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Ryan Trecartin: Art for the Age of YouTube



Courtesy the artist and Elizabeth Dee, New York

Ryan Trecartin
Roamie View - History Enhancement (Re'Search
Wait'S)
2009-2010
HD video
duration 28 min., 23 sec.

Imagine a funhouse dreamscape of smeared clown mouths, martini-shaken with YouTube videos and a dash of Baudelaire, and you have a glimpse of the art of Ryan Trecartin.

An exhibition of Trecartin's 2007–10 body of work, "Any Ever," opened this weekend and runs through October 17 at MOCA Pacific Design Center.

Video artist/filmmaker Trecartin (by way of Ohio, Rhode Island School of Design, Philadelphia, New Orleans and Miami) has relocated to Los Angeles just as New York gallery owner Jeffrey Deitch left Deitch Projects to become the new director for The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA).

"Ryan Trecartin has invented a new cinematic language that corresponds to the way people experience the Internet," Deitch said.

In her [2006 story](#) on up-and-coming artists, Wall Street Journal art reporter Kelly Crow singled out then-25-year-old Trecartin, who was the youngest artist chosen for that year's Whitney Biennale and was deemed a "virtuoso" by the usually-reserved Getty Museum.

The installation of "Any Ever" consists of seven video screens over two floors of the Design Center. The downstairs half of the diptych is "Trill-ogy Comp" (consisting of "P.opular S.ky (section ish)," "K-CorealNC.K (Section A)" and "Sibling Topics (Section A)," all from 2009), while upstairs is the "Re'Search Wait'S" series (consisting of "Roamie View – History Enhancement (Re'Search Wait'S)," "The Re'Search (Re'Search Wait'S)," "Ready (Re'Search Wait'S)" and "Temp Stop (Re'Search Wait'S)," all shot in Miami in 2009-2010).

"Trill-ogy Comp" screens as a sequential program, while the four films of "Re'Search Wait'S" run simultaneously, so that the viewer "can curate and structure their own plot and themes, through the process of editorializing, by how long they stay in each space," said Trecartin.

Trecartin's complex, non-linear narrative "movies" (his term) are impressionistic and intent on exploring the frontiers of new media. "When YouTube came around, it gave a better understanding of how people are using technology differently now...so that the director is no longer just behind-the-camera but is also a part of the front-of-camera now. It's easiest to think in terms of those teenage-bedroom YouTube videos.

"But I think it's bigger than that. It's happening culturally in all forms of media and technology. I don't think there's distinction between what's 'high' or 'low,' anymore, what's professional or amateur, all those dichotomies, they inhabit the same media space now."

One of Trecartin's primary themes (and the reason he often accentuates mouths with clownish makeup) is his interest in "exploring language and how it is changing. Mouths are a direct expression of an idea I'm trying to get across. I'm exploring all levels of a particular word – how it's said and with what accent and what positioning within a sentence and how a person's face is moving and what kind of props they're using with that word. It's all communication. Media and technology are not separate from that anymore."

Trecartin writes, directs and edits his movies, which he calls "highly scripted, but it's a very collaborative process. During a shoot no one really sees the script, so we go off on tangents...we always stay on track with the script, which acts as a structure."

As for whether he wants to someday make linear narrative films that are screened in movie theaters as well as galleries, Trecartin said, "I'm interested in exploring the places where all media meet. As TV, internet, art, games and movies all start moving towards the same point, I want to be part of inventing that space. I'd like to explore media that are traditionally seen as part of the mainstream but not necessarily utilize mainstream formulas.

"I would love for even the movies I made right now to be shown in movie theaters as well as museums. In the future, I think movies are going to be more of data sets that viewers have a hand in controlling — where the narrative originates and what happens to the content."