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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

*We are wild dogs with turquoise fur laughing at full moons.*

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Arts

by

Jennifer Frankie Christina Martin

Committee in charge:

Professor Amy Adler, Co-Chair  
Professor Louis Hock, Co-Chair  
Professor Anna Joy Springer  
Professor Michael Trigilio

2013

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The Thesis of Jennifer Frankie Christina Martin is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Co-Chair

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Co-Chair

University of California, San Diego

2013

## DEDICATION

In recognition of the life we have shared, always having the most fun possible. In recognition of the dreams we have shared, of color, clouds, art, love, and California. This thesis is dedicated to my sister **Katie**, the poet and colorist, for inspiring me to be who I am and do what I do, knowing that I have been loved and appreciated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Abstract of the Thesis.....	vii
Thesis.....	1
Glossary.....	25
References.....	26
List of Videos.....	27

*We are wild dogs with turquoise fur laughing at full moons.*

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One last and huge thank you to my dear husband, Eric Derr, whose love, support, encouragement, and effort helped me to complete this monumental work.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

*We are wild dogs with turquoise fur laughing at full moons.*

by

Jennifer Frankie Christina Martin

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Art

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Professor Amy Adler, Co-Chair

Professor Louis Hock, Co-Chair

My thesis work is a sixty minute long experimental video, which is an investigation into screen culture and relationships, in a precarious time during a young artist's life. To make this video, I used non-actors in the fields of Visual Art and Music, and played the starring role myself. This paper will outline the video as it relates to screen culture, online social networks, the picaresque novel format and notable contemporaries.



## THESIS

The thesis work, entitled *We are wild dogs with turquoise fur laughing at full moons. (WRWDWTFLAFM)* by Frankie Martin is a 60 minute long experimental video. *WRWDWTFLAFM* exists as a stand-alone piece, to be watched as a projection, from beginning to end in a comfortable chair. This making of this video is directly inspired by experiences during my late twenties, emphasizing time spent with female artist friends in Brooklyn. The video loosely references a subsequent bout of separation anxiety upon moving to Southern California, and attempts that followed for continuity in relationships, through the use of screen-based technologies, like Skype, Facebook and FaceTime. Topics that were under consideration during the making of this work included; the specificity of the recent past, at an age before I was willing to accept responsibility or consequence for actions. During that time I made attempts to understand my peers on a personal level- what they were doing and how it was possible to relate to them beyond the image that they chose to project. Also under consideration was the uncanny, created by the visual displacement of a Brooklyn experience lived into Southern California video. For instance, when a rooftop party in Bushwick became a beach bonfire at Ocean Beach.

The evolution of my artistic practice has been non-linear and has included, comprehensively; drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, performance for the camera, staged performances, and video. I often employ more than one medium in a piece, either figuratively or literally. Prior to *WRWDWTFLAFM*, I made videos which were no longer than 11 minutes in length. And although I previously completed three serial works (*A Beautiful You, Ten Two Minute Vidz, and Trapped in the Web*), even these projects had a total running time of no longer than 30 minutes each. Similar to the time I decided I was a comedian and

bicycled myself onstage during amateur hour at the Hollywood HoJo's... this film has been another iteration of Nike's slogan (which I accept as my own) *JUST DO IT*, perhaps with an ironic dash of *NO FEAR*; (a clothing company whose slogan is also their title). Graduate school at the University of California, San Diego proved to be a safe space for me to come out as a filmmaker.

In addition to experimentation in long form video, a main objective in making this video work, was to blur the line between real and fake and allow space for the surreal. One way in which I achieved this was to feature actual work by peers within *WRWDWTFLAFM*, and to then cast these peers as actors in the film. Further blurring this line, I had the actors play parts based on members of my East Coast Crew. Furthermore, in curating the work of my peers into *WRWDWTFLAFM* the video itself was molded into an exhibition, without the confinement of gallery walls.

The synopsis of the video *We are wild dogs with turquoise fur laughing at full moons.* is as follows: Comedy and art collide in this semi-fictional portrait of Frankly, a young sculptor seeking to make something of worth. Frankly is part of *The Hands of Light*, a female art collective, whose unity is disrupted by the screens present in their daily lives. The one person who reaches beyond the screen to Frankly is Shithead, a cross dressing crust punk who unintentionally threatens her sense of purpose.

The timeline for the making of this video was March 2011-August 2013. I wrote, directed, starred in, and edited the video. I was the director of photography for the entire video and the cinematographer for the scenes in which I was not acting. I cast and costumed the actors, did set design and construction. Camera one was by young cinematographer Adriana Feketeova, with additional camera help from; Natalie Hon, Eliza Kim, Jamilah Abdul-Sabur and Eric Derr.

*WRWDWTFLAFM* was originally written as a book of creative non-fiction, from 2009-

2011. As a means of constructing this book; adventures, romances and dreams were interspersed; writing when an event or dream was striking, during my late twenties and early thirties. This spontaneous prose led to the overall stylization of the book comparable to that of an overly personal blog. The chapters and essays are written in the first person, always with the same voice- my voice. Characters come in and out of focus, some more present than others. Taking cues from Kathy Acker's novel *Blood and Guts in High School*, there is a shared thread in this work and *WRWDWTFLAFM*, in that there is little sense of time or place. Additionally, they have in common that the largest emphasis is placed upon interpersonal relationships and small intimacies.

For my first year show (March 2011), I presented a rough draft of the book, alongside a living room set for the video, empty of actors and lit professionally in the style of a movie set. After weeks of hiatus from working on the book version, I wrote the screenplay as an adaptation from the book. The strategy employed in writing this was to organize select events into a weekend in the life of the most exciting female characters. I played the protagonist in the video; an exaggerated version of my-young-self, satirically named *Frankly*. It felt natural to play my own part, as I had so many times on stage previously. In casting myself as Frankly, the semi-fictional sculptor, I blur the line of real and fake. Although I studied sculpture, the artist-as-actor portrayed on screen is not meant to be an accurate representation of myself as a person. The character exists as a satirization of the young artist, struggling to make something worthwhile in the studio, sculpting a giant USB key.

In casting the rest of *WRWDWTFLAFM*, I aimed to retain the spirit of those on whom the screenplay was based (the originals). In attending concerts by the students in the UCSD Music Department, it became obvious to me why the department is recognized worldwide as a place where the most radical and experimental contemporary music is cultivated and encouraged by professors and visiting performers. In watching student concerts, a few

performers stood out to me, due to their humorous curatorial choices and disciplined exactness. For instance, Tomasdottir's piece, *Garr*, which included the use of looping pedals, flute and an oversized stuffed monkey. This piece involved layering and looping a score of flute sounds over a period of 9 minutes, building them to an overwhelming uproar, then placing the large stuffed monkey and her flute on the chair where she had been sitting and tiptoeing off stage as the monkey continued to perform in her place. The preciseness, mixed with surprise, humor, and playfulness was exactly what I was looking for in casting Diamond Girlfriend. Another piece, composed and performed by Clinton McCallum and Jonathan Piper (as Aquapuke) caught me off guard in a similar fashion, albeit far more disturbing.

In *Movement in Relation, No. 2*, Aquapuke stood on either side of a large stage, while projections of their faces loomed above them. Following a score, they force-fed themselves raw onions, followed by loading hotdogs on buns with condiments, stuffing those into their hungry mouths, then shotgunning cans of beer. Then, as a da capo, they returned several times to the hotdogs, subsequently shotgunning beers. The scent of mustard and onions wafted upwards, literally nauseating myself and the rest of the audience. Finally satiated, the score allowed them to meet center stage, grabbing each other with hand on forearm, and violently making out whilst punching each other hard into the stomach, with the available arm. This continued for approximately three minutes, but felt like fifteen; for the danger in this activity was that they may actually vomit into one another's mouths. In this performance, Clinton proved himself worthy of playing the role of Shithead, the 'ultimate' man; attractive, repulsive, dangerous, and with a perspective or aesthetic opposite of what I was capable of.

Rather than employing a theater actor, with the tendency toward overacting, I felt that a trained musician would be well suited to the awkwardness that should be conveyed in the thesis video. This awkwardness, lying in the crevices of their on-camera performance, would be due to the lack of an instrument or audience. Still, the trained musician would be able to

rely on an already excellent stage presence, and read the script with a specific exactness normally dedicated to following a score. This sense of awkwardness was essential in exaggerating the main themes in *WRWDWTFLAFM*, namely, a culture of social anxiety, potentially brought on by the current disconnect in socializing online versus in real space.

Furthermore, in claiming the screen on which the video is projected as a gallery space, another concept throughout *WRWDWTFLAFM* is played up; the screen as a dominant space for social interaction. For instance, in the video, references are made to Chatroulette, Facebook, FaceTime and Second Life as sites of interaction. The disconnect between the characters and their originals forces the characters to exist as parody artists, untouchable in the same way that a screen-as-gallery-space renders the art untouchable.

Including a sampling of peer work was a strategy that worked twofold: first, to aid in achieving an authentic atmosphere for a young artist's world. It was important that the video be lush and full of art beyond that of my own. Secondly, in curating stand-alone works by the actors, a platform was created on which to build a *new* social network of support, similar to that which is portrayed in the video, but in real space.

The male character was written and made complicated by way of condensing several men from the book into one ultimate man (Shithead) for the screenplay. Nobody could play better the combination of Brian Blomerth/Jonathan Coward/Mark Cross than Clinton McCallum, who was cultivating his own demonic all-powerful cult persona through his compositions and performance work with *Aquapuke*. The originals were as follows; Brian Blomerth- a pomeranian-obsessed comic artist and noise musician, Jonathan Coward- a long-haired “ladies man” also a noise musician, and Mark Cross- convicted on several counts of vandalism (graffiti) and also a tattoo artist.

*Day is Done*, a staged Aquapuke concert, is featured in the middle portion of the video, when Diamond Girlfriend and Frankly attend their concert. Aquapuke are cross-dressed in

fishnets, tiny red skirts, badly applied makeup and heels with their band's logo drawn in sharpie across their chests on dirty tee-shirts. The logo, a circle with three arrows extending beyond the circle, looks a badly drawn transgendered symbol. As such, their logo is an expression of their distaste for conformity to the gender binary, while not specifically wanting to classify themselves as transgendered either, and therefore the symbol becomes one of complete subversion.

The instrumentation of Aquapuke's noise music is tuba with distortion pedals and vocals. The tuba can be seen as simultaneously phallic and yonic, another symbol which expresses their characters unwillingness to assign to one gender. Frankly's interest in Shithead is due to his non-conformity, his non-traditional ideas about art, and his apparent female persona. Once unveiled, the performance, however, is hyper masculine; a parody of doom with a spoof on the legendary kool-aid of Jim Jones, a cult ritual in which members drank grape kool-aid laced with potassium cyanide. Here, Aquapuke successfully commands the audience to pray to them and drink from a cup holding an unnamed liquid, only to then compulsively crowd Shithead with adoration. Loud in ways both visual and sonic, the Aquapuke concert becomes an extension of how men are seen in the video overall. It is during this concert that Frankly sees Shithead as a man. And, in this moment of realization, Shithead is demoted to the ranks of the other male characters in the film; classified as grotesque, unreal and undesirable.

No one else could better play glue gun donning artist and noise musician Jamie Mohr (Diamond Girlfriend) than Berglind Tómasdóttir, the Icelandic flutist. These blonde beauties had both been young mothers, both teem with creativity and devotion to their work. In her supporting role as Diamond Girlfriend, Berglind Tómasdóttir presents an excerpt of a collaborative video made with Martin, entitled *Flute and Red Nails*, in the Che Cafe scene. In this piece, the compositional and sonic limitations of the flute are explored.

Employing a new extended technique, Tómasdóttir improvised a variety of different sounds on the instrument, including kissing, scratching, tapping and sliding red nails on a variety of flutes, and creating so-called whistle tones – made by blowing gently into the mouth hole. Beyond simply critiquing the nature of flute composition, the collaboration examines the gender dynamics at play in contemporary music, particularly with regard to the roles of performer and composer. The exploration of the female position in contemporary music performance and composition employs tropes of feminine beauty in order to reclaim something particularly gendered as a symbol of femininity. Playing into current debates over the status of feminism, particularly those surrounding post-feminism, anti-feminism and the third wave, this explicit choice to make use of the gendered status of cosmetics allows these women to secure the position of the female composer and performer evoked by the explicit requirement for red nails on flutes. (text by Emily Elizabeth Goodman)

### Structural Affinities

For the purposes of analysis, despite not being intentionally made to fit, *WRWDWTFLAFM* can be classified as a *Picaresque Novel*; the sixteenth century genre of literature, originating in Spain with *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*. According to Montser's book *The Picaresque Element in Western Literature*, the genre, though hard to define completely, is usually inclusive of certain qualities; including the use of satire in telling a story about and through the eyes of a pícaro, an anti-heroine who remains constant throughout each scene. The tale is centered around a pícaro's survivalist adventures (Frederick Montser 9) in a world with great odds stacked against her, since she would be from the lower class. The picaresque novel is always a social satire, focusing on relationships rather than places and gives little to no attention to the perspective of the upper class. Frankly, a true pícaro, has no stable relationship; characters come and go without clear definition of their status to her. At the center of nearly every scene, it is Frankly's perspective that reigns.

In the tradition of the picaresque novel, *WRWDWTFLAFM* contrasts contemporary society with that of the microcosm which is the pícaro (Frederick Montser 14) during the

scene in which she and Petal visit Brianna Rigg's solo show in a supposed elite and spacious art gallery. Frankly would not have access to this type of gallery as an artist, only as a spectator. In their admiration/jealousy of the artist exhibited, Petal and Frankly rearrange the objects in the space, announcing the act rowdily as “a collaboration”. The model/gallery sitter is apathetic to this criminal behavior, and her behavior suggests that perhaps she is also unhappy with her role, sitting behind the desk at this establishment.

Traditionally, the author of a picaresque novel is writing about a time from their bedraggled youth, and because of the emotional distance from the situation is able to “admit unabashedly the frolics and tricks of his youth” (Frederick Montoser 16), which may include minor criminal acts. Some to all of the acts depicted in *WRWDWTFLAFM* did actually happen in my life, before being reinterpreted for the video.

Although one of the major functions of the picaresque novel may be to reflect the social conditions as they impinge upon the central personality (Frederick Montoser 14), this is not to say the goal is social critique. Traditionally, and in *WRWDWTFLAFM*, because of the way the story is told, moral improvement is not suggested, rather the author seeks to make light of the situation for entertainment purposes. This can be noted in the bleak depiction of the quality of social networking sites Dickroulette, Footbook and Futurlyfe. Additionally, the screens present in her life are sources of interruption or entertainment in Frankly's life, for little purpose- also serve the purpose in the video of making light of the situation for entertainment purposes. For instance, when Frankly shows Mr. T the *Endangered Banana* video on Y'allzTube, she tells him “The whole world thinks this is hilarious, but really its just two dudes dressed like bananas.” In this statement, Frankly discloses her opinion of viral media as ridiculous, while admitting that she too, thinks its funny.

The genre changes topically from era to era. The sixteenth century character of Lazarillo faces challenges as he apprentices a series of men, including; a blind man, a priest, a



squire and more. *WRWDWTFLAFM*, as a modern day pícara must face the challenges presented by social media and technological devices, as can be witnessed in the Dickroulette scene. Here, Frankly awakens happily to find Diamond Girlfriend in her bed. In the time it takes Frankly to sit up, Diamond Girlfriend has loaded the Dickroulette website and engaged the two of them in role play with strangers online, rather than interacting face to face with her friend. Lack of sympathy for pain and sorrow, as a characterization of the genre, can be seen when Frankly, instead of questioning her friend's decision, accepts it with a joke “Dickroulette, what a way to start the day. Does it count as brushing your teeth?”.

As follows are contemporary comparisons or related material; Harmony Korine's film *Gummo* for shared structural elements, Pipilotti Rist's feature length film *Pepperminta* for shared surrealist elements, and Ryan Trecartin's *I-Be Area* for shared subject matter. I have chosen to talk about *Gummo* because I felt this work shared a lot in common with my own. I have chosen *Pepperminta*, because Rist has been an influence, ever since I first saw her work in a Chelsea gallery when I was twenty. I have chosen to talk about Trecartin's work because my own is most often compared to his on a surface level, and I wanted to outline some major differences. Additionally, it has been suggested that *WRWDWTFLAFM* has affinities to children's television shows, such as *Mr. Rogers Neighborhood* (PBS 1968-2001) and *PeeWee's Playhouse* (CBS 1986-1990). I must admit these shows are embedded in my psyche and so, will discuss them as well.

*WRWDWTFLAFM* relates to Harmony Korine's film, *Gummo*, in how it deals with fact versus fiction as well as in the overall approach to narrative. Korine is unconcerned with a linear narrative- the film is directionless, nothing happens. There is no transition, no exposition, or culmination of events. On a conceptual level, this format makes sense; it feels as aimless as the unemployed people and children act in this small town, in the aftermath of a hurricane. In *WRWDWTFLAFM* there is little consequence as one event jumps to the next. This is not to say that these works meander in a way that is meaningless or primitive. On the

contrary this meandering can be seen as a philosophical reflection of our daily lives, the chaos within them, and the lack of control that we have over the way things are. Since there are no limitations of probability, the door is left open to the fantastic, the improbable, and even the weird (Stuart Miller 10). It could also be said that in *WRWDWTFLAFM* this fragmentation is a structural device used to represent the incessant interruption by technological devices (smartphone, laptop), emphasizing the main source of Frankly's struggle, which keeps her close to but separate from her friends.

While it cannot be said that *Gummo* follows the genre of a picaresque novel, for lack of a distinct protagonist, there is one structural element that it shares with the picaresque novel; in its relationship to the episodic plot. The piling of events upon each other happen in a rapid succession. Such rapid action sequences are very frequent in the picaresque novel and have the effect of dazzling both the reader and the pícara with the accumulated chaos of life's action. (Stuart Miller 21) This rapid fire piling of events in radically different locales, is something that *WRWDWTFLAFM* shares with both *Gummo* and the picaresque tradition. This picaresque device structures the rhythm of the work and reinforces the vulnerability of the character, constantly shattering her stability and moving her forward in the plot. The chaotic nature of the world is amplified by the pícara's own mode of living, by the innumerable tricks she plays on others (Stuart Miller 23), for instance in *Gummo* this would be the cat killers, a group of kids who sell dead cats for money to a Chinese restaurant owner, or play tricks on the other cat killers. In *WRWDWTFLAFM* the amplification of chaos would be when Petal and Frankly gleefully insult men on a neighborhood walk, then rearrange the gallery exhibition of Brianna Rigg, or when Frankly and Diamond Girlfriend enter the stage of Aquapuke. Miller suggests that the rapid succession of trickery is a way of emphasizing the pícara's capitulation to her chaotic world (23).

Korine's use of friends/actors and people he picked up locally at the supermarket are

truly what the movie relies on for a sense of authenticity. Unfortunately in knowing this before watching the movie, it becomes easy to pick out who is who, in turn exposing the inauthenticity. Some criticize Korine as being exploitative of his untrained cast members, in particular, the locals, but I believe that Korine shows a sincere fascination with subcultures, and approaches their communities with wonderment, not negativity. The characters who are his friends/actors are obnoxious, but the movie can't happen without them leading the stories.

A particularly intriguing aspect of the film is the 'found footage' which cuts in sporadically and abrasively, with a battered VHS texture. The texture leads the viewer to believe they may be watching found footage but over time, through the content, it is revealed that Korine made this too. Its inclusion works to increase the blur between real/unreal. Some scenes feel long or slow, but its important to spend time with the subjects to get to know them as individuals. There is a lot of sympathetic portraiture in this film; such as the boy bunny who takes care of his grandmother, or the woman with Down Syndrome who is pimped out by her relative.

Another notable contemporary artist to be cited for comparison, in regards to related subject matter is Ryan Trecartin, who first entered the art world with Lizzy Fitch as a collaborative sculpture duo. In Philadelphia, in 2006, Trecartin went from being virtually unknown to winning the \$150,000 Wolgin Prize, which gave him plenty of money to make something interesting. Trecartin's first feature length, *I-Be Area* (2007), has ties to the New York Abstract Expressionist movement in painting, originally developed in the 1940's and 50's. Trecartin's (mis)use of makeup, and radical treatment of surface by way of layering video upon video, contains some of the rebellious and anti-figurative aesthetics of the Abstract Expressionist movement. Also in the style of Abstract Expressionism, this video work gives an impression of spontaneity despite being carefully planned out.

In *I Be-Area*, Trecartin weaves several stories together in the fashion of a soap opera,

stories which never align in a direct sense and are clouded with drama over issues of cloning, adoption, life style options and existentialist questions that revolve around having several identities simultaneously. The protagonist, I-Be (played by Trecartin) has cloned himself and is now existing as I-Be II, shunned by his clone-intolerant family. An older woman named Iysha wants to adopt at any cost, and sees children as commodities who symbolize possibility. Another character, Pasta (also played by Trecartin) works as an identity-consultant to pre-teens and was once a stolen child. *I-Be Area* can be compared with *WRWDWTFLAFM* in terms of subject matter, abstraction of language, identity construction post-gender ideologies and the use of online space.

*I-Be Area* and *WRWDWTFLAFM* both rely heavily on the realm of the online as a site for investigation. Although Trecartin's main concern in using the online world is to discuss self-assigned identity and gender politics, and my concern is with human connection and deeper relationships; the works do 'meet online' as a place to investigate space and perception of reality. I-Be has several clones who are radically different from each other; I-Be the Original is a voluptuous female, I-Be II seems to be an angsty F to M, trapped in his room and no longer accepted by his family. I-Be II is very yellow with short orange hair and dark eyes, wearing a computer keyboard as a necklace for easy access to his online bluish avatar, also male. I-Be II cannot control this avatar, who spouts monologues from inside the computer. The distinction between reality versus online reality becomes apparent in the scene in which I-Be talks to his avatar from his bedroom, through the computer. The avatar is as seen as a pompous asshole, giving him homework assignments.

In Trecartin's work, the world online is a place which has the potential to offer escape from confusion, but in turn actually creates more chaos. In adding alters to the life of the original, more drama is induced. In *WRWDWTFLAFM*, the world online offers a place of potential human connection, but in turn actually offers distraction or entertainment, which is

ultimately a break in intimate human connection. For instance, when Cesar Romero FaceTimes Frankly, in turn attempts to seize the opportunity to get together in person, but quickly realizes that Cesar is only using the phone call as a distraction from her studio work. She barely even looks at Frankly through the phone. Both in *I-Be Area* and *WRWDWTFLAFM* the protagonists want something that the online world seems to promise, and see this place as a new frontier for self discovery and connection. However, both Frankly and I-Be come back with only pebbles of possibility.

In terms of the way that the online world is visually represented, there is a similarity in aesthetic approach. Trecartin makes several gestures to the screen-ality of his work and representing the internal online world as blue is perhaps a wink to the old school TV screen which, in gaining no signal, displayed a particular vibrant blue. In *WRWDWTFLAFM* Diamond Girlfriend sparks a flashback to when Frankly was once *trapped in the web* although it is not clear how or why she got there. Also engulfed in a blue world, in blue clothes, Frankly wears the makeup and costume of a jester, harkening back to Picasso's blue period, which was a somber time for the artist, after the suicide of a friend, Carlos Casagemas. In thinking of Picasso's blue period, I chose this particular cornflower blue. Here, Frankly feels unhappy when using the technology for anything other than a tool for creation. Another reference point for the online world as blue could be that Facebook, (known as Footbook in *WRWDWTFLAFM*) which utilizes this specific blue as their logo and theme color.

The multiplicity of identities relates to the current phenomenon in which the ability to shape or reinvent one's persona within online social networks is completely possible and is an accepted practice. Trecartin's use of this as subject matter asks the question; what is the reality of identity? When one part of I-Be's persona crumbles, the rest are in turmoil. The existentialist idea of selfhood is brought into question. A deep angst is portrayed in the characters, self destruction and recreation, and a desire to control one's destiny.

In *WRWDWTFLAFM*, the character of Shithead also has several personas online, but his reasons for doing this are different. Like Frankly, Shithead is reaching out to others, in the spirit of intimate human connection while I-Be's alters offer him more insight about who he is at the core. In *WRWDWTFLAFM*, Shithead has a persona on the website Dickroulette, as a beautiful buttocks, one in his real-life band (Aquapuke) as a cult leader, one in Footbook as a bindlestiff and still another on the briefly seen video game, Futurlyfe, as a friendly blob. When Frankly interrogates Shithead about hiding behind his Dickroulette persona, he replies “Oh thats just my Dickroulette, that's not the real me.”

Shithead's interest in keeping up these personas is to make friends, gain acceptance from his community, and ultimately, to find others with whom to spend time - beyond the screen, in the flesh. In inviting Frankly to “do art” with him by spray painting an underpass, he invites an intimacy that can only happen within an artistic collaboration. When he invites Frankly and Diamond Girlfriend to the tattoo shop, Shithead seeks to mark them permanently, and this potential penetration would be another form of intimacy. When Shithead and Jonathan personally deliver an invitation to Frankly at her home for their Aquapuke concert, Frankly is both touched and confused by his physical presence.

Although she expresses a desire to interact in a meaningful way, Frankly ultimately rejects the intimacy offered by Shithead. Frankly is a character who lives in a screen-heavy world, and this is where she is most comfortable; by herself, with her creations, inside her own imagination.

Despite the fact that the artists play the leading roles in the works discussed, another place where Trecartin and I differ greatly is in methodology. In addition to playing several characters in the movie, Trecartin casts dozens of his friends- directing them loosely and using improv theater methods. Employment of these unorthodox methods embed the movie with a strong expression of contemporary youth culture. In this way, Trecartin co-opts the creative

genius of his friends improv abilities into his own work. *WRWDWTFLAFM* similarly capitalizes on the entertaining quality of contemporary youth culture, though through far different means and with a different result.

The editing style of *I Be-Area* and *WRWDWTFLAFM* bear similarities, perhaps due to YouTube culture and the ever-shortening attention spans of the modern viewer. Most notably the jump cuts, make Trecartin's work nail-bitingly fast paced, holding the viewer in the moment while hurling at light speed into the future.

*WRWDWTFLAFM* on the other hand, is calm and watchable by comparison, incorporating circuitous repetitive editing techniques sparingly, during moments that require extra attention either visually or sonically. These cuts are most often repeated for comical effect, much the way an instant replay occurs in bloopers shows, such as *America's Funniest Pets*. The interjections of replayed moments in *WRWDWTFLAFM* also serve to remind the viewer that they are watching a sculpted surreality. Similar to a DJ scratching, the visual repetition becomes an exaggerated reinterpretation of a moment. My editing style slows the viewer's experience, allowing them to languish in the spectacle while Trecartin's editing does the opposite, abrasively pushing forward without reflection.

It is a form of exercise to keep up with Trecartin's dialogue, which mimics the biting sarcasm and meanness in reality TV shows, and is conceptually representative of the immeasurable internet, moving faster than it is possible to process the information. The combined techniques of jump cuts and layered video thoroughly change the viewer's apperception of *I-Be Area*. Like surfing the internet, with constant distractions of pop ups the viewer is in a different frame/place before comprehending the one just past. Trecartin's characters have a particular intonation, halfway between a whine and a yell, everyone is abrasive.

Trecartin's use of scale takes place in the depth of layering, in extensive editing techniques. In the age of shorter attention spans, Trecartin ignores the tropes of traditional cinema and successfully delivers a feature length work which lends itself to audience devoid of an attention span. And like a flashy advertisement, he employs bright colors, at once garish and enticing.

Trecartin as a true colorist, smears his palette over the faces of his characters in an Abstract Expressionist manner, perhaps in the palette of De Kooning; with deep yellows, pink and orange and the occasional cerulean blue or cobalt green. In these strokes of makeup, Trecartin blurs the race and renders many of his characters genderless, placing more importance on the general mood or personality of any given character. The character of Pasta in particular has yellow arms and a whitish-yellowish face with green and orange accents around the eyes, encased in whitish-yellow contacts. The character has an intense sickly aura, with a disturbed quality of wanting to be powerful, while at the same time innocent. This comes through especially when Pasta interacts with tweens or, in one scene, a baby, whom s/he steals. Pasta's advice to the tweens, when counseling them on how to market themselves is “When I was your age I changed my name to Pasta.” Without the use of pronouns, Pasta is neither male nor female, but definitely queer and beyond gender in the Deleuzian sense.

For Deleuze, everyday opinions generalize and reduce concepts to their already known forms. Everyday opinion is also limiting, Deleuze argues, because it assumes that there simply is a common world, there to be shared through language as information and communication. Opinion not only assumes a present and shared world, it also assumes a common sense whereby thinking takes the same 'upright' form distributed among rational perceivers. (Claire Colebrook 23)

In *WRWDWTFLAFM* Shithead is depicted as desiring power, but remains powerless. Frankly only desires to have power over herself. For instance, when Diamond Girlfriend FaceTime's Frankly and reminds her not to “become trapped in the internetta again”, Frankly



is reminded of an embarrassing incident in which she did not have control over her time spent online. Later, she anxiously asks herself what her social mirror looks like. Though Frankly is deeply rooted in just one persona, she does not know how this reads to others, but, like Shithead, fears unpopularity.

In 2010, Swiss artist Pipilotta Rist made the feature length movie *Pepperminta* whose protagonist (Pepperminta) is parented by a grandmother who is represented as an eyeball paperweight. Her grandmother's main advice is "Always do what you daren't and see what happens." Pepperminta's adult life is ruled by her inner child who is "an anarchist of the imagination." As a scientist, it is Pepperminta's dream to free people from their fears using color and hypnosis. Werwen; a chubby, unattractive bubble-boy and Edna; a lesbian tulip fieldworker join as comrades in her mission.

*WRWDWTFLAFM* uses both verbal and non-verbal language incorrectly to expose the absurdity and perhaps disposability of everyday language. For instance, in renaming the popular website Chatroulette as Dickroulette, I sought a more accurate naming, since very little chatting occurs on this site, which is mostly comprised of online participants spinning a roulette wheel to by chance meet screen to screen with the genitalia of a stranger. The nature of language is that it often becomes false once it is spoken. An object, once named, is transformed in the naming process.

It is possible that the current state of language, with the addition of shorthand text-speak language, exemplifies the already narrowing vocabulary we are experiencing. *WRWDWTFLAFM* makes a nod to this shrinking in the incorporation of SMS text language into the everyday vocabulary of the characters (BTW, LOL, WTF). Is it possible that this shrinking has the potential to dilute the meaning of spoken words and slowly render us impotent for true expression in verbal language. This is not necessarily negative, since it has the potential to accelerate the standardization of a global language. Why talk at all when

gesture (can be more effective).

The works of Trecartin, Rist and I all share in the expression of abstracted language, though each for different reasons. An Abstract Expressionist use of language is explored in Trecartin's work through the use of text speak and invented slang words thrown around rather than scripted into sentences. This fascinating use of language places emphasis more on personality and feeling in a poetic sense rather than communicating information directly. This use of language is not unlike American comedy artist Andy Kaufman's *Conga Drum Skit*, in which he tells the story of the children in a village who sneak off during harvest time without the use of any real words, only gibberish, congas, and facial expression. In this severe abstraction of language, the expression becomes something that can be conceptually and universally understood.

The use of abstracted language occurs in *Pepperminta* when the protagonist encounters authority, whom she obstinately ignores. Several times in her film, the voice of authority is abstracted into angry gibberish, sounding halfway like a bark, and can therefore be universally understood as commanding. Rist does not need to script the voice of authority because we already know their intention.

The largest portion of *WRWDWTFLAFM* containing abstracted language is during the *Color Party* scene, in which Frankly, Petal and Joey are painting their nails and applying makeup in areas where makeup does not usually belong (arms, hands) in defiance of the societal expectations of beauty. The women don't use full sentences and barely use real words. Furthermore, portions of the scene are sped up, prompting the speech to become higher in pitch. Here, in an exaggerated slumber party fashion, they appear to bicker, gossip, watch TV and speculate about their host. In this scene it is only important to get a glimpse of what they are discussing, and to understand a shadow of an idea, that they are parodying slumber party aesthetics and the frivolous talk that comes with it.

In terms of viewing *WRWDWTFLAFM* as a fantasy scape, let's first look to a contemporary contextualization; lonelygirl15, the project and screen name of an actress hired by viral media artists in 2006. In watching the videos of lonelygirl15, viewers believed they were witnessing the real life video diary of a 15 year old girl. They wanted to believe they were witnessing and participating in this intimate conversation with a beautiful teen. As seen early on in *WRWDWTFLAFM*, Frankly flashes back to a time when she was *Trapped in the Web*. Originally intended for an online audience, this scene is satirical, and aims to subvert what is expected within the YouTube context, by making the personal struggle reach an all-time peak, sending the viewer into a state of complete uncomfortably. For me, it was a test. Like many social networks, pornography and the internet in general, *WRWDWTFLAFM* brings to life a fantasy experience to the viewer, rooted in reality. *WRWDWTFLAFM* intertwines fact and fiction, by mixing dreams with real life events, using actual art by real artists and prop art, and in having real artists play parts based on other artists. As a semi-fictional video, the viewer cannot engage with the work as an accurate representation of a weekend in the life of a young artist, but is invited to suspend disbelief that it might be.

Another element of fantasy exists within the rich imagination of Frankly, where all things are possible; she *can* connect with others, she *does* hangout with the Hands of Light in her dreams, her key sculpture *is* awesome and she *can* collaborate with famous artists like Brianna Rigg *and* communicate with inanimate objects (Mr. T).

In Rist's work *Pepperminta*, the importance of color to the plot is exemplified formally in the increased saturation within the image itself. The quality to which the saturation exists is exquisite, whether projected or watched on a screen the hues seem to give a quality of having light from within them completely undiluted by white or black, the color is seen as pure. According to the movie, the general population has submitted to the daily grind and fear getting what they want, instead settling for boredom and what is already available. This purity

is key to the concept that Pepperminta as a pure, creative and enlightened spirit the fantasy that she is the only one who can heal the general population. The scopophilia in *Pepperminta* is not in looking at the people or bodies, but immersing oneself in the color and textures present in Rist's cinematography.

In comparing *WRWDWTFLAFM* to PBS's *Mister Rodgers' Neighborhood*, a similarity in structure and intent can be found. In his neighborhood, it is not Mister Rodgers who is utterly fascinating, but his neighbors, his community. He acts as a host, and through his interests in his neighbors and what attracts him to them and how he deals with the problems that arise, the viewer can indirectly learn more about Mister Rodgers and his ideals. As such, he is not the main attraction. In real life, as a teacher, Mr. Rodgers had an interest in informing children about the importance of community and encouraging an attitudes of acceptance, individuality, and imagination. In making *WRWDWTFLAFM*, my interest was not in gaining adoration for myself personally, but rather to share a world, similar to my own a fantasy based in reality, that I find fascinating. Mr. Rodgers cast his own community of friends to play the parts in the television show, often using parts of their real names as their character names. By pure coincidence, Mr. Rodgers and I both named a smaller character after our maternal grandfathers. He named the Delivery Man Mr. McFeely, and I named the mustached female painter Cesar Romero. Another television show that bears similarities to *WRWDWTFLAFM* is CBS's *PeeWee's Playhouse*.

Paul Reubens had beginnings as the character of PeeWee in stand up comedy. I also originally played at satirizing myself on stage as a comedian. In comparing *WRWDWTFLAFM* to CBS's *PeeWee's Playhouse*, it can be said that Paul Reubens and I have similar aesthetics in terms of set design. *PeeWee's Playhouse* was a children's television show, and included the animation or personification of PeeWee's furniture and other inanimate objects or animals. For instance, Chairry, a turquoise chair that had an eyes and mouth and spoke and

sometimes hugged PeeWee. Chairry offered a place of rest, to get away from the madness of the visitors to PeeWee's home. Chairry could be compared to the character in *WRWDWTFLAFM*, Mr. T, a ceramic turtle sculpture whom Frankly visits to get away from it all. Mr. T offers Frankly comfort, advice and provides her a place to escape to watch her favorite Y'all's Tube (YouTube) videos. PeeWee and Frankly share another similarity, in that they are physically adults who sometimes act as children. PeeWee wears clothes that are too small for his already small frame, and when frustrated one of his famous retorts is "I know you are but what am I?" with a roll of the eyes. He owns his own home, but it is filled with toys and other impractical devices. Similarly, Frankly exhibits childlike qualities in her body language, she skips often, and refers to taking severely large steps up a path tiled to look like a snake as 'exercise'. Furthermore, Frankly as woman-child is seen during the times when she speaks to Mr. T and believes she is communicating with him.

It is through the use of this childlike goofiness that the characters of PeeWee and Frankly reach viewers initially comedically, as a bridge to more serious issues. Sometimes life *is* so crazy or upsetting that sitting in a chair feels like a hug, or watch videos on YouTube provides a much needed place to zone out. PeeWee requests wishes of Jambi the Genie, a disembodied green genie head that lives inside of a bejeweled box and never gets exactly what he wants – and Frankly's interactions with friends on FaceTime never quite give her the intimacy that she wants. Though portrayed as comical, these scenes can belie a sadness or feeling of loss that is very real.

Another notable feature of *WRWDWTFLAFM* is the preference given to depicting one on one encounters. It is during these intimate interactions that characters have the potential to be free from the social construct and free from their multiplicity of online identities. Networked, we are together, but so lessened are our expectations of each other that we can feel utterly alone. (Sherry Turkle 154) In the real space interactions depicted in

*WRWDWTFLAFM*, there is a potential for intensely real or authentic interactions. In personal space, it is easier to jump over social hurdles. For instance, in the *Corndog* scene, Shithead reaches Frankly in a new level of intimacy, albeit only for an afternoon. He does this through allowing her to see who he is as an artist. As he spray paints he proclaims “Hell yeah, its art.” Previously Frankly believed that art was something made in a studio, shown in galleries but is now touched by Shithead's enthusiasm in this intimate collaboration, and through his eyes, she can view graffiti in a different light.

In regards to the way in which community is shaped in the technological age, *WRWDWTFLAFM* refers back to this question repeatedly, and leaves the answer open-ended. In *WRWDWTFLAFM*, Frankly views these sites as places to go primarily for entertainment, while Shithead frequents them in attempts to make friends to meet up with in the real world. I satirize several social network sites, renaming Facebook as Footbook, Chatroulette as Dickroulette, and the virtual “place” Second Life as Futurlyfe. In Second Life

there is no winning, only living. You begin by naming and building an avatar. You work from a menu with a vast array of choices for its looks and clothes. If these are not sufficient, you can design a customized avatar from scratch. Now, pleased with *your* looks, you have the potential, as Second Life puts it, to live a life that will enable you to “love your life”. You can among other things, get an education, launch a business, buy land...have a social life that may include love, sex and marriage. (Sherry Turkle 158)

Shithead has a profile in Futurlyfe, and Frankly references having one. By contrast, Futurlyfe is barely an existence, harkening back to 1980's low-fi video games, the profiles look like blobs, roaming through an unending landscape of neon, palm trees and fountains, unable to even pretend to communicate in any meaningful manner. Futurlyfe is fashioned as a social commentary on the suspension of reality that occurs within worlds such as Second Life, which promise to offer participants a chance to love their lives. Instead, Futurlyfe offers a mundane fantasy in which Shithead participates regardless, as if he has no free will at all.

In the chance meeting of Frankly, Diamond Girlfriend, and Shithead on the social media site, *Dickroulette*, the women find him intriguing because he is showing his buttocks rather than his genitalia, which is customary for this particular site. Diamond Girlfriend logged onto the site to wake them up and get them running out of the house, as cheap entertainment. Within this site, men are again portrayed as grotesque and unappealing, aggressive, funny, and not to be taken seriously. It is because of his gender neutral appearance that the women decide the beautiful buttocks may be one of them and so set out to meet him. When it turns out to be Shithead, they confront him about his choice not to reveal his identity. In reply he says, “That’s just my Dickroulette, that’s not the real me.” This acknowledges what they know to be true; online identities are a chance for escape and fantasy, and potentially less weighted by class, race, and gender.

Social networking services have become a highly popular online activity in recent years with 75% of young adults online, aged 18-24, reporting that they have a profile. Social network sites have become such an obsession with some that they raise concerns about the potential harmful effects of their repeated use, known in the popular press as “Facebook addiction”. (La Rose, Kim and Peng 59) Including these sites as a main theme within the video is to show what is on the mind of a generation of 30-somethings (like myself) who have had to transition from real space into online space in order to stay connected to peers and colleagues. In keeping with the tradition of the picaresque novel, *WRWDWTFLAFM* does not intend to critique or change the way that the world works, only to participate in and regurgitate contemporary culture for the sake of entertainment.

In the ending of *WRWDWTFLAFM*, Frankly eventually abandons the world of chaos and retreats to the tranquility of her bathtub, together with her creation, the USB key sculpture. This is the ultimate indicator of Frankly's retreat into her own imagination. Here she can escape the imagination of others (Brianna Rigg's art show, Aquapuke's concert,

Diamond Girlfriend's flute work, and Dickroulette) and be alone as a way to survive. The key is a metaphor for the key to Frankly's happiness.

As a USB key, it plays at the metaphor for the spread or sharing of information, and speaks to digital culture. As such, a USB key would be inserted into a computer, which would inevitably have a screen on which to view whatever data may be contained in the key. In - creating a sculpture, and not an actual USB key, it can be noted that although she admires the digital world, Frankly prefers something more tangible. Something to take a bath with. Throughout the film she concentrates on others, and in acting goofy, she displays her fear of being serious, unless she is alone. In the end of the video, in the bath with her sculpture, Frankly is depicted as happy and comfortable, alone with her creation, having rejected the world of others.

In making *We are wild dogs with turquoise fur, laughing at full moons*. I have fulfilled my desire to create a place, non-place which exists as a time capsule *and* an exhibition of my state of mind during graduate school. Furthermore I was able to create this fantasy portrait specific to my fellow artists and musicians during this time at University of California, San Diego. In reinterpreting the work of peers through my lens and editing process, and in revisiting the situations in which I found myself in my early thirties, I have made a video in the spirit of honesty without being documentary, and which is entertaining without forsaking deeper conceptual themes.



## GLOSSARY

Angsty refers to the way many teenagers act. Generally it involves the feeling of not being understood by anyone and a feeling of being alone in the world. In reality about a million other people are feeling the same thing.

FaceTime is a video telephone /video chat service somewhat similar to Skype and Google Hangouts that makes it possible to conduct one-on-one video calls between newer Apple iPhone, iPad, iPod touch and Mac notebooks and desktops.

Footbook is Martin's made up word, which acts as a stand-in for Facebook. Facebook is the most popular online social networking site started in 2004 for college students by Mark Zuckerberg.

F to M is an abbreviation for female-to-male, and refers to a transgendered person who was born or assigned as a female at birth, and subsequently identifies as a male; and may or may not have undergone surgical or hormonal gender re-assignment changes.

Futurlyfe is Martin's made up word, which acts as a stand in for Second Life. Second life is a 3D online world lived in and built by its participants, and considered medium for creative self-expression, social interaction, and fun, where participants can be or do almost anything.

A pop up is a type of window that appears on top of (over) the browser window of a website that a user has visited. In contrast to a pop-under ad, which appears behind (in back of) the browser window, a pop-up is more obtrusive as it covers other windows, particularly the window that the user is trying to read.

Twrens is a colloquial word for persons between middle childhood and teenage years, usually aged 8 -12. The word is a blend of teen and between.

Parkour is a method of movement focused on moving around obstacles with speed and efficiency. Originally developed in France, the main purpose of the discipline is to teach participants how to move through their environment by vaulting, rolling, running, climbing and jumping.

BTW is SMS text abbreviation for “by the way”.

WTF is SMS text abbreviation for “what the fuck?”.

LOL is SMS text abbreviation for “laugh out loud”.

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## LIST OF VIDEOS

1. *We are wild dogs with turquoise fur laughing at full moons.* File name: WRWD.mov