

ALL BYTE

Feminist Intersections
in Video Art

April 9- July 10, 2016

INTRODUCTION

All Byte: Feminist Intersections in Video Art is a group show that features emerging artists whose videos ask the viewer to, among other things, explore matrixes of power and to listen across difference. This original exhibition is an interdisciplinary collaboration and is co-curated by the Program Director of Sacred Heart University's Film and Television Masters school, Justin Liberman; Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Connecticut-Stamford, Ingrid Semaan; and Franklin Street Works' Creative Director, Terri C Smith.

The curators worked together to select the nine exhibiting artists in *All Byte* from an international pool of 200 artists who submitted work as part of an open call Franklin Street Works announced in February 2016. In choosing the artists for *All Byte* the curators considered how well the work reflected ideas around intersectional feminist work, the original and/or skilled use of the medium, and the ways in which their work was in discussion with almost fifty years of feminist video art. Understanding that a single video is unlikely to address gender in relationship to all of the intersectional themes of race, class, age, religion, country of origin, sexuality, and more, the curators envisioned an exhibition where the combined works speak to a wide variety of factors that operate in tandem with gender. The resulting show features works made between 2012 and 2015 by emerging artists (or collectives) Michelle Marie Charles, INVASORIX, Kegels for Hegel, Sarah Lasley, Nicole Maloof, Virginia Lee Montgomery, Sunita Prasad, Legacy Russell, and Maryam Tafakory.

The term “intersectionality” was coined by feminist legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. This analytic frame aimed to disrupt the approach of “single axis analysis,” which treated race and gender as mutually exclusive. Instead, intersectional work looks at how social factors and systems of power interlock and shape each other.

When taken as a whole, the works in *All Byte* address gender in concert with many other factors, including: exploring queerness through a transformative journey; placing the alienated female body in surreal parallel to the predominantly white, male tech industry; gender based medical practices; addressing the contradictions between the lyrics and images in hip-hop videos that often portray women as sexual props; recounting academia's gendered power structures through parody and art history; exploring inaccurate, race-based assumptions about citizenship and experience; queering of influential, usually white male, theorists through song; unearthing colonial histories, preserved in the street signs of a small American neighborhood; the sexuality-fluid social space of dance clubs; female gendered experience in an Indian context, and more. Through the intersectional feminist lens, these artists shed light on systems that reinforce dominance to the exclusion of others and create narratives of inclusion and understanding.

— Co-curator, Terri C Smith

WORKS ON VIEW



1.

Michelle Marie Charles

***Explicit and Deleted*, 2012**

Video

Running time: 00:04:13

Courtesy of the artist

New York artist Michelle Marie Charles' early videos first found audience on YouTube. Her video *Explicit and Deleted* is a spoof on hip-hop videos, representing a queering of hip-hop and satirizes the, often submissive and decorative, role of women in those videos. The satire arrives to us through various means, including asides spoken off camera, the song lyrics, and the cross-dressed characters – Charles wears a 70s influenced afro and moustache reminiscent of second wave feminist artist Adrian Piper's macho character "The Mythic Being" and the woman of desire in the video

is played by a man who ends up directly addressing the audience about how being in this video is one of the only viable jobs she can take in efforts to pay off her student loans. *Explicit and Deleted* gained critical recognition when it was part of the 2013 exhibition *Goddess Clap Back: Hip-Hop Feminism in Art*, which was curated by artist Katie Cercone for the CUE art foundation in New York City. In Jillian Steinhauer's review of that show for *Hyperallergic*, the critic writes, " Plus, the greatness of *Explicit and Deleted* ... isn't only in the video: it's in the combination of images and words. Here's the first line of the chorus: 'Girl, I love you so / for all your emotional attributes such as your titties.' Add to that the fact that nearly everyone in the video is cross-dressing; Charles's crazed face as the leading man surrounded by boobs and booties; the interjection of a 25-second incisive social commentary; and the purposefully low production values, and it all adds up to a pitch-perfect satire."



2.

INVASORIX

Macho Intellectual, 2015

Video

Running Time: 00:03:17

Courtesy of the Artists

INVASORIX is a collective based in Mexico City that employs, among other tactics, queer performance as a form of activism. With *Macho Intellectual*, the group creates a music video that outlines patriarchal structures, egotism, and narcissism in academia, mentorship and work situations. The power trips that can happen when people buy into knowledge and professional recognition as a tool to create gendered hierarchies are explored through: humorous group video portraits of INVASORIX posed as artists from historic movements (but with added components of paper moustaches and cross-dressing); a catchy tune; and savvy, biting lyrics such as, "About discipline and punishment,

he just wanted to shut me up.” Women are not excluded from INVASORIX’s critique of macho intellectualism. As feminist scholar bell hooks and other theorists have noted, women also can take on qualities and choose to benefit from patriarchal structures. Speaking to this, INVISORIX’s song includes the lyrics, “I came across a macho girl. She was a potential sister. We mistook fraternity for ambition and competition... We are sick of competition, of self sabotage, of abuses of power.” The present and the past are equally present in *Macho Intellectual* too. By juxtaposing INVASORIX’s video portraits as art historical characters with archival group photos of the actual groups of DADA, Abstract Expressionism, Bauhaus, etc., the collective drives home the ambivalence that often accompanies art historical and cultural influences on today’s artists when these histories so rarely foreground people of color, women or openly queer voices.

3.

**Kegels for Hegel with the Korean Studies Department
and kate-hers RHEE**

Bite Me (Love Song to Friedrich Nietzsche), 2013

Running Time: 00:06:37

Kegels for Hegel with Biz (fka Biz Vicious)

Kinsey Grade Killers (Love Song to Alfred Kinsey), 2016

Running time: 00:04:34



Kegels for Hegel

Take Me to Your Borderlands (Love Song to Gloria Anzaldúa), 2016

Running time: 00:00:27

Video

Courtesy of the artists

4.

Kegels for Hegel with Lauren Klotzman

Death by 1000 Fucks (Love Song to Georges Bataille), 2015

Running time: 00:03:42

Kegels for Hegel with Katie Anania and Lauren Klotzman

Obviously (Love Song to Jacques Derrida), 2015

Running time: 00:04:59

Video

Courtesy of the artists

5.

Kegels for Hegel with Christiana Laragues

I Wanna Fight you to the Death (Love Song to G.W.F. Hegel), 2013

Video

Running time: 00:02:18

Kegels for Hegel with Lauren Francescone

Thing (Love Song to Karl Marx and Friends), 2016

Video

Running time: 00:05:40

Courtesy of the artists

Kegels for Hegel is a Texas-based collaborative project where the artists make music videos that, in part, queer the work of (mostly white, straight, male) philosophers and theorists. The collaborative elaborates on their approach to making these videos, “Unlike our academic training, which consisted of specialized study over decades, Kegels for Hegel is based in the emancipatory potential of a lack of expertise. We make songs using simple computer programs, cellphone apps and loops of noise that we find or create.” This embrace of the amateur combines with a scholarly understanding of the philosophers they riff on to create videos that are comfortable with being simultaneously silly, sexual and wickedly intelligent. Through this shift in platform from classroom or lecture hall to music video, the

artists aim to take the “language of academic discourse and make it speak in the dialect of music.” Their videos in *All Byte* focus on influential Western thinkers, including: French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004); psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1938); German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831); and philosopher Karl Marx (1818 -1883).



6.

Sarah Lasley

***Edyn in Exile*, 2015**

HD Video

Running Time: 00:11:00

Courtesy of the artist

With *Edyn in Exile*, Sarah Lasley explores ideas of transformation and alienation through improvisational performance, stark landscape and a queering of cinema.

The artist's process often involves close collaboration with each film's subject. *Edyn in Exile* was not different, with the artist traveling in a station wagon to the Bonneville Salt Flats in the Utah desert with one of her students whose cross-dressing identity is Edyn Panache. For the filming, Lasley had one image in mind – the scene near the end where Edyn expels red liquid, resembling blood from her groin onto the white sand. Through improvisation, exercises to connect Edyn with her body (such as hip rolls), and collaborative conversations, the minimalist, yet moving, actions leading up to and following that moment unfolded as the two worked over a several day period. *Edyn in Exile* reflects Lasley's larger practice where, according to the artist, she explores, "the synthetic nature of gender and how we control and are controlled by our own images," adding, "The language of narrative cinema provides a framework within which my characters can riff and play. I'm in search of a female film form: one that values a non-linear, sensorial experience over analytic, dialogue-based storytelling." (For more on Sarah Lasley and *Edyn in Exile*, see panel transcription).

7.

Nicole Maloof

***Funny Street Names*, 2015**

Video

Running time: 00:11:54



Funny Street Names presents a fragmented recollection of the artist's childhood, using the Internet to move across time and between the U.S. and Korea. Nicole Maloof, elaborates on how the media of Internet and video propel the video's storyline, "Using a personal story of transnational adoption, the narratives jump back and forth between Korea and the U.S., with connections ranging from the absurd to the historical, in ways that are often overlooked by American history books. Google maps, Wikipedia, YouTube, Gmail, and illegal video streaming sites aid with the storytelling, offering the audience a view into the past, while also incorporating cartography, commercialism, and nostalgic media that mark the narrator's childhood." With *Funny Street Names* Maloof unpacks the history of her childhood neighborhood by telling stories about the early American (Native American and European) people whose names are on the street signs. Using common digital tools like her phone, ipad and computer along with research and memory recall, she creates a textured narrative that explores

assumptions and prejudices surrounding race via images from the public sphere (street signs, commercials, cartoons, etc.) and personal memories of childhood. (For more on Nicole Maloof and *Funny Street Names*, see panel transcription).



8.

Virginia Lee Montgomery

***The Alien Has to Learn*, 2015**

Digital Video

Running time: 00:09:00

Courtesy of the artist

The Alien Has to Learn explores the male-dominated tech-culture of North America. The work was filmed onsite at a contemporary Las Vegas innovation technology conference, inside an adjoining Mirage Casino hotel-room and outside at the Mirage's roadside automated

fire fountain. The viewer sees the tech conference from what Virginia Lee Montgomery describes as the “vantage point of a professional woman negotiating boundaries of personal / professional performativity.” The video shifts from machismo partying, to men playing miniature basketball, to quiet scenes of the lobby where the only women we see are hotel employees (one of them watering the fake flowers), to Montgomery alone in her room as the “alien” who must learn how to fit into the homogenous tech conference scene. These moments in the hotel room are surrealist in nature and, in addition to the wooden doll she looks to for instruction, involve two other props oft seen in Montgomery’s work, a long blonde ponytail and a cheese danish, both of which are inspired by her day job as a creative whose work takes her to corporate events. Much of the video is given over to an allegorically ejaculatory “fire fountain” that Montgomery records in an unmediated fashion, creating a parallel between the grand finale of the flames and the finale of her video around gender imbalance in a powerful and influential field that affects us all.



9.

Sunita Prasad

Recitations not from memory, 2014

HD video

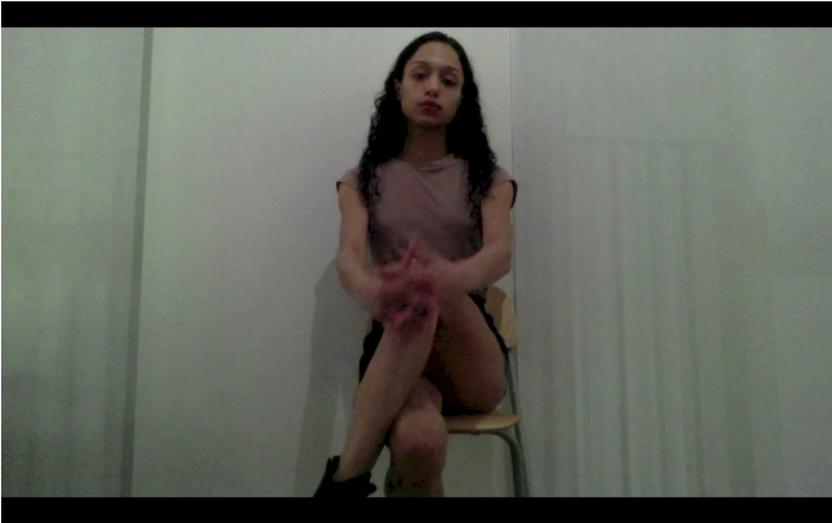
Running Time: 00:18:01

This piece was made possible through the support of the Art Matters Foundation.

Courtesy of the artist

Recitations not from memory features women's stories about gendered experiences that were anonymously shared with Sunita Prasad via listservs. As part of the conceptual construct for the piece, the artist sought out women who she considered to be her "socio-economic counterparts." These stories were then read from a teleprompter by men who Prasad enlisted via social media. Prasad, explains, "The men were asked to meet in small groups in settings suggestive of various social spaces in daily life: the office,

the café, the home. The stories I had gathered from women were then loaded onto a teleprompter, and each man was asked to recite a series of experiences to the camera without prior rehearsal or preparation." The artist notes that she was interested in this topic as discussions around it become more common in India, "*Recitations not from memory* is the result of an experiment in listening to, reading, and speaking gendered experience in the Indian context, during a period of increased attention to gender discrimination within Indian public discourse." The results are striking due, in part, to the incongruity between detailed stories of vulnerability, lost innocence, and harassment and the men who recount them in a seemingly detached, matter-of-fact manner.



10.

Legacy Russell

***Social Sculpture: In Remembrance of Poise and a
Choreography of Loving You Down, 1:58am, Plastic
People, London, 2013***

Video

Running time: 00:01:43

Courtesy of the artist

According to the artist, *Social Sculpture: In Remembrance of Poise and a Choreography of Loving You Down*, "makes parallel the histories of 'social sculpture' and the oft-gendered and ritualized cultural practices as found in dancehall or nightclub social spaces." Wearing disco shorts in her studio, Legacy sits on a chair with the sounds of a London nightclub playing. While seated, she shifts and changes her body language, a performance that leaves the viewer to contemplate who the imagined recipient(s) of

her gestures might be. We wonder “Who does she think is viewing her at the club as we also view her on a monitor in the gallery?”

Russell adds that these gestures are meant to project “wiles typical to stereotypes of flirtation, femininity, and the cultural practice of nightlife ‘peacocking,’ and the lax collapse of a body perhaps exhausted by—or disinterested—in the scene around her...” In addition to its references to often sexuality and gender fluid spaces of nightclubs, this short video connects with more than forty years of conceptual artists who videotaped themselves making performances in studios, including Marina Abramovic, Joan Jonas, and Bruce Nauman.



11. Maryam Tafakory

I was five when I became a woman, 2014

Video

Running Time: 00:04:27

Maryam Tafakory's *I was five when I became a woman* draws visually poetic parallels between the activities of a seamstress and the acts of female genital cutting that still occur to the majority of young girls in eight countries and has, according to the World Health Organization, affected between 100 and 140 million women. Tafakory who was born in Iran and is based in London, describes the video as an "emotional tapestry that invites you to briefly share the life long torment of genital mutilation still forced upon many young girls around the world." This video is representative of the artist's overall practice in its attention to the feminist notion that the "personal is political," the non-linear narrative, and the use of symbolic actions and materials to tell a story. In *I was five when I became a woman*, a voiceover of a woman telling her story of being taken at five for this procedure is accompanied by a grown woman meditatively cutting and sewing fabric and patterns and writing on a piece of paper in Persian, creating a mix of past and present, storytelling and poetic imagery.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Michelle Marie Charles

Michelle Marie Charles employs a sociological consciousness to convert her embodiment and neighborhood surroundings into symbolic sites for exploring the politics of meaning making. Using digital photography and video as mediums, she examines the intrinsic and extrinsic implications of her black female body and the working class community of color (Southeast Queens) she hails from. Her resulting images simultaneously counter the existing negative stigmas and inject fresh, transgressive responses. They exist as “love letters”, showing the pockets of beauty and sense of community through the lens that only an insider can possess. She renders these terrains with careful reverence through her photographs and alternately creates absurd, often tongue in cheek worlds in her videos to deconstruct somber themes in an accessible manner. She holds a B.A. in New Media from SUNY Purchase College.

INVASORIX

INVASORIX (since 2013) is a queer/cuir feminist working group making songs, video clips, DIY publications, tarot sessions and performative presentations. Currently

INVASORIX are Daria Chernysheva (Russia/Mexico), Alejandra Contreras (Mexico), Nina Hoechtl (Austria/Mexico), Maj Britt Jensen (Germany/Mexico), Liz Misterio (Mexico), Una Pardo Ibarra (Colombia/Mexico), Naomi Rincón-Gallardo (Mexico/Austria), Mirna Roldán (Mexico), Nabil Yanai Salazar Sánchez (Mexico), Adriana Soriano (Mexico). Considering non-professionalization as a strategy, they have taken on the challenge to write collectively lyrics and make video clips that critically address female masculinities and power relations in artistic, educational and patriarchal environments. Alongside, they published a reader, a set of tarot cards and have realized performative presentations. They apply parody to provoke a wider scope of reflection and reactions. The collective often focuses on how transformative potentiality relies on how they learn and unlearn collectively, and how they explore different ways of being and working together in the style of the amateur.

Kegels for Hegel

Straddling philosophical smutcore and tongue in chic, Kegels for Hegel (K4H) is a conceptual art project that makes queerly ambivalent songs, music videos, and art objects that both revere and mess with the intellectual production of philosophers. K4H is a “band” fronted by two academics who have no musical training and use computer programs to make songs. But really K4H is an open collaboration of

artists, academics, and other creative, clever, disreputable types who make things.

Sarah Lasley

Sarah Lasley was born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky. She received a B.F.A. in 2004 from the University of Louisville in Kentucky and an M.F.A. in painting from Yale University in 2008. Lasley's work explores the synthetic nature of gender and how we control and are controlled by our own images, seeking to create a female film form that values a non-linear, sensorial experience over analytic, dialogue-based storytelling. Her films have screened at film festivals and galleries across the USA, most recently at Vox Populi in Philadelphia. Since 2009, she has taught video art at Yale University, Vassar College, SUNY Purchase and the Pratt Institute. She was the videographer for Amanda Palmer and the Grand Theft Orchestra's 2012 world tour and has done video production for Martha Stewart Living magazine, Naked in a Fishbowl (Cherry Lane Theatre), STREB: Kiss the Air! (Park Avenue Armory), and the live-film version of Michael McQuilken's performance JIB (Yale School of Drama).

Sunita Prasad

Sunita Prasad is a New York City based artist and filmmaker. Her projects employ techniques of hybridization between documentary, fiction, and performance to address issues of gender, public space, and the history of social movements. Her work has been exhibited internationally at venues and institutions including the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Homesession in Barcelona, Torino Performance Art in Turin, Momenta Art in New York City, and Vox Populi Gallery in Philadelphia.

She has received awards from the Art Matters Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Warner Bros. Production Fund, as well as residencies at TAJ & SKE Projects in Bangalore, the Contemporary Artists Center in Troy NY, and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

Nicole Maloof

Nicole Maloof works within an interdisciplinary practice, encompassing drawing, printmaking, video, and performance. Maloof plays with the rigidity of categorical boundaries, an aspect of language that aids in upholding present power structures. Bodies, history, memory, and science bleed at the edges, in ways that complicate

gender, point to the postcolonial, and defile the myths we tell ourselves. Born in Korea and raised in Massachusetts, Maloof received a BFA in painting and a BA in chemistry from Boston University. After graduation, Maloof worked on organic chemistry research at Harvard, lived in Korea for two years on a teaching Fulbright, and then moved to New York where she earned her MFA in the visual arts at Columbia University. Maloof currently lives and works in New York.

Virginia Lee Montgomery

Virginia Lee Montgomery is a mediating performance artist currently working in New Haven, CT. She received her BFA from The University of Texas at Austin in 2008. Projects include Ideation Accelerator at the Yale Department of Physics' Wright Nuclear Laboratories (2015), Live- Sketching Labor at MOMA PS1 for Art Handler Magazine with ALLGOLD (2015), and Haptic Mapping at the Eric Harvey Theatre, Banff Centre, Canada. Recent group shows include *things you can't unthink* at the Banff Centre, Canada (2016) and *Drawing for Sculpture, Tiger Strikes Asteroid*, Brooklyn (2016). She has been awarded residencies at The Shandaken Project and The Vermont Studio Center. Montgomery is currently an MFA candidate in Sculpture at Yale University.

Legacy Russell

Legacy Russell is a New York-born, London-based, writer, artist and cultural producer. Holding an MRes of Visual Culture with Distinction at Goldsmiths College of University of London, her creative and academic work explores gender, performance, digital selfdom, idolatry, and new media ritual. Legacy is the founding theorist behind Glitch Feminism as a cultural manifesto and movement; #GLITCHFEMINISM aims to use the digital as a means of resisting the hegemony of the corporeal.

Maryam Tafakory

Maryam Tafakory (b. Iran) is an artist filmmaker living and working in London. Part performance, her work draws on womanhood and rites of passage, interweaving poetry, (self)-censorship and religion, combining a formal minimalist syntax and figurative mode of representation. Sharing an Islamic Persianate identity, the narratives she develops are closely tied to her own recollections and experiences of being brought up in post-revolutionary Iran. Tafakory's work is screened and exhibited internationally including, Rotterdam International Film Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival, Zurich Film Festival, London Short Film Festival, British Film Institute, and Ciné Lumière Institut Français.

"ALL BYTE" PANEL TRANSCRIPT

As part of "All Byte: Feminist Intersections in Video Art," UConn Stamford's Womens Gender and Sexuality Studies department hosted a panel featuring three artists from the exhibition. The panel took place during one of the department's classes but was opened up to other students and the public. It was followed by a Q & A with those in attendance. This is a transcript from the panel that has been lightly edited by the panel participants for clarity and to remove repeat phrases and redundancies.

Ingrid Semaan, Ph.D.

Sociology and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies UConn-Stamford

The term intersectionality was coined in 1989 by the wonderful feminist critical race theorist, Kimberlé Crenshaw. However, intersectional thought, writing, and activism existed long before that. For example, there is Sojourner Truth's 1851 "Ain't I a Woman" speech, The Combahee River Collective Statement of 1977, Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands* from 1987, and many other works.

Intersectionality is a paradigm that highlights the interconnectedness of race/class/gender/sexuality/nationality, and other sources of difference and inequality and holds that they are not independent of each other, but, rather, each intersects with and shapes the others. Work that is intersectional recognizes, highlights, and comments on these intersections. Truly intersectional work addresses not only differences between different groups of people based on race/class/gender/sexuality, but also connections between and among them.

This kind of work is rare, in part because it's difficult to analyze so many dimensions of people's lives at once. One example of a study that does this is the book Women Without Class by Julie Bettie, in which she analyzes how race, class, and sexuality shape the lives of four groups of young women: working class Mexican American women, middle class Mexican American women, working class white women, and middle class white women. She not only looks at how their lives are different, but also how they are similar and how they interact with and shape each other's lives.

Again, this kind of work is rare. Most work that we might call intersectional addresses just two dimensions (for example, race and gender or gender and sexuality). This is true of many of the wonderful videos we chose for this exhibit. However, we feel the show as a whole, which includes nine videos, is intersectional across and among many forms of

difference and inequality. I strongly encourage you to go to see the whole show at Franklin Street Works between April 9-July 10 as we are screening only three of the videos today.

Artist Introductions Before Screening Videos

Sarah Lasley

Hi, thanks for inviting me. I wanted to talk briefly about my practice and where this piece comes from. My work addresses the synthetic nature of gender and how the external surface of femininity can define how others perceive us to be on the inside. The seductive quality of sexy, beautiful images has always been something that enticed me - I grew up with fashion models taped to my walls. I also have a background in representational figure painting, and most of my current work takes on a cinematic narrative form. I want to make something that looks like cinema, partly because I view it as an equivalent to the sexy images of women that attracted me as a young person, but also because these images are so familiar to people. You can draw someone in with these conventions, so they think they know what's going on, and then you turn right and they're like, "oh, wait- where the hell are we now?". There's also a great deal of power in a cinematic image, and we're in an interesting time with technology where previously, before digital video and DSLR cameras, you had to have a lot of

money to have access to those glossy, cinematic images in video.

I also want to set you up a bit about the performer in this film. Her name is Edyn Panache and she's the drag persona of a student I had in one of my classes at Yale who is from a Mormon background and came out to his family while he was away in school. He had begun performing as Edyn and was graduating and going back to Utah to rejoin his family for the first time, so it seemed like Edyn was going to be put to rest for a while since there wasn't a space for him to live in that persona once he was back in Utah.

I have been doing these solo road trips for a few years now. I grew up in Kentucky, and no one in Kentucky ever leaves. So it was kind of radical when I left in the first place, but I realized I hadn't seen more of the United States so I started driving out west alone during the summer. I would collaborate with people that I met in the towns I passed through. I have a very intimate shooting practice. My projects are always shot with just me and one or two other people. I don't use scripts or agendas going in—I usually have one image that I want to build up to and the process of shooting and working really has to do with an exchange between the person and me, the performer and me. So I asked my former student if Edyn would join me in the desert for a few days to give her one last stand. And I'll just leave it at that but this is what we came up with.

Nicole Maloof

I also have a background in painting, printmaking, and drawing. I'm actually really new to video as well, but the thing that I think is cool about the moving image is that we all have a really finely tuned sensitivity to it because we're all so familiar with the moving image now--between films that we watch, television shows, YouTube videos, GIFs, all of this. You're actually a very sophisticated audience, and I feel that your ability to read the moving image is also highly sophisticated, as much as ours is.

And so I'm coming from more of a computer, Internet language in my video. I'm also interested in this idea of shifting the power, or rather promoting a more democratic power in creating an image. My piece is shot only using an iPad mini and my laptop, so if you want to make a piece with moving image you totally can. And I don't really want to give much more away because it would be like explaining the joke before you tell it. The piece is about childhood and memory so keep that in the back of your mind. There's a lot of reading by the way.

Virginia Lee Montgomery

Hello everyone, I'm excited to be here. I like to describe myself as a mediating artist because I employ diverse

media—sculpture, performance, video, sound—and because I frequently perform as a mediating character. I'm currently working towards my MFA at Yale in Sculpture, which I mention because my interest in time-based art truly derives from a tactile language. I think of time as a physical material with haptic qualities. I also like to use whatever materials I can get my hands on—that includes pulling ideas from my personal life and using any accessible tools around me. In shooting *The Alien Has to Learn* I used a consumer-grade GoPro camera and my own iPhone as I wanted the video's aesthetic tone to feel very personal, raw and oscillate between cinematic tropes and raw YouTube textures. As a performance artist, I'm deeply interested in issues of identity, construction and agency.

The Alien Has to Learn pivots around my own identity and experience working within corporate environments as a creative services facilitator. In addition to being a fine artist, I also work as a commercial illustrator in a niche field called Graphic Facilitation. For years, I traveled across North America as a creative consultant rapidly drawing people's ideas, real-time and large scale at public business conferences. It was very, very surreal. And, I unexpectedly absorbed a complex view of what current labor dynamics look like for women within different ecosystems. This video, *The Alien Has to Learn*, was filmed in Las Vegas at a gigantic, public, technology conference. The dream-logic video illustrates the navigation of a magical-professional woman

facing immense workplace alienation via rampant gender asymmetry. In my video, thousands of male conference attendees saunter about, shoot hoops, network, while in contrast the only working women found are performing conference services like custodial or catering. As a side, for me, it's alarming to consider that this predominately homogenous, hetero- male demographic controls and developments the technologies—like iPhones—that will later impact broader global culture. So as an artist and as a female- bodied person, I struggled here. After a long day working around seas of 5,000 men I would return to my hotel room privately perform a series of aggressive, calibration rituals. I wanted to counterbalance this rampant gender asymmetry via art making. In preparation, I brought with me to Las Vegas my own yonic power totems: my Dewalt drill fitted with a 4" bi-metal hole saw and an oily, melty cheese danish. I also brought with me a strange, rigid, alien-like doll of myself. In making this video, I was trying to locate myself within this deeply alienating 21st century, patriarchal landscape of gender segregation.

Q&A

Terri C Smith: So I have one topic for each of you in looking at your work, and I have an overall thing in mind.

Nicole with you, looking at how you dealt with language was so interesting to me. We heard you talk but the computer was the main English voice; there wasn't a human voice speaking English so that was very a smart and telling choice that says a lot or could potentially be unpacked.

Sarah, hearing the story about the video and your student, *Edyn in Exile* takes on additional meaning because Edyn is about to be exiled from that person's life for a while because of the family dynamics and acceptance and the issues around that.

Virginia, two things. One, we should probably touch on the danish and the ponytail for folks so they can understand how those items operate in your overall body of work.

Also, the hyper-masculinity in the context of the conference and the thinking about the tech industry being so male white dominated ties in so interestingly with you showing the fire at the end – it is so hyper-ejaculatory and you hear what sounds like mainly men clapping at the end so I was wondering more about that.

And for all three of you, I'd be curious to know your approach to sound because in watching the 200 video submissions for this exhibition—not to mention all the videos I've seen at other times over my life because I've been curating new media art since the 90s—sound can

make or break a video and you all handle sound very well! All three of you used sound exactly when it needs to be there versus the temptation to overlay what I feel like is sometime too much sound, which makes things start to sound like a music video versus anything else.

Sarah: Talking about Edyn and her actual exile, yeah. I want to tie that into something I saw in all three of our pieces, which is the way one attempts to connect with an environment. I actually felt that Edyn is a kind of alien on Mars, so for me that's why the soundtrack has a science fiction vibe to it.

Also, nature has been the "other woman" in my work for a long time because if you're talking about standards of beauty, none of us can step to nature. She's really the ultimate, most beautiful image ever made. I view Edyn, when she enters the desert, as a by-product of pop culture. She's carrying all the cultural symbols of power, and through the exhausting of tropes and clichés, she's a spectacle that can never live up to the spectacle of the environment holding her.

By the time you get to that last gesture in the film, which is maybe a release or a mark, there is a *return* to the body (maybe playing it back narratively that moment is a bit jarring). As she walks out of the desert we can see it was all a sort of exorcism... a way of loosening up and sloughing all

that shit off so that she could return back to the world, and maybe, hopefully, be a human again.

We've each somewhat addressed this lo-fi low-budget approach to making video, and I want to say, it is beautiful that we have access to iPhones and anyone can work with moving images. An iPhone is quite powerful these days. You can use an iPhone to make a feature film, like the Sundance hit *Tangerine*, but then the iPhone is also being used as evidence for people whose voices have been historically silenced to show how violence and brutality is being used against them. So it's a very powerful device. Social media is giving underrepresented groups access to creating and controlling their images where there had been a lack of visibility prior. But for me, the next step and what *Edyn in Exile* was really about is the step beyond just owning and controlling our images to also owning and controlling our physical bodies. For Edyn and I that's what the process was about. We spent an entire day doing hip rolls together in the desert. Being a woman, or queer, from a conservative background, or from any environment where your sexuality is not free or fully "yours," you start to carry some funky junk in your sacral area. Some shame. Just getting into that space, feeling like it's yours, and connecting to it is important. That last moment was catharsis for three days of not knowing what we're doing yet refusing to put language to anything. This piece was really about obfuscating language and labels. Is he a man, is he a woman, a he, a she, am I? I feel like the

process was also about me not speaking for him because I can't do that. All I can do is be there to bounce back images of what he's putting out to me and then hopefully it creates an emotional and sensorial experience, even if it's not one that any language can attach to. At the end of every night shooting, we would go back to the hotel room and be like "Who is she??? Who is she? I don't know, but let's just try it again tomorrow."

Nicole: Continuing this idea of being in the body, obviously this video is about my past, and as a woman and as a woman of color, moving through these spaces I have to move around in, so much assumption is made about who I am, my motivations, and my intellect, based on this body. So I have very little control over the assumptions that are placed upon me, which are due to my race and to my gender, and these assumptions are placed upon me both in Korea and here in the U.S., where I'm assumed to follow certain gender stereotypes or act a certain way because of how I read as Asian. But as you saw in the video, I was adopted. So I was born in Korea. I was raised by white people, and I have a Middle Eastern last name. It's real confusing when people meet me, and yet people have such strong assumptions about who I am and why I do the things that I do. So to give you a little more into my background, I have a science degree, in chemistry, as well as in painting. I recently finished my education at Columbia, getting an MFA in visual arts, and so my interests are pretty wide. I have

interests that span across science, education, and art, and in spite of this, people still assume that my motivations for studying certain things are not rooted in my own curiosity. I actually have had people say to me, “So your Asian parents forced you to get a chemistry degree so that you could study art, right?” And I’d be like, “I don’t have Asian parents.” And then on the other hand, relating to what Virginia said about the tech industry: I was doing organic chemistry at Harvard and there were very few female chemists, and so you know, I have this science degree, but then I’m assumed to not be particularly good at it because I’m a girl.

Going back to your question about language then, I kind of wanted to refrain from showing my own body or using my own voice so there wouldn’t be these immediate assumptions placed upon my past, and then it was in part also pragmatic--I really don’t speak Korean very well--so I needed a way to have a voice speak Korean to a Korean audience without the distraction of my American accent. I edited this video in Korea, and so the first audience I was thinking about was actually a Korean-speaking audience and not an English-speaking one. To further complicate things, as you saw from the emails in the video, I did reconnect with my birth family, but they don’t really know me very well as a person. We don’t share the same language, they don’t really speak English, I don’t really speak Korean, and so I unexpectedly reconnected with them after four years

of silence. They told me that they were coming to the opening [where *Funny Street Names* first screened] and I hadn't finished editing the video yet, and so suddenly this project also became not just an intellectual exploration into overlapping histories, but it was also my first attempt to really show them (my biological family) who I was as an artist, which was also kind of terrifying. So then I ended up going to this computer voiceover because it made the most sense since it didn't reveal who I was immediately and, pragmatically, I was able to cover up my inability to speak Korean.

Virginia: For a moment, I'll build off of what it means to reveal or what it means to withhold. So working as a professional, it's really interesting when you're suddenly navigating your own psyche within a performative corporate context. Externally, you may project a solid, "normal" character-type. But then at the end of the day, you go back to your private hotel room and say, "OK, now I can finally be a weirdo." Moving between these two performative structures creates all these complex separations of identity. It can be exhausting. For me, working within these hyper masculine, homogenous environments was deeply uncomfortable. Even when these conferences have global attendance, 99% of the attendees are composed of heteronormative men from Ireland to Brazil to South Korea. Yet, as my video narrates, I was working as a female-bodied, blonde woman. It is also completely insane to think that I,

as a blonde woman, I could represent a form of diversity! In that environment another point of contention was the sexual dynamic. At the end of the workday, I would bolt out before cocktail hour to avoid drunken libidos. Back in my hotel room, safe, I'd make video art and read. I'd read Octavia Butler, Ursula LeGuin and Margaret Atwood. Soon I was able to find guidance with using symbols to reveal the construction of gender identity. That's the thought process that eventually led me to start forming performances around a 4ft blonde ponytail, my prop for identity.

Cheese danishes also appear a lot in my work. At conferences again and again, I would see these gigantic trays of half-melted danishes. They are so wonderfully fatty, oily, buttery. They serve as perfect metaphor for our own soft bodies and because they melt over the course of the day, they also index time. So, there I would be in these corporate environments, feeling very uncomfortable in my own female body and I would see these melted danishes and think, oh, that's how I feel! They're also circular, oily, like vaginas. They are my yonic, pro-body, Americana workplace metaphors that can physically and symbolically serve as contrasts to the rigid, hygienically, repressive spaces that are not at all about bodies being free to melt.

On the subject of sound, personally, I'm interested in all the quiet sounds that encapsulate us. When you make a video, it's easy to put on a seductive song to make all the

visual jumpcuts gloss together like a music video. But when you choose to create a soundscape composited from small everyday, weirdly banal noises, it really conjures an intimate, introspective space for the viewer to start examining things.

Sarah: ...more on sound. All of the sound in my film was artificial. I didn't have any diegetic sound or nature sounds captured by the camera, and I actually used one wind loop over and over again so there's this constant sense of things moving through. Then the wind transitions into the one moment of breath, the blow-up moment. And then the last part is throat chakra cleansing, so it's the sounds of monks trying to energetically clear their voice. I have a dear friend who makes these gorgeous synth landscape sound compositions. His name is Yannis Panos, and he composed the sound for me. I've worked with him on a bunch of projects. He just gets me, and we could not be more opposite. He's a Greek man, and I'm southern and female. But he really understands my delicate sensitivity. A lot of the transitions in the music appear before the cut or after the cut as a way of also making it feel like a slippery gooey thing, like now there's a mountain and we're moving, but the sound is still shifting from earlier. Ultimately, I wanted to toss you around so you wouldn't use your analytical brain as much.

Nicole: I guess I approached my piece from an opposing perspective. I wanted a collaging of sound: of what my

iPad was able to capture and then all of the sound resulting from the YouTube videos, commercials, and music videos. I wanted to have them rub up against one another. Because as much as this video was about these overlapping histories of colonialism and my own past, I also really wanted it to be about how we remember things—and how we remember our past is really not a linear thing. We think we have a grasp on ourselves and on history, and we really don't. So I wanted to reflect that in the sound, how things butted up against one another in a way that didn't necessarily make sense. Like when I layered the music video with the dinosaur videos, it ended up becoming this thing I wasn't really expecting. It was funny how certain components lined up, a strange symmetry... there is one section when you see these Nazis going through and shooting people while simultaneously a stegosaurus is getting shot and killed. Those sounds and images start to overlap and sort of mimic one another. That's what happens when we think back on our own lives and our own past, how things start to resonate in a way that may be complete fiction. That's how I wanted to treat the sound—not as something that necessarily made sense.

Terri: Did you have moments of: this is too much! I've got to pull back. Where it got too cacophonous. It seems like you struck a really great balance with that, in your layering of sound and images

Nicole: Basically, if I needed sound, I had it there. If I didn't need it, I removed it. For example, when retelling the story about what had happened between the settlers and the native people in my area, I just felt like it would be doing a disservice to the story to include sound effects. I removed the sound of the cars and the environmental noise because it was extremely serious to me, and I wanted the viewer to only focus on the text and the images.

Terri: Ingrid, do you have any thoughts on the intersectionality or any other thoughts on this?

Ingrid Semaan: I loved to hear from all of you. You answered a lot of my questions in this conversation, which is really fantastic. I loved all of your films, and I thank you so much for your work and for coming here and sharing them with us.

Nicole, I loved your juxtapositions of the Native American street signs and the colonists. I thought that was just beautifully done and in terms of intersectionality, looking at time, history, space, and geography. It was just brilliant and really worked for someone who's a layperson, is not in the arts, has no training in the arts. I really appreciated that.

Edyn in Exile was just so gorgeous -- gorgeously filmed and I just loved the setting. I read it, this might not have been your intention, but I read the early scene with the blow-up

dolls as very free and playful, and then she starts trudging through the sand and leaving herself. Metaphorically, it was really beautifully done on so many levels.

And Virginia, I loved the masculinity and the presentation of masculinity and the ejaculatory ending – I thought it worked so well, having been in Vegas. I did have questions about the ponytail, but especially the danish, but your explanation adds so many more layers to this examination of masculinity and gender and I really loved it. I'm so glad I got to hear from you too, from all of you.

Audience Q&A

Question: Hi, my name is Ashley, and my question is for Sarah. *Edyn in Exile* was gorgeous, and I was captivated by the presentation. You had mentioned that the part when she was rolling her hips was like a reclaiming of the body-- where did you get that idea from, especially because for me it seemed like you said exorcism of releasing of everything so I never thought to think of it as a reclaiming, which is a brilliant concept. I wondered where you got that idea.

Sarah: My work is very personal so this is going to be a personal answer. More and more, we're in a beautiful moment where people are talking about patterns of trauma in their lives. It seems one in three women has felt some

form of sexual abuse of power, be that whatever it is. For me that gets stored in this physical space (abdomen and hips). The idea of returning to the body came about in the last few years of doing these trips for myself and being in nature. When I first was in nature, I felt like it was too soft for me. But what for me started to happen in those spaces of being alone, being a small woman deciding to feel safe driving thousands of miles westward, was that I started to feel my body more. A great deal of that also came from doing more yoga and dance, anything that started to actually loosen the ligaments. But it was also about being dedicated to feeling my body: to sitting and being patient and be still long enough to remember that I am not just a mind, that I actually bring with me all of this [gesturing to indicate her physical self]. So when I could finally sit on my butt in nature long enough, I realized that it could all drain down. Maybe that's why so many women dance, it's a space where you can be big and be free. It's where you get these powerful female voices. Divas always impressed me. It's all releasing. The hip rolls and release came from a personal relationship that I was developing with my own body and wanting to see if this other person would be willing to go down a new-agey, wacky road with me. I had also been reading a lot about nature and Christianity. Most religions are of the mind and deny the urges of the body. Deny this land. Your kingdom is above. Which to some extent I believe. But, I also think: I need to live in this body. I need to protect this body. I also need to know it. That's where I was at the time.

Question: I'm Katherine. This is for all of you. How much of your pieces do you have planned before you start making it and how much of it really develops during the process of producing it and how does that evolve over time?

Nicole: As I've said, I don't really have a background in video. I'm more of a drawer and a painter. The way that I draw is super intuitive, so I generally need to put something down first and then react to it. I approach video in a similar way. I knew that I wanted to tell these different stories so I just started collecting them. And a bunch didn't make the cut. I brought all this footage with me to Korea, and the piece didn't actually start to take form until I began the editing process. I had a week and a half where I had to finish most of the editing, and I began without knowing how it was going to go. For me, the thinking of the piece happens during the actual making of the piece. I collect all of this research, all these stories and footage, and only when I sit down for an extended period of time with focus does the idea start to become something. I don't know how other people work, I'd be curious to hear.

Virginia: so much of my practice is conceptually and performative based. Me just orally telling you the story of walking through that environment is one thing, but then how do I show it? I bring props with me, but I didn't know whether or not the TSA was going to take my wall drill from me. So it's always interesting to me to see what happens. To

a degree I'll storyboard, but it's a lot of improvising, I have a really performative approach and think things like, "I'm going to try to get into the Imagine Dragons concert" to see what that going to be like. It's interesting to throw yourself into a situation and to make sure that you always have a lot of extra cards to capture all the video footage.

Sarah: I spoke already about the collaborative part, but I will say that the image of the liquid moving out of the body was something that I had very clearly in my head for a while. I saw some YouTube video about how you can spew blood with a fire extinguisher and some tubing. So we threaded the tubing up Edyn's leg, and then I went in and removed the tube with visual effects so you can't see it.

So I had that image and said, "we have to build up to this," and luckily Edyn agreed to do that.

Terri: Anymore questions? Did anything stand out to anybody? Is there some theme or moment you see as really awesome or confusing?

Virginia: There's a lot of symbology. I was thinking a lot about what the inversion of a ponytail is; rather than draw something out of the head, have something be forcibly put in the head.

Terri: Virginia, have you always, from the beginning, making video pieces or art in general, felt comfortable with the improvisational, intuitive aspect of it or is it something that as you make work, you start to trust in that process?

Virginia: I think dance or music is a good metaphor. It's about building up a rhythm and just getting comfortable, constantly futzing around in the studio. If you're editing in something like Final Cut Pro or Premier, getting accustomed to editing and not looking for a narrative because sometimes the narrative will find you.

Sarah: I went to video because I have a really nervous brain, and with painting you're in a studio by yourself, just sitting there being neurotic. As a result I moved to video. In the beginning, I wanted as many people as possible to be on set but then I was thinking, "I'm overwhelmed and this is great and I'm juggling." I soon realized, though, that in those spaces I couldn't find me. I was just worried about shuffling *them*. So for me that's where it began—a fight for control. Everything was planned and scripted, but it has recently loosened up.

Nicole: To follow up again on your question, as I said, I won't have any real structure in the beginning. But I forgot to mention, I will sometimes make these silly challenges when I approach the work. I looked at the notes I took while making the video, and I forgot I wrote this, "How do I make a story

about children without actually showing any children?” You don’t even see a kid until the very end of the video, and even that was a last minute decision, to throw in a short clip of an old family video. I liked the challenge of talking about bodies and history without actually showing a body, but instead using text, ephemera, and artifacts to point to one. So that was a challenge. How to make the narrative feel personal yet not do the thing that most people would want or expect--like oh, I need to see violence happening to order to feel it. I don’t think that we should always do that.

To give away one of my inspirations in making the piece—and I highly recommend listening to this specific episode of Radiolab on memory. After listening to this one particular episode I found out something interesting about memory pathway. The same synaptic process involved in recalling a memory is the same as when you first create that memory. So that means that the most “accurate” memories you have are actually the ones that you’ve remembered or accessed the least. Every time you remember something, you’re rewriting the memory over and over again in the physical structure of your brain. So it’s not like a hard drive that you can access and leave intact. It actually physically changes in your head, and that blew my mind. And so I thought further, “If I can’t even accurately remember my own life, how can I expect to have an accurate or meaningful relationship to history?” The person next to me, if she doesn’t even know what she’s done in the past, how can I expect to know what

she's done in the past. The same thing goes to all of you and how we relate to one another socially and historically—and especially within these large systems of oppression, they're not myths, they are real. But how do we talk about them and how do we relate to them when our relationship to even ourselves is so slippery? That's also why I didn't want to have an actual image of a body at first, because I think so much of how we relate to ourselves now is also heavily mediated through the Internet, so when we think about ourselves, it's always in a mediated way. We see ourselves in YouTube videos even. When I was doing research for dinosaur videos, I was totally brought back to the 80s, when I watched this one particular claymation special over and over again, and all these memories came back when I watched it again on YouTube. I thought, "Man, that's weird." I'm in my thirties and so I didn't grow up with the Internet. People who are younger than me are cataloging their entire lives from the beginning through digital media. Yet they are still creating a fiction, even though they think it's close to truth—it's really not. It's heavily mediated.

Virginia: Just building off that. It's something interesting when you're making videos. When you perform an action you might not know what you're doing at the time, but then later when you look back at yourself on the camera, you might say, "Hey! That looks intentional, I knew what I was doing in that moment." Though a lot of times you don't. That ease with the unknown comes with practice. On a

side, if any of you are thinking of making videos, I also think poetry writing is a helpful practice. It speaks to that same notion of getting into a symbolic rhythm.

Nicole: And I think about what you just said...

understanding is always in hindsight. I feel like it doesn't just apply to making art but to our lives too. Like we think things are intentional, that we plan things, how we got here today in this room even, but I don't know, it might not be quite as intentional as we think. And it can be both exciting and freeing to think that we have this control over our decisions, our bodies, and even meaning, but that's what I also wanted to address in the video. Meaning can easily slip away. These street signs that I grew up with suddenly became these markers of a historical story that I never knew about until I started to dig into old texts. Even the story behind the racial slurs I heard as a kid--I was horrified when I stepped into my first Korean language class in my mid 20s, and I heard this same slur word and I immediately got super bristly. Hearing this word brought me back to my childhood and my first encounters with racism, and to find out this slur potentially originated from the language of the country I was born in, was kind of upsetting! It shows just how quickly meaning can escape an object, a word, a place, and I think that's something that we are all connected to, personally and within a larger historical context.

Question: My name is Francis, so for Sarah and Virginia.

Virginia, I like how you showed when you're in the room, how you're moving around, how you're like making a caricature of yourself and using that little puppet to represent yourself. I saw there was a contrast between Sarah's and yours [videos] because hers was more about reclaiming the body, it was more free and natural. When you are talking about the professional world and how you see yourself as a woman, you kind of have to control your movements, you have to be very deliberate. I didn't really get it at first, but I really saw that when I saw both of the videos and you explained it a little better. I thought it was very interesting because, as a man, I don't really have that experience of course so I don't know what that's like, but I thought it was very clever and interesting. I also want to add that I love science fiction, and I was looking at the history of it and found out that women made it. It started out with women so it felt weird because now it's mostly dominated by men. We always have these narratives of the good guy versus the bad ones and it's just like, why is this [genre] dominated by men when women started it. I kind of want to see that other side to it because it's very interesting. And it's kind of boring because I don't like the typical battle of the bad guy/good guy thing. You know what I mean? It's very monochromatic and boring, but I think that was very interesting, and I just wanted to say that I liked that you guys had those differences and showed those different experiences because that's something that

we all need to know more about. Thank you for great videos.

Sarah: Have you ever seen *Barbarella*? There is one with a female heroine-- you should check it out.

Virginia: I'm also happy to recommend a reading list of science fiction.

Question: [no name] I just had a question about Virginia's video. At the end when it was like the fire show, I didn't really understand the significance. I knew that it was something about hypermasculinity, but I'm not sure so I just wanted you to elaborate on that if you could.

Virginia: Absolutely. So the fire fountain in a way isn't as "fun" to watch as the beginning hotel room sequence. And I'll say "fun" with air quotes because I know structurally that part was edited really quickly, it's pleasurable to watch: the action is very dynamic and it's actually borrowing from cinematic tropes, i.e. Las Vegas action movies like *Oceans 11*. In *The Alien Has to Learn* it starts off like a thriller, but then the narrative dissolves, it falls apart, and instead reveals a more unnerving slow-burn horror. The video ends with an everyday iPhone capture of a spectacle where a gigantic, masturbatory fire fountain is the performing agent. I was also really interested in the extreme artificiality of that fire fountain. It also has a tropical rainforest frog soundtrack

when it is 'resting' to conjure a sense of exoticism; it's a lure. It is there for people to consume and be seduced by. Interestingly enough, The Grateful Dead's drummer did the sound design for the Mirage Casino's fire fountain. If you consider that factoid from the perspective of an anthropological target market group index, it directly speaks to appealing to the Grateful Dead-loving, middle-aged, white man on vacation or at Las Vegas for a technology conference. I wanted to include the fire fountain because it's again another signifier of hyper-maleness: its presence is just another reminder that this 'space' isn't designed for me.

Question: Hi My name is Allie, and I've done research on science fiction, particularly on Octavia Butler. [The work here] made me think of how I felt when I was studying that and reading as a child, and how science fiction used to be very much about something new being introduced but it wasn't necessarily a bad thing. [The genre] became very overpowered by films like *War of the Worlds* or it became about attacking what was unknown. I felt like both Sarah's and Virginia's pieces were reclaiming what science fiction used to be, something new introduced not necessarily bad, almost like a rebirth thing. I feel like a lot of men see it as a strange thing when it's just men seeing through the lens of what it feels like to be a woman, so I thought it was very interesting to see that [female perspective] in your pieces. I was just wondering if you guys took any inspiration from

anything like that because she's getting a TV series soon based on her trilogies.

Sarah: That wasn't something totally intentional. We didn't know that we were going to shoot in that location; I just showed up to Salt Lake City and he suggested the Bonneville Salt Flats. It's unregulated land in Utah on the Utah/Nevada border. It's funny, Utah has very strict gambling and alcohol laws (there are many stringent laws in Utah), but when you leave the Bonneville Salt Flats and cross into Nevada there are casinos everywhere. You're literally welcomed into hedonism. Virginia, our videos are structured similarly. I have a lava fountain at the end as well, except mine went down and yours went up.

Virginia: Even the play on words between alienation and being an alien is always really fertile ground, especially when you are trying to think about what it is to be intersectional and occupying all these different positions. Because it's really ok to be many things at once. Always.

Terri: From earlier, when you, Nicole, were talking about refraining from showing the body and you, Sarah, were talking about trying not to have language, I thought that was an interesting connection between your pieces. How do you see taking out something that is in our daily lives? Obviously you felt like it opens up some sort of potentiality

or possibility. Any thoughts on what kind of things it opened up by taking those things out?

Sarah: I like that you, Nicole, didn't have the body present on screen, because once the body is present it flattens, it becomes image. That's something I struggle with in working with technology. Sometimes I would rather be a performance artist so that people could smell and feel and energetically sense me in their space, but that's not what I do so.... I like allowing the form to unravel as a way of getting the work to vibrate outside of its own cage. You use POV shots in yours, Virginia, which is an embodiment with technology and yours is POV-related as well, Nicole. You're clicking.

Terri: When you say out of the cage, do you mean outside the limitations of the media?

Sarah: Yes of technology, of it's relationship to self-consciousness, of taking your own photograph. If I take a photograph of myself, even if I never show it to someone, I'm giving to the technology something I know will be viewed. We often think of ourselves as being viewed. That relationship is embedded in the lens.

Nicole: For me, removing the image and saving it 'til the end served another purpose also. Even when we try to reclaim our own images, they're still being viewed through a

lens of patriarchy and white supremacy in this country. You can't escape that. So even if I give you my image and insist that I'm a whole person, before your brain even registers anything I'm telling you, there is a lens that so heavily mediates how you're reading that body. Whether you intend to or not, all of us in this room have biases that we have been learning since birth. So how do you renegotiate with the viewer? How do you work around these biases and potentially open up new meanings and recognize another person's agency and subjectivity? You can't just insist upon it and then people will think it. You always encounter that wall, for me through the editing. I wanted to find a way to work around that. The small clip at the end of the video, me as a kid--see, I'm from the South Shore of Massachusetts. I always used to say the word "wicked," like "wicked hawt." So many people have this expectation of what a little Asian girl is supposed to sound like, and I needed that expectation to build over the course of the video. Then I could destabilize the viewer... I don't feel like my Asian-ness reads as much as my Boston-ness, and yet I do get that question of, "Where are you from?" And I say, "Massachusetts," and they're like, "No, no really, where?" I hear that all the time. How do I negotiate these expectations in my personal life, and how do I negotiate them through my work too?

Terri and Ingrid concluded panel and thanked everyone for coming. Applause for artists.

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41 Franklin Street Stamford, CT 06901

Art Space: 203-595-5211 • Cafe: 203-595-5581

info@franklinstreetworks.org • www.franklinstreetworks.org