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TV Dinners - Louky Keijsers



Julia Brown, American Vernacular, 2007. DVD, color and sound, 4' loop, Edition of 6 + 2 AP. Courtesy of the artist and LMAAprojects, NY.

About ten years ago, I was strolling through Soho when my eye caught a glimpse of an exhibition at the Guggenheim SoHo. Once inside, I was immediately compelled by this show—everywhere I looked I saw monitors and colorful, comfortable seating. I thus spent hours in the space, lounging and enjoying the videos. To this day, I still have the fondest memories of that inviting atmosphere of endless video art viewing.

This show (I do not even recall the title) was committed to my memory and serves as the basis for my curatorial project "TV Dinners," a group exhibit of the works of 12 emerging video artists: Loudigy Beltrame, Julia Brown, Claudia Joskowicz, Gautam Kansara, Stephanie Lempert, Lin + Lam, Ra di Martino, Paulien Othelen, Kambui Ojijimi, Iris Piers, Mathilde Rosier and Jordan Wolfson. With that Guggenheim SoHo show in mind, I wanted to create an exhibition to engage the audience completely and to allow them also to view the works in an intimate and timeless setting. "TV Dinners" is not supposed to overwhelm the audience by its incorporation of some of the latest technologies, but rather to invite the viewers to fully appreciate and feel comfortable with the works on display.

Entering the gallery, the visitor wanders through a forest of white foam and cubes as well as monitors. The scene's appearance is a subtle reference to the film *A Clockwork Orange*. As curator, it was a wonderful experience to see the audience comfortably sitting on the foam cubes and staring at the works. The video pieces addressed several topics varying from architecture, popular music and performance, to economic, social and political issues.

Lin + Lam's video *Dark Meat or White Meat?* offers a humorous history of Thanksgiving "turkey pardon" ceremonies in comparison with Ticker Tape statistics detailing some of the more controversial pardons throughout history and the plummeting number of them granted since the 80s. Nearby, the work *Last Christmas*, by Gautam Kansara, revolves around a dinner with the family. The artist's camera tapes the entirety of this domestic scene as well as the uncensored conversation at hand. Here, the artist explores the complexities and contradictions embedded within his own family's dynamic.

Artist Iris Piers, on the other hand, uses a small digital camera, pen, paper and voiceover to create little pieces of everyday surrealism. The artist created *Casimir* or the *Beginning of Dreaming*, "Casimir," a word invented by the artist, is a term that is meant to paint the dream in a highly romantic light. Paulien Othelen also observes the simpler things in life. With her camera, she has recorded life's smaller, quieter moments and gestures, the ones often overlooked, and has emphasized them in a piece entitled *Slideshow*. In this way, the artist creates a subtle and graceful real life documentary.

In *Drawn and Quartered*, through her camera's lens artist Claudia Joskowicz discovers and highlights both the architectural and social elements present in the surroundings of the location of a violent event. Similar in genre is Mathilde Rosier's *South Georgia*. Situated in a forest covered with snow, a girl dances to joyful music composed by the artist. Here, Rosier creates a complete visual poem. In a similar vein as works by Joskowicz and Rosier is Jordan Wolfson's *Dinosaur*. In his video, the artist displays a static shot of an anthropomorphic swimming pool cleaner that sensually flirts with the camera.

Sea-Side Hotel by Loudigy Beltrame is haunted by the absent characters that once occupied the now-empty premises of modernity, the spaces given over to the infinite narratives of a new reality. Between, on the other hand, is a video work from Ra di Martino in which the artist incorporates the social interactions between people in a way that suggests that their general confusion and misunderstandings can be seen as reflections of our current society.

Fascinated by language and signs, artist Stephanie Lempert created a video, in which the tail of a dog communicates with its audience through the likes of Morse code.

Julia Brown's *American Vernacular* was created in a setting resembling America in the 1800s and features the physical interaction of pairs in domestic spaces, with one person using the other as an object. It is an intriguing and at the same time bizarre and humorous image. It could be a fairy tale, like Kambui Ojijimi's *Night Fights*, in which a girl and boy challenge each other to a roller skating dance competition in the middle of the night, and on the rocks of Brooklyn. The disco beats are an integral part of the work, creating an atmosphere of excitement, hope and innocence.

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