

## **Future Bodies: Living the Posthuman Imaginary**

Chloe Lum and Yannick Desranleau, formerly Seripop, are reputed for their early days of screen-printing posters and large-scale, colourful and immersive paper installations. Though the introduction of theatrical elements and dance may seem like a departure from their existing oeuvre, the artists' most recent body of work is an expansion of their collaborative practice and continuation of their prodigious material exploration.

*Is it the Sun or the Asphalt All I See is Bright Black* is a performance in 10 sketches presented in the form of a two-channel video projection and installation. The artists collaborate with professional dancers, mining affect through an exploration of the lifespan of materials and how they react under stress, towards the construction of abstract and narrative works

A leathery peach-coloured tarp, a glossy pink puddle of rubber, a set of papier-mâché rings, an intestinal object suspended from a yellow umbilical-like bungee cord; these are just some of the many assorted props displayed - hooked, stuffed, twisted, and hung from the walls. The installation, characterized by a muted and contemplative palette - sanitary blue, scab brown, innocuous beige, medicinal mustard, timid taupe, and pepto pink, in addition to others - is an affective encounter for viewers. One cannot help but draw parallels with the human body, its colours, textures, shapes, and processes.

For this new work, Lum and Desranleau have constructed a material terrain that shifts and changes over time. At the will of the camera, new facets of the same elements are slowly revealed throughout the duration of the performance.

As with most time-based art, this work demands patience from its viewers. An ambient noise audio track helps us focus by honing our senses. Each sketch is ushered in with a steady camera pan and defined by a solo dance performance and a voice-over inner monologue that hails the viewer. The sequence opens with an existential sentiment: "Is it necessary to do this, they say?"

Collaboration has always driven the duo's practice. Over the last few years, their process has grown to include other creatives. Acting as mediators for the artwork and surrogates for the audience and the artists themselves, the addition of dancers attests to the couple's commitment to experimentation and exploring different forms of expression, not limiting themselves to only areas of expertise. Each sketch is a dance of improvised choreography with minimal instruction from Lum and Desranleau. Trust between the artists and the performers is paramount as is respect for each other's creative skill and distance in order to make this work. The two artists while not featured as dancers in their theatrical productions, are no strangers to stage performance as former musicians.

Taking on the art of movement, the artists discuss and reflect on personal and shared experiences and the symptoms of living: embarrassment, pain, exhaustion, and mania but also empowerment, confidence, and refuge. In one sequence, we see a dancer don a heavy black

rubber-like armour. It adds weight and volume to her body, strengthening her presence. In another instance, a dancer struggles to dress herself. She stretches a wearable sculpture, a peach bladder with red phalanges, over her head but is unable to find an opening. Her face is concealed. This uncanny imagery recalls Miranda July's mysterious and odd t-shirt dance in her film, *The Future* (2011) or Rene Magritte's painting, *The Lovers II* (1928) depicting two enshrouded faces attempting to kiss through fabric. These moments, both banal and passionate are depicted as emotional trials of struggle, frustration and isolation.

Drawing on cyborg and disability theory, this new work occupies the posthuman imaginary. Their Cronenberg-esque sculptural objects are hybrid, both apparatus and appendage while straddling a number of binaries; weapon and remedy, junky and precious, deficient and excessive, abject and sublime. At times, body and sculpture seem one in the same, as the dancer adopts the qualities of her prop/costume and vice versa. Watching the dancers caress, cradle, manipulate and maneuver their surroundings provides the viewers with a sense of satisfaction and relief. Such engagement helps quell our urge to touch the art but also compels us to imagine what it would be like hold, wear, and interact with the unique objects and perhaps, fantasize about our fluid and impervious posthuman techno-bodies.

Under the direction and conditions set out by Lum and Desranleau, the dancers are free to move the way they want and interpret how the given components of their new future body would function. Each dancer approaches the objects differently and intuitively with their own predilections and consciousness. Apropos our contemporary social climate of global anxiety and fear, this new work offers us reprieve and responds to an urgency for a reimagining of the self.