

THE WALLS ART SPACE

JAY YOUNGER AND LISA O'NEILL

MEAT MIRROR

5 - 20 June, 2021

MEAT MIRROR is a performance activated multimedia installation that interweaves questions about the normalisation of cosmetic surgery with notions of the 'space of appearance' in the real and digital public spheres. The exhibition critically addresses the alarming normalisation of surgical enhancement via a multimedia aquatic installation punctuated by programmed performances. Wrapped in the Suburban Gothic's paradoxical sugarcoated grotesque, Meat Mirror poetically juxtaposes natural against digital worlds as well as butchery against beauty and mixes Orwellian satire, MGM aquamusicals, and Schlock Horror genres.

MEAT MIRROR PROBES 'BOOTY' AND HORROR

Meat Mirror looks through the veneer of social media to the brutal realities of cosmetic surgery. Inspired by a FourCorners expose of the tactics of the beauty industry (Beauty's New Normal), this performance-activated multimedia installation explores the normalisation of cosmetic surgery, using the collision of "appearance" in both the actual and digital public spheres.

This collaboration between artist Jay Younger and performer Lisa O'Neill uses a video projection of a social media feed onto an upturned dressing table mirror, which is reflected back onto another wall. Its imagery highlights the "gaslighting" used to lure vulnerable women into spending money on new body ideals.

The particular focus of Meat Mirror is the "booty lift" (or Brazilian Butt Lift). An Instagram campaign @meat_mirror has, in recent weeks, promoted interest with a game that invites followers to guess "Who is behind the Behind?" with images of impossibly plumped (celebrity) buttocks. (In order to do well you do need some prior study.) While this subject interacts with the rising tide of female fury in the zeitgeist (#MeToo, Brittany Higgins, and new openness from women about long term systemic sexism), it is also seamless in the longevity of Jay Younger's practice. For some thirty years she has used art to "take the political body and women's issues into the public realm".

At THE WALLS choreographed performances by Lisa O'Neill take place in front of the mirror, with Instagram an overt presence within the private boudoir of an "outmoded 1940s gullible Esther Williams' type character. She is seduced into having surgery; her (inflatable) bottom increases over the seven minute performance, until she is nearly dead from the surgeries and exhaustion. It has a humorous yet melancholic ending."

The artists told me that, "In Brazil you can get cosmetic surgery in the public health system – it is common and cheap. They have a lot of bodies to practice on, hence the BBL. In Australia we tend to think that harm is happening elsewhere, but it is a \$1 billion industry. We were stunned to learn that in Australia the term 'plastic surgeon' is not protected – a weekend of training allows people to operate and perform cosmetic surgery. Men and women are conned, often by gaslighting, into believing that this kind of change will make their life better. Often it has made their life worse. People have died: there are a lot of botched surgeries. This is the impetus behind Meat Mirror."

Meat Mirror highlights the ubiquity of social media in the private domain, a joining of the individual in the mirror with a commodity – sheer absurdity providing some relief from the brutal realities at its heart.

- LOUISE MARTIN CHEW, 2021 (Originally published by Art Guide Australia)

ARTIST AND COLLABORATOR BIOS

JAY YOUNGER is a visual artist, curator, and academic with over 30 years of practice and is Adjunct Professor at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. Jay's often satirical and absurdist artwork takes form as photomedia, public art and multimedia installation with the purpose of interrogating the position and status of women and to ask questions about the human subject immersed in the conflicting agendas of politicised space. Jay's work has been exhibited extensively in Australia and overseas, and is represented in major public gallery collections throughout Australia. In 2019 Jay's work was exhibited in 'Hands Across the Pacific' where she was one of eight artists representing Australia at The Ningbo Museum of Art, China. In 2011 Jay completed her Phd in the arena of art in public places (UNSW). An exhibition of Jay's 2D work will tour Australia and her installation work is included in Anne Marsh's forthcoming book on Australian women's installation art.

LISA O'NEILL is a dancer, performer, choreographer, performance director and educator working across mediums of dance, theatre, contemporary performance and new-media. She has developed a broad body of works over several decades, presenting across Australia, United Kingdom, Europe, Asia, New Zealand and the United States of America. A polymath of sorts, Lisa has presented digital art installations in the Forbidden City of Beijing, performed Off Broadway in Australia's longest running children's show Fluff, danced at the Sydney Opera House numerous times and acted in Shakespeare and Greek Tragedies in castles and ruins across Europe. Since 2001 Lisa has directed the Acting program at TAFE Queensland, using this platform to facilitate a rigorous and informed performance culture for young actors and performers to practice and study. In 2010 Lisa co-founded the performance collective Rramphouse and in 2018 the theatre collective Robert The Cat.

GUY WEBSTER (Sound Designer) is a Sound Designer/Composer/Collaborator and works across the mediums of theatre, dance, circus, sound art, installation and new media. During his early career as a dancer & choreographer Guy developed his practice as a composer and musician. His work has since featured in theatres, festivals and galleries throughout Australia, Japan, Europe, UK, USA and China and his live performances have shared the stage with the likes of Beth Orton, Ed Harcourt, Powderfinger, The Cruel Sea, Mad Professor and Sarah Blasko. Guy has created music and sound for many theatre & dance works with Qld Theatre Company, Sydney Theatre Company, La Boite Theatre Company, Shake & Stir Theatre, The Brisbane Festival, Bleach Festival, Dance North, Backbone Youth Arts, State Library of Qld, Out of the Box Festival, and Lisa O'Neill. Guy is also a founding member of new media performance and installation group, The Transmute Collective.

GEORGIE PINN (Interactive and Expanded Animator) has two decades of experience working in diverse creative roles from motion graphics and animation, to directing and producing public cultural events, interactive installations, film, fashion, theatre and sound. Her key research focus is 'empathy' as a creative force for making connection across cultural, age and gender divides. Her moving image works have been showcased in various contexts such as music videos, contemporary art, fashion, and theatre contexts and her interactive projects have been presented in a range of international locations such as Ars Electronica (Austria), Federation Square, Drive (Berlin), Robotronica, WhiteNight, The Cube, ISEA (S.Africa), Pause Fest, the MCG and Sheffield doc fest (UK).

CARA COOMBE (Young Artist Mentee) is a fine art photographer based in Brisbane, Australia. She holds a Bachelors and Honours degree in Photography from the Queensland College of Art. Cara's work sits within a biographical framework, exploring the concepts of gender, sexuality, mental health, and personal, family and socio-cultural identities. Cara has exhibited her work throughout Australia and internationally, with international group shows exhibited in Paris and New York. Her most recent exhibition was her debut solo show, 'Human(e)' at Brunswick St Gallery.

CHELSEA O'BRIEN (Young Artist Mentee) graduated from TAFE Queensland in partnership with University of Canberra with a Bachelor of Acting and Performance in 2017. Since graduating Chelsea has worked as a performance producer on Wynnum Fringe Festival, Jungle Love Festival and is the Artistic Director of the Brisbane Sci-Fi Theatre Festival. As an actor and a performer, Chelsea has been involved in several theatre works across Queensland and a variety of festivals. The most recent including: 'Love + Information' at Metro Arts, 'Terra-fied!' for The Sir Thomas Brisbane Planetarium and Starlight Children Foundation and '#Millennialgirls' a finalist for Short + Sweet.

ADDITIONAL COLLABORATORS AND CREW

LEAH SHELTON – Costume Construction

GEOFF SQUIRES – Lighting Design

ROB PEAGRAM – Rigging

ANDY WILLIS – Install and Assistant

RAY MORRELL – Install and Assistant

WILSON HODGES – Lighting Assistant

JOE RUCKLI – Stills Photography

DAVE GRANATO, POLYGRANATE FILMS – Video Documentation

ODETTE MILLER – Publicity

DESIGN – Liveworm Studio Griffith University, Cian Saunders/ Cara Coombe/ Jay Younger



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GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

THE WALLS acknowledge the YUGAMBEH people, the traditional owners of the land on which we operate, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples on the Gold Coast today.

www.thewalls.org.au