

Ryan Trecartin & Lizzie Fitch

[SELECTED BY]

Screening #1: 29.11.2018 (7:45 pm)

Junior War (2013)

Comma Boat (2013)

CENTER JENNY (2013)

Item Falls (2013)

Screening #2: 6.12.2018 (7:45 pm)

Mark Trade (2016)

Screening #3: 11.12.2018 (7:45 pm)

Temple Time (2016)

American Ryan Trecartin and his partner Lizzie Fitch have gained great prestige in the visual arts world in recent years. Besides his sculptures and paintings, Trecartin is primarily known for his high-speed, collage-like videos, in which he refers to and over-identifies with the digital visual culture and consumption culture of the Internet.

Trecartin's work is created collaboratively. First and foremost, there is his artistic partner Lizzie Fitch, with whom he runs a film studio in Los Angeles. Fitch also plays a major role in the design of their sets, screening environments and exhibition settings. In addition, many of their mutual friends and acquaintances are actors or extras in Trecartin's films. He and Fitch also always act along. To a degree, Trecartin's films are a magnifying window on the kind of world in which they live.

The term 'Post-Internet Art' often surfaces in texts about Trecartin's and Fitch's work. In such critiques this term is usually applied to a young generation of digital natives, whose artistic work clearly exhibits the influence of digital culture. Post-Internet is a controversial concept, however, because the prefix 'post' creates confusion. After all, it is not about art created 'after the end of the Internet', or 'free from the Internet', but about art that exudes the worldwide web and its digital aesthetics from all of its pores. The Internet is so all-pervasive in the 'real world' that there is no longer a clear dividing line between online and offline. Events are staged with a view to the production of photos that can be circulated on social media, digital bullying leads to real-life suicides, the dissemination of fake news causes political landslides, et cetera. Not to mention the 'Internet of things', in which whole households of interconnected devices are connected to the Internet. Post-Internet art reveals the impact of this contemporary hyperconnectivity and infobesity on our ways of thinking, speaking, feeling and acting.

Trecartin and Fitch's films are over-the-top, lavish, chaotically mounted clusters of diverse materials. The most hyperkinetic Hollywood-style action films pale in comparison with their work. There are constant jumps between takes and the camera never stops. The result is continuous distraction. For the viewer, it is difficult to distil an unambiguous narrative. What Trecartin and Fitch create instead is an immersive experience of a crazy and frenzied world.

In exhibitions, Trecartin and Fitch's video work is only exceptionally shown purely as film. The immersive experiencing of the film is enhanced by the decorative sets in which the films are always presented. These sculptural theatres provide an evocative framework: a room with massage chairs, a motel bar, a gymnastics facility... These artificial environments are often dotted with props and pieces of scenery from their film sets.

The presentation of Trecartin and Fitch's work in KRIEG takes a different form. After all, their work has rarely been shown in Belgium. To compensate for this and to give us an opportunity to immerse ourselves in several of their works, Trecartin and Fitch were asked to compile and shape the very first edition of [Selected by]. [Selected by] is an annual screening, in each edition of which a different video artist is given carte blanche to compile a screening exclusively from his/her own works. Instead of one evening-filling programme, Trecartin and Fitch suggested organising three evenings.

In their work Trecartin and Fitch not only criticise the post-Internet condition, they also try to map out the mingling of the digital and the analogue worlds and to look at how today's high communication and information output is generating new ways of being and a new kind of poetry.

KRIEG

29.11 + 6.12 + 11.12.2018

Elfde-Liniestraat 25
3500 Hasselt (BE)

KRIEG.pxl-mad.be

Fitch and Trecartin have selected six films for KRIEG. For the first programme, they have selected four works from 2013.

For many millennials, the video work *'Junior War'* (2013) is probably very recognisable. In this short film, we follow a group of adolescents out for a night of 'partying'. The youngsters get drunk, vandalise mailboxes, urinate against houses and provoke the police. This work shows us an 'early' Trecartin, in which the source material is less staged than in his later video work. In a sense, it is a documentary work, compiled from camcorder footage Trecartin shot during his high school days. *'Junior War'* gives us a good picture of the context in which Trecartin grew up.

The second video work, *'Comma Boat'* (2013), presents a more staged and more theatrical reality. The aesthetic Trecartin develops in this work is characteristic of all of his subsequent work. In *'Comma Boat'* Trecartin questions power. Centring on his own position as an artist-director, it is a meta-film, in which Trecartin questions the art world in a humorous way. 'I've made many different alphabets just to get ahead in my field,' says a character at one point. But the film is more complex than just a simple lament about the notion of power. Trecartin simultaneously shows us that we too are responsible for stage-managing the power structures surrounding us.

In *'CENTER JENNY'* (2013) Trecartin and Fitch further explore the idea of powerlessness. In this film we see multiple variants of 'Jenny', a sort of newly constructed female archetype, in which the only differentiation between the Jennies depends on how much power they can acquire. All of these Jenny's have the same goal: to reach the 'source'. The closer they get to the centre the better. Any remove from the centre connotes uncertainty and vulnerability. But at the same time: the closer they get to the centre, the more the danger they are in of being consumed by the forces that shape the world. There is no escaping the centre.

'Item Falls' (2013) presents itself as a casting call. Among others, red-headed Jenny returns, this time brimming with confidence: she intends to make it from basic level to centre level. The driving force behind the auditions is a producer named TK. *'Item Falls'* poses big questions: How much free will do we really have? Is what we are seeing real? What does it mean to be normal?

The second and third film programmes show more recent work. The 2013 films stick to strict scripts, but these more recent works are more loosely structured. The actors have more input in both their texts and their clothing. Direction instructions are often given live, or the actors give their comments about the work out loud.

In *'Mark Trade'* (2016) Trecartin and Fitch move out of the studio and into nature. We follow a central character, who delivers constant monologues to the camera, whilst traversing the American countryside. *'Mark Trade'* reveals a disturbing clash between age-old nature and contemporary culture.

The final video work Trecartin and Fitch chose is *'Temple Time'* (2016). This film evokes a strange reality show, in which ghost hunters search for supernatural activity in an abandoned Masonic temple. This work resembles the cult film *'The Blair Witch Project'*. There is less true horror, but for the viewer it is every bit as unnerving.

Throughout their work, Trecartin and Fitch successfully comment, in their own grotesque way, on our contemporary Internet culture. That commentary, however, goes far beyond simply taking a critical approach to this culture. What makes their work unique is that in it they succeed in creating entirely new, disruptive realities.

Michiel Van de Velde

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Ryan Trecartin (b. 1981) and Lizzie Fitch (b. 1981) met in 2001 while studying at the Rhode Island School of Design, and have collaborated closely ever since. In 2006 Trecartin, at the age of 25, became the youngest artist included at the Whitney Biennial. The two artists have presented exhibitions at venues such as MoMA PS1 in New York (2011), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2011), and Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin (2014), and have also participated in prestigious exhibitions including the New Museum Triennial (2009), the Venice Biennale (2013) and the Berlin Biennale (2016). After having lived and worked in Los Angeles for a number of years, the artists are currently based in Athens, Ohio.

Translation: Stephen Smit