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The need to understand reality is at the root of my artistic practice. In particular the area where my own assumptions or fantasies meet physical reality. My work is the play, the exploration of reality through fantasy. This paper will attempt to give insight into my thesis work.

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By

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“The absurdity of reality demands a form which dismantles the realistic facade”

-Adorno

When my baby sister was born she became everything I did not expect her to be. Discovering the fallibility of loved ones and remaining committed to loving and caring for them created a need to understand and think through their contradictory behavior. This need to understand reality is at the root of my artistic practice. In particular the area where my own assumptions or fantasies meet physical reality. I could only play so much with my fantasy sister before the real one would bite me. In essence my work is the play, the exploration of reality through fantasy.

Exploring a more appropriate manner to translate content into form has played an important role in the evolution of my work. Driven by the need to clarify my practice, my current work is the result of a better understanding of my own thinking processes and reasoning. The ideas behind the work remain the same, but the shift from printmaking to working with video allowed my work to become more content driven. Learning to see the work objectively helped to dispose of naive assumptions and ideals and clarify the content explored.

Though the work comes out of a specific idea, it does not seek to communicate a particular or coherent position, but rather to offer an alternate way of approaching that idea from three different points of view, creating a sense of wonder. It is this method of inquiry that I am interested in. The work is an arti-

fact of a thought process, evoking notions of absurdity. The Absurd as defined in philosophical discourse is the human search for meaning and the inability to find any. Therefore when one is faced with a meaningless universe, there are three options to resolve the dilemma. According to absurdist philosophy the first option, not very practical, is suicide. The second is spiritual or religious transcendence, believing in the reality beyond the absurd. And, the third solution is the acceptance and even the embrace of the absurd. The three possible positions: of escape, transcendence, and acceptance, are used as the points of departure from which I approach the subject matter in a particular piece.

Absurdism has been influential on artists involved in the Surrealist and Dadaist movements. The concept of nonsensical, non-linear plots, wordplay, parody and dismissal of realism explored in visual art, literature and cinema inform my work. Particularly, I am drawn to literary works of writers such as Gogol, Kafka and Bulgakov. Narratives where characters are faced with a strange and mysterious force that can be understood as the existential concept of the Absurd. For instance, in *The Metamorphosis*, by Kafka, protagonist Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to find himself turned into a vermin. He tries to convince himself to feel normal, but his incomprehensible condition as an insect proves otherwise. All events and incidents seem improbable yet the casual acceptance of Gregor's transformation by the characters creates a sense of mystery.

Working with video allows me to incorporate time, space and my own body as tools. Through the manipulation of time and space I can alter the perception of reality by imposing the fantastic. The body serves as a medium to express both the fantastic and the real. In my current work, I investigate two structures: one focuses on the space in which the body exists; the other, focuses on the experi-

ence of living as a search for understanding.

In *Golden Gate* (tale), reality is explored through the absurdity of the story told. The black and white close up shot of the narrator is juxtaposed with images of child like drawings in colored pencil that appear to illustrate the story. The tale is nonsequential, evoking a sense of memory that is essentially a fantasy. It is intriguing to me that even a seemingly arbitrary juxtaposition of images wants to become a linear narrative in the mind, mirroring the constant need to seek out meaning in the encountered. In *Walking*, it is the rhythm of the steps that serves as a narrative that holds three loops together while the constant repetitive movement seems meaningless.

The three character series deals with the experience of the world approached from the three positions: escape, transcendence and acceptance. While the three personas came out of a need to make sense of my own identity, in my earlier work (1), they have morphed into independent more fantastic characters (2).



1. *Untitled* (triptych), polyplate print on fabric, 2006



2. *Untitled (Three)*, digital video still, 2010

Within the series of short videos the characters are distinguished by their appearance and each loosely represent a point of view according to absurdist philosophy. The three personas project own desires onto each but conflict in their positions. The clown character has accepted the absurd, and therefore directly manifest it. She is silent and mostly seeks meaning in play and reflection on what is experienced through creation. The tee-shirt character is concerned with fundamental problems concerning matters such as existence, knowledge, values and reason, eventually deciding that the suicide is the ultimate solution. The character wearing make-up and a squirt is seeking transcendence. She does not necessarily believes in the reality beyond the absurd, but like a rebellious teenager seeks comparable, worldly experiences.

In *The Three*, the characters are a manifestation of a single identity. The

fantastic emerges from anxiety caused by the search for understanding and initiates a break with everyday and routine activities. The reasonable now seems irrational and the familiar begins to appear strange. Thus, we see a gap between thought and reality. This incomprehensible gap between real and fantastic I denote as Absurdity. Absurdity is further heightened by the want to construct a linear narrative where there is not one. The characters are not responsible and have no remedy for this situation, but merely respond according to own perspective. I want the viewer to be intrigued by the imagery and yet be frustrated by the absurdity of the content.

The *Fall* examines the construct of space as it relates to the body, imposing the fantastic. The endless fall represents the search for meaning and the inability to find any.

Working with video allows me to manipulate time and space highlighting the gap between the real and fantastic. My work is not about finding a specific solution but about the process of looking for meaning through play. I want to offer the viewer an escape from logical, transforming the mundane into wondrous.

CATALOGUE

Zalevskaya, Liliya. *Golden Gate* (tale). Digital Video. 2009.

Zalevskaya, Liliya. *Walking*. Digital Video. 2009.

Zalevskaya, Liliya. *Fall*. Digital Video. 2010.

Zalevskaya, Liliya. *The Three* (Three character series). Digital Video. 2010.