Exquisite Corpse

Curated by
Tran T. Kim-Trang

Exquisite Corpse, as I've played it, is a game where one person begins by drawing the head of a body on a piece of paper. Once this head is drawn, that part of the paper is folded over and then passed on. Each person draws the next part of the body working from the head down. Once the drawing is completed, the paper is unfolded to reveal a bizarre configuration of the human body.

MONDAY, MARCH 21, 8:00			
Fever Dream, Chick Strand	1979	16mm	7:00
Untitled, Dana Valentino	1992	Video	7:30
The Sum of Them, Christine Panushka	1983	16mm	4:00
Mr. Wonderful,			
Marlise Malkames and Gregg Nations	1992	Video	7:00
Powers of Ten, Charles and Ray Eames	1973	16mm	8:00
Let's Get It On, Jennifer Engelmann	1992	Video	3:00
Kustom Kar Kommandos, Kenneth Anger	1965	16mm	3:30
Red and Rosy, Frank Grow	1992	16mm	18:00
Flesh of Morning, Stan Brakhage	1950s	16mm	25:00
Body, Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose	1993	Video	12:00
AT HOLLYWOOD MOGULS			

Mr. Wonderful

The Sum of Them

As the Exquisite Corpse game suggests, there are various ways of assembling a body. Borrowing from the disparities of an exquisite corpse, this program is composed of works in pairs that resemble the paired symmetry of the body, but pairs, too, that illustrate how asymmetrical a body can be, especially one wrought of play.

Untitled

The program begins with Chick Strand's *Fever Dream*,[1] a film of intoxicating beauty, inspiring desire and touch. Dana Valentino's *Untitled*[2] is a lyrical "poem" on bleeding, reminiscent of Judy Chicago's *Red Flag*, but with a wicked mood. The next pair of animation works are both delightful and sharp; the first is Christine Panushka's *The Sum of Them*[3]—providing a dreamscape of body types and motions that is, in Gene Youngblood's words, "at once sensuous and cerebral." *The Sum of Them* is followed by Marlise Malkames and Gregg Nations' *Mr. Wonderful*,[4] a Monty Python-esque Super 8 piece about penis envy and the taboo of showing male nudity on the screen. We then look at two works generated on the computer, one by the well-known furniture designers, Charles and Ray Eames, and the other by a graphic designer, Jennifer Engelmann. The Eames' *The Powers of Ten*[5] is a film about the relative size of things; it represents a scientific and exponential view of the body in cosmic and microscopic proportions. From this technology which was produced for IBM, we have progressed to desk-top capabilities of creating video work on PCs, as shown in Engelmann's *Let's Get It On*,[6] an AIDS public service announcement. From computer work to "music video," a precursor of its kind from Kenneth Anger, *Kustom Kar Kommandos*[7] regards the body in altogether different terms. Alongside is Frank Grow's *Red and Rosy*,[8] a tribute to Grow's father and dragster star, "Big Red" Friedman; watching this cyborg-edged film is an adrenaline-raising experience. Coming around again to the personal space and other forms of bodily transgression, we see in Stan Brakhage's *Flesh of Morning*[9] and Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose's *Body*[10] extremely challenging notions about the pleasure of the mind and the body.

It was the challenge of this festival to curate across race, gender, class, sexuality, genres, time, and profession, to see how the works would sit next to one another, and how visions have been transformed by diverse people coming to the film and video media; the idea was also to uncover past works or recontextualize works which have had wide and repeated showing. I focused on the thematic structure of the body since it is my area of work and intrigue, and admittedly, it is a "hot" topic today. There are of course many more works which would have been equally rich and educational to view in this context, and the reasons are many for their omission. I would also like to note that I concentrated on the "white" bodies since they were the most accessible from the pool of works I came across for this festival.
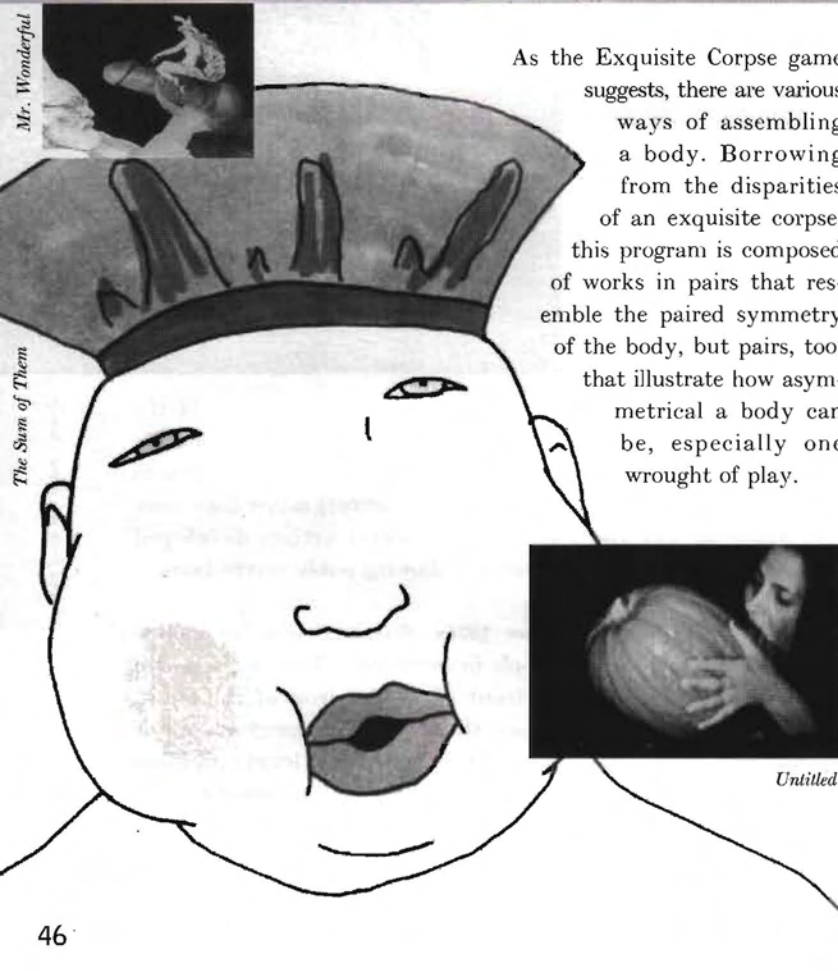
Returning to the Exquisite Corpse game, I wanted to explore the notion of play in this program. In composing this show, it occurred to me that the works all exemplified a form of play, be it confessional, whimsical, or threatening. Play as a form of experimentation has been theorized quite a bit within recent years, so I will not feign to arrive at a theory of my own, but suffice to say that I've been influenced by some theorists and have been concerned with the notion for some time. What this program offers in terms of play as experimentation, then, is boundary-wrecking, havoc-forming, delightful moods and statements about the film/video medium and about playing itself.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging some of the works which would have benefited us as well in regarding the body: Pam Tom's *Two Lies*; Meena Nanji's *Voices of the Morning*; Soo Jin Kim's *Comfort Me*; Aline Mare's *Saline Solution*; Zeinabu Davis' *Period Piece* and *Cycle*; Harry Kipper's performance work; Susan Mogul's *Take Off*; Hye Sook and Kelly Hashimoto's performance documentations; Nina Rodriguez's *Identities*; Paul McCarthy's work; Skip Arnold's work; Judy Chicago and the Women's Building works; Hilja Keading's works, and many, many more. Thanks in abundance to: Jon Stout, Karl Mihail, Cheng-Sim Lim, Abe Ferrer, Berenice Reynaud, Ming-Yuen S. Ma, Tyler Stallings, Eric Sherman, Scratching's curatorial committee, and all the artists.

Body

yeah yeah ye

Let's Get It On

Powers of Ten, Charles and Ray Eames, © Eames Office 1998

100,000 light years

21
10
meters

Kustom Kar Kommandos

Footnotes:
1. play, v. intr.: to make love in a sportive or playful way
2. play out: to use up; exhaust
3. play, n.: action, motion, or use
4. play, v. tr.: to use or manipulate, esp. for one's own interests
5. play both ends against the middle: to set opposing parties or interests against one another so as to advance one's own goal
6. play at: to participate in; engage in
7. play, v. intr.: to move or operate freely within a bounded space, as machine parts do
8. play, v. intr.: to function or operate uninterruptedly, esp. to discharge a steady stream
9. make a play for: to make an attempt to attract or obtain by using artifice, wiles, or skill
10. play hardball: to use rough unscrupulous tactics in order to achieve a goal