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Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 7 pm

5455, de Gaspé avenue, suite 109



Courting
Otherness: Prop
Performance
and Camp in
Contemporary
Canadian Video
Art

© Bridget Moser, My Crops Are Dying But My Body Persists (2020)

Vidéographe and Dazibao are proud to welcome the talented duo Chloë Lum and Yannick Desranleau to present an exclusive program as part of our *dv_vd* series.

program

Bridget Moser *My Crops Are Dying But My Body Persists (2020)* 21 min. 57 sec.

Erica Eyres *Clay Head (2015)* 7 min. 7 sec.

Life of a Craphead *Life of Life of a Craphead (2020)* 14 min. 15 sec.

Marissa Sean Cruz, *BILLED-A-BEAR ʘ•x•`? (2021)* 6 min. 29 sec.

Maya Ben David *Ferris Wheel Pregnancy (2023)* 1 min. 54 sec.

Mike Bourschied *The wellbeing of things: A 5km race (2017)* 9 min. 30 sec.

Sin Wai Kin *Tell me everything you saw, and what you think it means, from A View from Elsewhere (2018)* 5 min. 38 sec.

We've assembled this program because we feel the intersection of prop performance and camp has been overlooked in the Canadian art context. What we are presenting tonight is a small sample of a longer list that could go well beyond the video medium; indeed, most of the artists shown in this program also work in sculpture, installation, and performance. What unites them is the important place that objects take in the staging of their video works, and a performance style that, through slapstick, deadpan interpretation, humor, or irony, manages to elaborate a critique of the world we live in, while captivating us via weirdness or absurdity. These objects will be either wearable artworks made in the studio, bricolaged appendages, lavish costumes, unaltered items ordered from Wish.com and Amazon, or more subtly, the evocation of these objects and how they impact the organization of the lives of the artists. In most cases, the subject of the work is directly about the relationship between the performer and these objects; props that serve as a catalyst for the performer to enter a transformation—a pirate on shore leave arriving home wearing a completely different costume of an equally iconic male archetype: the cowboy. His suit, however, shows irregular details: unexpected ropes and extensions are present, facilitating interactions with his bird companion (Bourschied).

Props also act as a tool to affirm and reinforce identity, by defying the viewer's gaze, such as wearing highly exaggerated makeup, prostheses, and clothing to create a drag persona critiquing one's own experience in drag circuits as a non-binary person (Sin). Or in a more ironic manner, poking at cosplay and gamer subcultures via absurd, often anthropomorphic costuming to critique the widespread misogyny in these spaces (Ben David). Props can also support a personal narrative by proxy, like serving as material and metaphorical commentary of a bittersweet auto-fiction of youth fame (Eyres). The props may be absent from the screen, mentioned only to support the context that the protagonists' art-world day jobs prevent them from spending time on their art practice (Life of a

Craphead).

Props can take the front stage, while keeping a tenuous relation with the narrative, making us wonder if the slapstick performance is meant to punctuate the series or one-liners on over-consumeristic anxiety, or vice-versa (Moser). Furthering this disjointed approach to collage into a scathing critique of the art world's passing interest in digital market-oriented fads, where props become the object of said critique, through a dizzying series of hard cuts. Amongst these clips, the protagonist is seen in snippets, dressed as a Phantom of the Opera-esque cosplay bear, who looms over as a sort of reaper of grifter fads (Cruz). Props, through theatricality, thus aid in the telling of a wide array of stories. Via this intersection of props and camp, the props used by this group of artists function to underline humour, absurdity, the uncanny, and artifice, creating artwork that can destabilize and entertain while being steadfast in its criticality.

– Chloë Lum and Yannick Desranleau

Chloë Lum and Yannick Desranleau are installation artists who work across video, performance, sculpture, sound, text, and photography. Their collaborative practice is rooted in the theatrical and the choreographic and examines the slippery and complex relationships between bodies and inanimate objects. These subjects are examined through the lens of chronic illness. They are based in Tiohtiá:ke (Montréal) and have worked collaboratively since 2000.

Bridget Moser

Alongside a collection of coded consumer objects and beige foods that stand in for other images, ideas, and bodies, the persona that inhabits *My Crops Are Dying But My Body Persists* attempts to make sense of herself and the world that surrounds her in often misguided but occasionally self-reflexive ways. Through a suite of absurdist visual montages and monologues with this cast of props, she considers the existential anxiety that accompanies overconsumption under capitalism, environmental degradation, social isolation, and the effects of white supremacy, while simultaneously attempting to evade it. Ultimately, delusional misconception and apprehensive insight give way to collapse and disintegration.

Bridget Moser is a performance and video artist whose work combines strategies associated with prop comedy, experimental theater, performance art, absurd literature, existential anxiety, the internet, and intuitive dance. She has presented work at venues including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Remai Modern, le Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Vancouver Art Gallery, Western Front, Esker Foundation, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, and SPACES Cleveland. Her work has been reviewed and featured in *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, *Art in America*, and *Artribune Italy*. She has been shortlisted for the Sobey Art Award and is the 2023 recipient of the Hnatyshyn Foundation Mid-Career Visual Arts Award.

Erica Eyres

Clay Head centers around a story based on Eyres' own family or people she has known and is being retold by exploiting elements of storytelling to create a work of fiction that alludes to the personal. The story's biographical fallacy is furthered by the use of a stand-in narrator, whose presence contributes to a mechanism that she refers to as "the estranged voice." This distancing effect, coupled with the apparent detachment of the footage from the story being told (a caricatural human head being sculpted out of foam and clay paired with the story of a failed child acting career) and the infusion of dark humor, complicates any reading of this video work as autobiographical.

Erica Eyres lives and works in Glasgow, UK. Through videos, drawings, paintings, and sculptures, Eyres' work uses found images and objects to explore the unreliability of autobiography and the artist's subjective truth. Solo shows include *Do I Have to Love You?* at OTP Copenhagen (2023); *Family Meal* at Norberg Hall, Calgary (2022); *Another Dirty Room* at Celine Gallery, Glasgow (2022); and *Too Shy to Party* at Plaza Plaza, London (2020). Group shows include *Secret Signals* with Keith Boadwee at OTP Copenhagen (2021); *Lunch*, curated by Panel, Glasgow, for London's Kitchen (2021); and *Private Behaviour* at White Columns, New York (2021).

Life of a Craphead

Life of Life of a Craphead is made up entirely of re-enactments of true events from Amy Lam and Jon McCurley's lives as artists and collaborators. This episode follows Jon attempting to borrow gear from one DIY space to lend to another, and Amy frustrated by her job in a large art museum. All of the dialogue is based on real conversations that Jon and Amy had in those situations. *Life of Life of a Craphead* was originally conceived of as a TV series, but *Life of a Craphead* dissolved in 2020, and so this first episode is the only episode.

Life of a Craphead was the collaboration of Jon McCurley and Amy Lam, from 2006 to 2020. The name *Life of a Craphead* came from the opening joke of the first live comedy routine they performed together in 2006. Projects included the performance *King Edward VII Equestrian Statue Floating Down the Don* (2017) in the Don River, the exhibition *The Life of a Craphead Fifty-Year Retrospective* (2013) at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and *Entertaining Every Second* (2018-19), an exhibition that traveled across Canada. *Life of a Craphead* also made a feature-length film *Bugs* (2016), and organized and hosted the performance art show *Doored* from 2012 to 2017.

Marissa Sean Cruz

Marissa Sean Cruz's video, *BILLED-A-BEAR* (2020), considers the implications of networked life and value. Comparing crypto assets to a once white-hot Beanie Babies market, Cruz builds an allegory to make sense of interconnected systems embedded in the art-industrial complex. The video satirizes the ever-widening popularity of non-fungible tokens (known as NFTs) and their value in the art market by remixing capitalist jargon, authentication practices and digital branding to consider how conversations about digital art have changed since the most recent NFT boom.

Marissa Sean Cruz is a digital multimedia and video performance artist from Kijikuktuk (so-called Halifax). Cruz's topics of interest are related to labor, power, and surveillance as seen through digital platforms and pop culture. Their experimental videos comprise found footage, 3D modeling, sound design, and costumed performances to look at value systems with critical sensibility. These satirical works aim to capture a fast-paced contemporary present and envision possible, liberatory futures.

Maya Ben David

In the animal kingdom pregnancy takes on many different forms. It is a beautiful and God-inspired miracle, but what about machines? How does birthing and child-rearing change when it takes an entire engineering team to create a new life? The iconic rotating spokes on a Ferris wheel is a labor of many hands. Architecture is very important to me and that's why I'm so concerned with pregnancy and breeding. Immortality can only be reached by the production of Ferris wheels in every major city.

Maya Ben David (MBD) is a Toronto-based Jewish-Iranian Anthropomorphic Airplane. Working in video, installation, and performance, she creates worlds and characters that aid her ongoing exploration of anthropomorphism, cosplay and performative personas. Ben David presents the origin stories of her characters in the form of video and performance and expands on them via her online presence. They often inhabit alternate universes accompanied by nostalgia, such as the worlds of Pokémon and Spiderman. In addition, Ben David also plays a character called MBD who is known for having multiple feuds with her many alter egos as well as the art world.

Mike Bourschied

In *The wellbeing of things: A 5km race*, an enigmatic narrative unfolds in a modest motel room, where the camera is trained on a treadmill. Bourscheid appears as a disconsolate pirate-turned-cowboy plodding upon the treadmill where he converses telepathically with his parrot about his anxieties. Little is resolved through the conversation. Bourscheid's "costume-object" becomes an actor in their own right, functioning simultaneously as "ritualistic semaphores and as theatrical props." The artist's pirate/cowboy is in many ways ridiculous and incongruous with the world around him; he fails to uphold the highly gendered roles either of his characters conventionally carry and, walking in place in a stereotypically threadbare hotel, his identity and life-role appears unclear, if not pointless.

Mike Bourscheid sculpture-and performance-based practice involves his fabrication of ungainly or ridiculous appendages and prosthetics, in order to channel alternate personae as a device for addressing aspects of masculinity, European pomposity, and patriarchal power. Bourscheid represented Luxembourg at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017, and his recent exhibitions include Richmond Art Gallery (Canada), Centre National de l'Audiovisuel (Luxembourg) and Heidelberger Kunstverein (Germany). Mike Bourscheid has a current solo exhibition at 1646 (The Hague, Netherlands) as well as upcoming exhibitions at Gr_nd (Berlin, Germany) and Galerie Hyperbien (Paris, France). Mike Bourscheid is based in Luxembourg and Vancouver.

Sin Wai Kin

In *Tell me everything you saw, and what you think it means from a View from Elsewhere*, we see the artist dressed as one of their earlier alter-ego's Victoria Sin, lounging in a luxuriously furnished room of satins and furs. In her clothing and prosthetics, she assumes a pose that is alluring and seductive while simultaneously intimidating and confrontational. The body's movements are barely perceptible and the almost still image references the opulence of European brothels of the 19th Century, burlesque, and Beaux Arts era reclining nudes. The drag appears as theatrical as the stillness and visible prosthetics emphasize the body's presence and its complex representation of femininity. The voice-over describes the image in forensic detail, guiding your eyes across her surface, imploring you to really 'look at her'. With the camera and the artist both

perfectly still, it is you, the viewer, that surveys the subject under such guidance.

Sin Wai Kin brings fantasy to life through storytelling in performance, moving image, writing, and print. Drawing on experiences of existing between binary categories, their work realizes alternate worlds to describe lived experiences of desire, identification and consciousness. The artist's recent film, *A Dream of Wholeness in Parts* (2021) was nominated for the 2022 Turner Prize, and included in the touring exhibition *British Art Show 9*, as well as being screened at the British Film Institute's 65th London Film Festival. Upcoming solo exhibitions include Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive (2023); *Soft Opening*, London (2023); MUDAM, Luxembourg (2024); *Accelerator*, Stockholm (2024). Recent solo exhibitions include *Dreaming the End* at Fondazione Memmo, Rome (2023); *A Dream of Wholeness in Parts* at *Soft Opening*, London (2022) and *It's Always You* at Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong (2021).

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