

Nottingham Contemporary
Teacher / Group Leader Notes

Ridykeulous: Ridykes' Cavern of Fine Wines and Deviant Videos

23 Sep – 7 Jan 2024

Featuring: Film, video installation, sculpture and performance.
Curriculum: Art & Design, Media Studies, Performing Arts, PSHE, SRE, Citizenship, History, English
Themes: Social justice, activism, gender, identity, relationships, community, humour, language and word play, performance

Ridykeulous is a curatorial initiative by the internationally renowned American artists Nicole Eisenman and A.L Steiner, joined here by Sam Roeck. The exhibition focuses on queer and feminist art and features the work of over 30 LGBTQI+ contemporary artists.

The exhibition uses humour and 'queer fabulousity' to challenge the art world and culture at large. It seeks to erode the positioning of LGBTQI+ art and identities as 'alternative'. The exhibition provides an opportunity for inclusive cross-curriculum learning and conversations.

Gallery 1



My Barbarian, *Standelabra VI* and *Maskworkers* installation view, Courtesy the artists and Vielmetter Los Angeles, 2023. Photos: Jeff McLane.

The performance collective My Barbarian explore social issues through a queer lens. They use playful performances to do the serious work of imagining different kinds of social structures and dynamics. Here they draw on tropes from camp sci-fi and horror to interrogate the mask. A mask can be a disguise, or an alter ego and masks have become part of our everyday through PPE and social media filters. Here, the work is presented on a large screen on a stage with the performers appearing life-size. Also present are sculptural objects (seen in the film) and dramatic lighting.

Last summer we presented an exhibition by [Meriem Bennani: Life on the Caps](#), who uses live footage and 3D animation to create fictional worlds to explore social issues. Here, she returns with *2 Lizards*. Created in 2020, during lockdown and released on her Instagram account. It is the story of two lizards living in New York through the Covid pandemic, presented as weekly episodes.

Gallery 2

Warm Up: Hermitage Stage Theatre, features the artist Klara Lidén performing a set of warm-up exercises alongside the St Petersburg State Ballet. Projected at scale the performers appear life size.

Amongst the trained and disciplined bodies of the dancers, the artist's body and movements are awkward and out of sync. The artwork makes visible what happens when an outsider enters a group where expectations and codes regulate behaviour. Rather than trying to conform, the artist suggests irregularity can be the catalyst for new thinking.

A.K. Burns' video installation *What is Perverse is Liquid (NS 0000)* is the final part in a queer world-building sci-fi series. The new work focuses on water as a metaphor of transition, transmission and death. Alongside A.L. Steiner, A.K Burns was also a founding member of W.A.G.E (Working Artists in the Greater Economy). Their Womanifesto seeks to address economic inequalities in the arts.

Gallery 3



Still from Tabita Rezaire, *Sugar Walls Teardom*, 2016. Courtesy of Tabita Rezaire and Goodman Gallery.

Sugar Walls Teardom by Tabita Rezaire explores the exploitation and hidden contribution of black and enslaved womxn's bodies to advance medical science. (Spelling used to signal the inclusion of black, trans and non-binary people). It celebrates the power within their bodies and the womb, their contribution to science and the potential for healing. The work takes the form of a pink gynaecological chair and video on headphones. You can sit on the chair to view the film.



Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, *Before There Were None*, 2023, install image.

In the centre of the gallery is an installation that includes playable video games. *Before There Were None*, by Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley draws its title from a 1939 Agatha Christie novel. First published under another name that included the N-word and featured unnamed black characters.

The story in the video games explores the erasure of black and trans people. In it the characters are faced with death, but instead choose to live. The artwork also includes soft sculptural figures of the missing characters and souls. These were made by local young people working with Danielle. Discussing the inclusion of racist terms in their work, the artist says, "This book created a wealth of black torment. Having that erased didn't feel good. This is why I picked this book, I really wanted to do a new version".

An artwork by Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa is two images of the artist dressed as the Queen. One, from the front in elegant dress and regal pose. A second, from behind reveals soiled underwear. The artist was born in Guatemala and moved to Canada as a child. The artwork explores experiences of the Commonwealth and colonial histories.

Gallery 4

Created by Charles Atlas, the pioneer of dance developed specifically for camera, *Turning Portraits + Guest* is a 5-channel whole environment video installation. His works over the past 40 years have often explored "in-between states of identity". This work features a series of intimate and hypnotic portraits, performance artist Leigh Bowery and a new soundtrack.



Still from Charles Atlas *Turning Portraits and Teach*, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Luhning Augustine.

Gallery 5



Still from Young Joon Kwak and Alli Miller, *Mutant Salon: Exorcises*, 2015 – 16. Courtesy the artists and Commonwealth and Council.

The film *Mutant Salon: Exorcises* uses exaggerated and absurd costumes and performance to parody exercise videos and beauty standards. Also, within this space by the same artists, a sculpture like a grotesque exercise bike.

Resources

There is a calm space and resource area in a room next to Gallery 1. You can use this space as a break-out, gathering or workshop area. It contains resources related to exhibition themes. We are working with those with lived experience to produce resources and guidance. Resources are also designed to be used in the classroom. The exhibition also contains some explicit content. Guidance and resources to help navigate the exhibition with students is available.