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proximity • pleasure • plasticity looking at performance

↳ Opening on **April 21** at 6 pm

↳ The gallery is open from Tuesday to Saturday from noon to 5 pm

Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, Deanna Peters/Mutable Subject, demi-mesure (Clara Cousineau + Marion Paquette), Every Ocean Hughes, Francisco González-Rosas, Freya Björg Olafson, Hannah Wilke, Ivetta Sunyoung Kang, Lisa Smolkin, Manoushka Larouche, NIC Kay and Wan Yi Leung

Everyday, within a single, simultaneous beat, we both consume and produce images, whether for the camera or not. In a culture where identity is performative and spectacle is the baseline, how we look remains critical: look, as in how one appears before others, and look as in a way to witness. The works presented in this exhibition performatively treat the surface of the body as though it were an image and the surface of the image as though it were a body. This closeness, this touch, and this mattering are thus considered through the interconnected cluster of terms including proximity, pleasure, and plasticity.

Complicating sight lines, the artists ask, “who is seeing, who is seen... how, and what else?” They deploy different proximities: peripheral, inside, distant, repeated, delegated, blurred, absent, refused. Less concerned with the gaze of the camera and its domination, the artists consider non-dualistic relationships between the body and the image. Their

performances are both a protest and a celebration of visibility.

There is a pleasure to such tension that intensifies the work’s potential to instigate ways of seeing and doing differently. This pleasure is in itself a kind of proximity, often distancing itself from the minimalist or authenticity-seeking modes of some performance art. Pleasure self-appropriates the labor of performance, renegotiating the terms of exchange in favor of new, curious definitions of ‘real’ in the midst of today’s ever-expanding, all-consuming imagescape.

Many of the works in the exhibition explore properties of the virtual self and digital image, how people mirror them, become them, and multiply them. Here, plasticity can be characterized as the changeability of the materialities by which the self takes shape, as



© Lisa Smolkin, *Life's lil Bitches* (2019)

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well as the possibility that the self is an active shape maker. It is an assertion of mass and matter, involving how we relate to, and how we position ourselves with the world around us. Considering the now omnipresent interchangeability of image and self, these works have been brought together on the premise that we are as much of images as images are of us.

A project developed by Emma-Kate Guimond, under the direction of France Choinière.

Full details on featured artists and works on our [website](#).

+ Session

On May 12, 2022 at 6 pm
Premiere on Facebook

Francisco-Fernando Granados in conversation with Margaret Dragu

+ Performances

On May 19, 2022 at 7 pm
Laurence Beaudoin Morin
+
Camille Rojas

On May 26, 2022 at 7 pm
FATHERMOTHER*
+
Betty Pomerleau

*Kezia Waters & Jordan Brown

On June 4, 2022 from noon to 5 pm
Mathieu Lacroix

EVENTS

On May 12, 2022
Premiere on Facebook at 6 pm

Session 30
Francisco-Fernando Granados in conversation with Margaret Dragu

On May 19, 2022 at 7 pm

Performances
Laurence Beaudoin Morin
+
Camille Rojas

On May 26, 2022 at 7 pm

Performances
FATHERMOTHER*
+
Betty Pomerleau
*Kezia Waters & Jordan Brown

On June 4, 2022 from noon to 5 pm*

Performance
Mathieu Lacroix

* The performance will also be live streamed on Facebook



Dazibao thanks the artists for their generous collaboration as well as its advisory programming committee for its support.

Dazibao receives financial support from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts de Montréal, the ministère de la Culture et des Communications and the Ville de Montréal.

Dazibao acknowledges that we are located on unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation and that Tiohtiá: ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations, and today, is home to a diverse population of Indigenous as well as other peoples.

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proximity · pleasure · plasticity at Dazibao, Montreal

By oualie frost

The unlit gallery space, while not scary, felt a little haunted at first. I tried to read the wall panel that gave an overview of the show, but **Manoushka Larouche** in *Détail sur le visage reconnu* was clapping furiously in my left ear, and I kept looking over my right shoulder to see if anyone was in the gallery with me. Were the footsteps I heard another viewer or one of the twelve videos playing on loops? Straightening my shoulders, I began to feel self-conscious of my phone use. Sure, I was only taking notes, but did I seem uninterested?

Just then another person walked past, spectre-like and fleeting.

Dealing with the seer and the seen, performance and spectacle, and the relation between performer and witness, *proximity · pleasure · plasticity* blurs the boundaries it questions, like the installation design caused my own nervous insecurity. Through video-based performance, a dozen artists with wonderfully varied practices and ways of relating to the exhibition's themes are shown simultaneously. Projections and screens fill all corners of Dazibao's space. The more vocal videos have their audio masked by headphones, but others play aloud and create an ambient atmosphere of their own.



Ivetta Sunyoung Kang, *Proposition 1: Hands*, 2020, video

Alleviating the venue's mild aggravation of my anxiety, **Ivetta Sunyoung Kang's** *Proposition 1: Hands* is a calming and intimate sensory experience, offering the opportunity for two people to sit down and perform hand-warming exercises based on a Korean children's game.

“Do you think my ancestors would like me?” **Lisa Smolkin** asks at one point during her video *Life's lil Bitch*. I ask myself that too. Like in a colourful DBT fever dream, Smolkin guides herself (and us) through anxieties, nervous systems, issues with late capitalism, and her feeling like an outsider despite her attempts at clear communication.



Lisa Smolkin, *Life's lil Bitch*, 2019, video

In a room mostly obscured by darkness, **Wan Yi Leung** punches a masked naked man. While I get how *Alone with the cat in the room* functions conceptually in relation to the show (power, pleasure, “shameful” desires), it isn’t my intellect that deals with how the work interrogates pleasure. Instead, my wounded, primal brain feels pleasure watching it. How many viewers also get second-hand catharsis by watching this unidentifiable man, a potential stand-in for abusive men in our lives, get his ass literally (but not viciously) beat, without having to worry that any “real” violence was actually taking place or that our enjoyment of it makes us “violent”? He did consent after all, and though the few unfortunate glimpses of his genitals proved them flaccid, the premise of the work suggests a more mutual enjoyment.

While engaging and creatively inspiring, *proximity · pleasure · plasticity* is an exhibition I would warn those with sensory issues to prepare themselves for before seeing. There were other appropriate content warnings at Dazibao’s entrance, but I don’t recall one for potentially overstimulating environments.

By the time I exited the gallery, more people had entered in groups. I wondered what experiences they would have, assuming they would be less conscious of their selves. I could imagine them partnering up to ground any anxieties with the warming hands game, but would they miss out on feeling the simultaneous dichotomy of being the watcher and the watched?

proximity · pleasure · plasticity continues until June 23.

Dazibao: <https://en.dazibao.art/>

The gallery is [accessible](#).

oualie frost is a writer and anti-artist currently based in Tiohti:áke/Mooniyang (Montréal). They write regularly for *Afros in tha City* and irregularly make art at home.

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LEDEVOIR

«proximité · plaisir · plasticité» : trois questions à Emma-Kate Guimond



Photo: Marilou Crispin Vue d'installation de l'exposition «proximité · plaisir · plasticité. Regard sur la performance» chez Dazibao

Nicolas Mavrikakis

4 juin 2022
Arts visuels

La performeuse native d'Edmonton, établie à Montréal depuis 2005, s'entretient au sujet de l'exposition «proximité · plaisir · plasticité». Regard sur la performance qu'elle présente en tant que commissaire.

L'exposition *proximité · plaisir · plasticité. Regard sur la performance* parle d'un « moi virtuel », mais paradoxalement, des œuvres montrent des individus exposant aussi leur intimité bien réelle... Comment s'articulent ces deux mondes ?

Le moi virtuel n'est pas seulement actif dans un environnement virtuel. Dans *Identity Templates for a Disordered Body* (2022), Francisco Gonzáles-Rosas incarne une sorte de syntaxe Internet par son costume et son discours. *Alone With the Cat in the Room* (2018), de Wan Yi Leung, documente un contact de corps à corps, mais l'artiste a rencontré son participant sur la plateforme SugarDaddies. C'est l'interaction de leur « profil » qui a donné lieu à l'œuvre. De nombreuses œuvres présentées abordent Internet comme un moyen de nouer des relations réelles. *Brown Shades of Black* (2021) de NIC Kay souligne comment Internet est un véritable espace qui permet le partage de pratiques de danse entre créateurs noirs.

Vous écrivez que la performance actuelle ne correspond plus aux approches auxquelles elle a été associée — minimaliste ou en quête d'authenticité. Quand et pourquoi la performance s'est-elle transformée ?

Le minimalisme en art performatif qui a surgi, entre autres avec Fluxus et Judson Dance Theatre, n'a jamais disparu et le maximalisme fait partie de l'histoire de la performance. Cependant, de nombreux artistes refusent ces esthétiques épurées, minimales. Le discours pince-sans-rire de Lisa Smolkin dans *Life's lil Bitch* (2019) est sincère et important. De nombreux artistes, dans l'urgence, ne peuvent plus se permettre cette distance que soutenait une approche minimaliste. Plusieurs sentent qu'il est temps de dire ce qu'ils ont à dire, d'entrer dans des versions audacieuses d'eux-mêmes, et cela passe souvent par l'ostentatoire. Le mot « version » est essentiel, car le moi est fluide. Idéaliser l'authenticité, de même que le naturel, peut être problématique puisqu'il n'y a pas qu'une seule bonne façon d'être. Non seulement ces idéaux oppriment la différence, mais ils limitent les possibilités. Nombre d'artistes queers, BIPOC et autochtones s'appuient sur une esthétique fantaisiste pour façonner des futurs espérés. Se projeter, s'imaginer grâce à la théâtralité : voilà leurs outils.

Peut-on associer la notion de performativité évoquée aux idées de Judith Butler sur le genre ?

La performativité est omniprésente dans la vie quotidienne ainsi qu'à travers les pratiques artistiques intégrant l'image. Le pouvoir peut être décentralisé en réorientant ou en compliquant les définitions de l'identité attendues et imposées par la société. Il va sans dire que les différentes versions du moi, la perméabilité entre le monde virtuel et la « vraie » vie sont de formidables agents de changement !