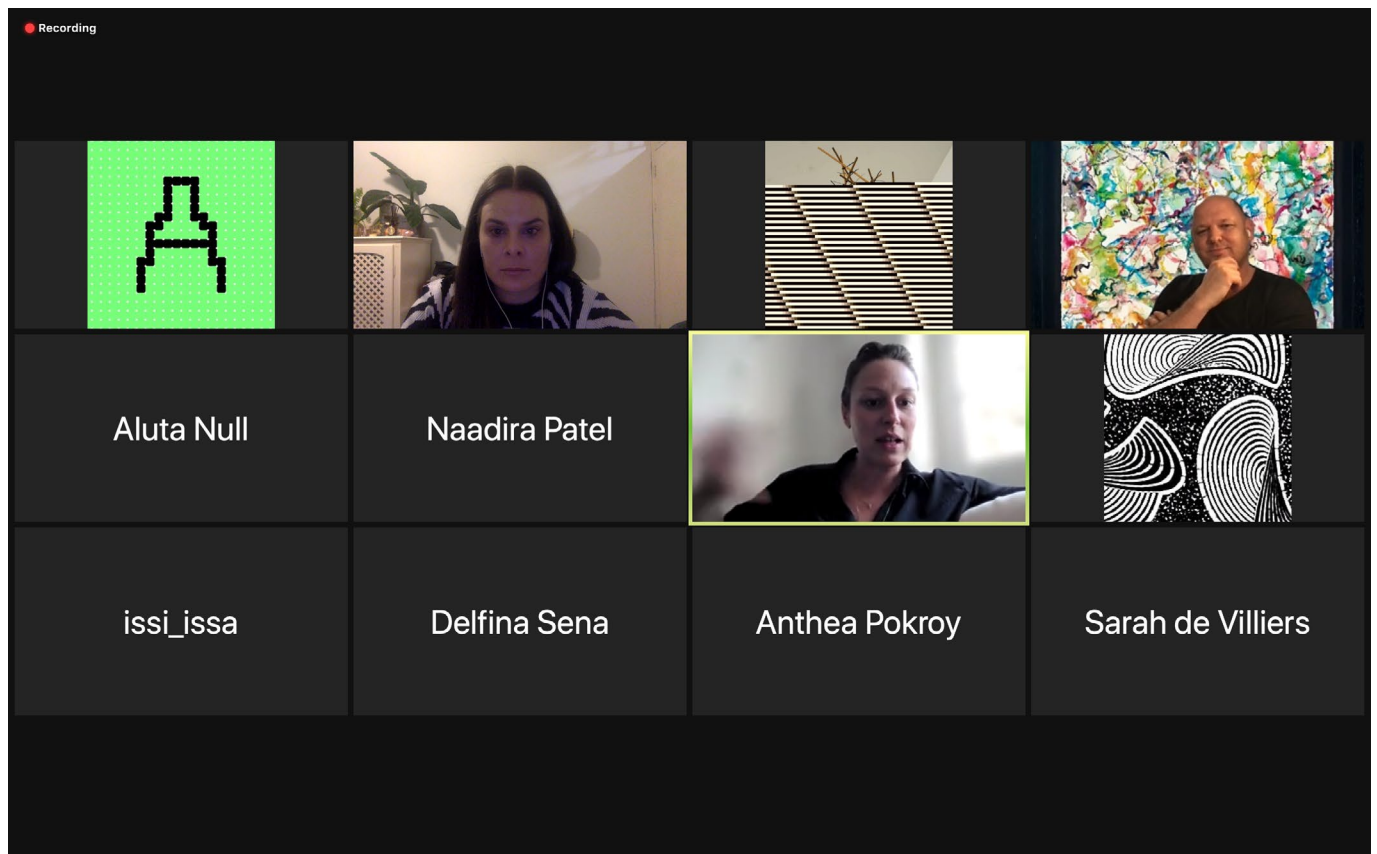
ARTPOOL  
'9 COLOURS'

# BEYOND THE DIGITAL EXHIBITION

MEET CURATOR CARLY WHITAKER & ARTISTS FROM '9 COLOURS' DIGITAL EXHIBITION!

ZOOM  
7TH JUNE  
7PM CET

Naadira Patel  
Nathan Gates  
Io Makandal  
Aluta Null  
Issa\_Issa  
Marcus Neustetter  
Brooklyn J.Pakathi  
MJ Turpin  
Carly Whitaker



Screenshot of talk and participants hosted by Artpool on Zoom.

To watch the talk and discussion on 9 Colours click [here](#).

**“The personal computer (a meta medium), and the internet (aka network of the networks), are mistakenly regarded as mere extensions of pre-computer culture. Net-, web-, media-, computer-, and digital-, are the miserable and inadequate prefixes still used to indicate that something was produced with a computer and was maybe digitized or accessible through a computer interface.”**

**–Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied, ‘Do you Believe in Users?/Turning Complete User’, *Mass Effect*, 2015, p. 1**

Artists participating in  
*9 Colours* were:

Aluta Null (Kamo)  
Brooklyn J Pakathi  
Carly Whitaker  
Io Makandal  
issi\_issa  
Marcus Neustetter  
MJ Turpin  
Naadira Patel  
Nathan Gates

**“The internet persists offline as a mode of life, surveillance, production, and organization — a form of intense voyeurism coupled with maximum nontransparency ... The all-out internet condition is not an interface but an environment ... Computation and connectivity permeate matter and render it as raw material for algorithmic prediction, or potentially also as building blocks for alternate networks.”**

*-Hito Steyerl, Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead, 2013*

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