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Séance Fiction Bopha Chhay

Hannah Doerksen, Maggie Groat, Tamar Guimarães with Kasper Akhøj, Soda_Jerk, Guy Maddin, Heather and Ivan Morison, and Shana Moulton

'Séance Fiction'

*Walter Phillips Gallery
The Banff Centre
Through July 26*

Think Bruce Nauman's 1967 neon work *The True Artist Helps the World By Revealing Mystic Truths*. While Nauman's neon-signage work questioned the role and function of the artist in society, "Séance Fiction" examines more closely the role of the artist as an agent and interpreter of the past and the future.

In Shana Moulton's video *The Undiscovered Drawer*, the protagonist Cynthia (Moulton's alter ego) is trapped in a room. She locates a key that unlocks a drawer where she finds objects that consequently determine her fate. Cynthia frees herself from the room by playing an ergonomic keyboard as a xylophone and belting out a Coldplay tune with a cosmetic tool that encourages you to hold your head and face in a particular manner. Perhaps a kind of mystic intuition?

The conflation of science fiction titles and florigraphy in Heather and Ivan Morison's ongoing *Science Fiction/Wildflower* series becomes not only a temporal and spatial conflation but one that encourages a belief in parallel universes. What is the relevance of a Bulgarian daisy in a copy of JG Ballard's *The Crystal World*? Between the pages are pressed flowers and botanical specimens. Carrying their own language, their placement between the pages of a science fiction title forces a schism or interjection within the narrative.

Hannah Doerksen questions the symbolic value of nostalgia as imbued in objects with *I Come to Believe We All Gunna Drown*—a near reconstruction of the Overlook Hotel bar in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. Along the bar, familiar objects such as African masks and an Easter Island statue amongst others are all placed atop various vessels. We recognise these mass produced objects from a time when it was acceptable to perpetuate cultural stereotypes without critical reflection. The bar's estrangement is further induced through the absence of bartender and alcohol, and though it beckons the viewer with wunderkammer-like allure, it remains devoid of hospitality.

Focusing on the form of moving image as a way to invoke the incorporeal, Soda_Jerk's *The Time that Remains* makes use of glitches to rupture not only of the fragility of the medium but also the audacity of the film industry. The two channel work stages the past and future selves of actresses Bette Davis and Joan Crawford from movies they star in. One

is asleep on one screen while the other is seen attempting to escape devastation. The recurring glitches create a disturbance, with sleep signifying the descending starlet and the societal pressures on women in the film industry to maintain eternal youth.

A Família do Capitão Gervásio, a 16mm film and installation by Tamar Guimarães and Kasper Akhøj, looks at the town of Palmelo, Brazil where a small Spiritist community lives. People are seen to be undergoing both individual and collective healing transformations and rituals. Spliced between these moments are cut shots of modernist architectural forms from within the town. While the forms cast from concrete and wood acting as plinths and furniture within the installation might seem a superfluous trope of contemporary art, the abstraction and materialisation of modernist architectural forms as support structures can speak to our desire to discern the unknown.

As if to obliquely respond to Nauman, "Séance Fiction" positioned the role of the artist as "medium". Where language might fall short as we seek clarity and order, the exhibition reveals a tension between belief and skepticism. One of the most compelling and incidental aspects of "Séance Fiction" was the convergence of drifting audio from the various works that induced an ever present immaterial hauntology soundtrack, creating a synergy as if channeled by the works.

Bopha Chhay