

Miki Aurora

My works, comprised of post-conceptual objects, paintings, and videos, traverse the boundaries of the micro and the macrocosm. This process occurs through an application of the contemporary tropes associated with womanhood (in the tradition of confessional art), which transform various female archetypes into totems for the dark psychological undercurrents pervading modern Western society. Video documentation of ritualistic processes, further divulge these societal undercurrents, concurrently posing investigations on the philosophical and spiritual truths intrinsically part of the revelation of these societal ailments. A modern application of the found materials in my object art, as well as aesthetics heavily associated with the cultural mythology of wasted youth, operate within their modernity, as a mode for reformatting ancient philosophical truths for understanding within our current social climate.

Miki Aurora



Objectified Corporeality

4.6' x 2.2'

glass, hair + toenails (artist's), found objects

An interview by **Dario Rutigliano**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator
arthabens@mail.com

Highly refined and moving in its symbolic and at the same time communicative concreteness, Hollow/Static by Vancouver based multidisciplinary artist Miki Aurora walks us through an unconventional investigation about the elusive boundary between micro and microcosm. The balance between aesthetics and subtle but effective socio-political criticism, allows her to create an area in which perceptual parameters are subverted; one of the most convincing aspect of Aurora's work is the way she establishes direct relations with the viewers going beyond any artificial dichotomy between the materialization of a work and the moment we relate to the ideas behind it. We are particularly pleased to introduce our readers to her stimulating and multifaceted production.

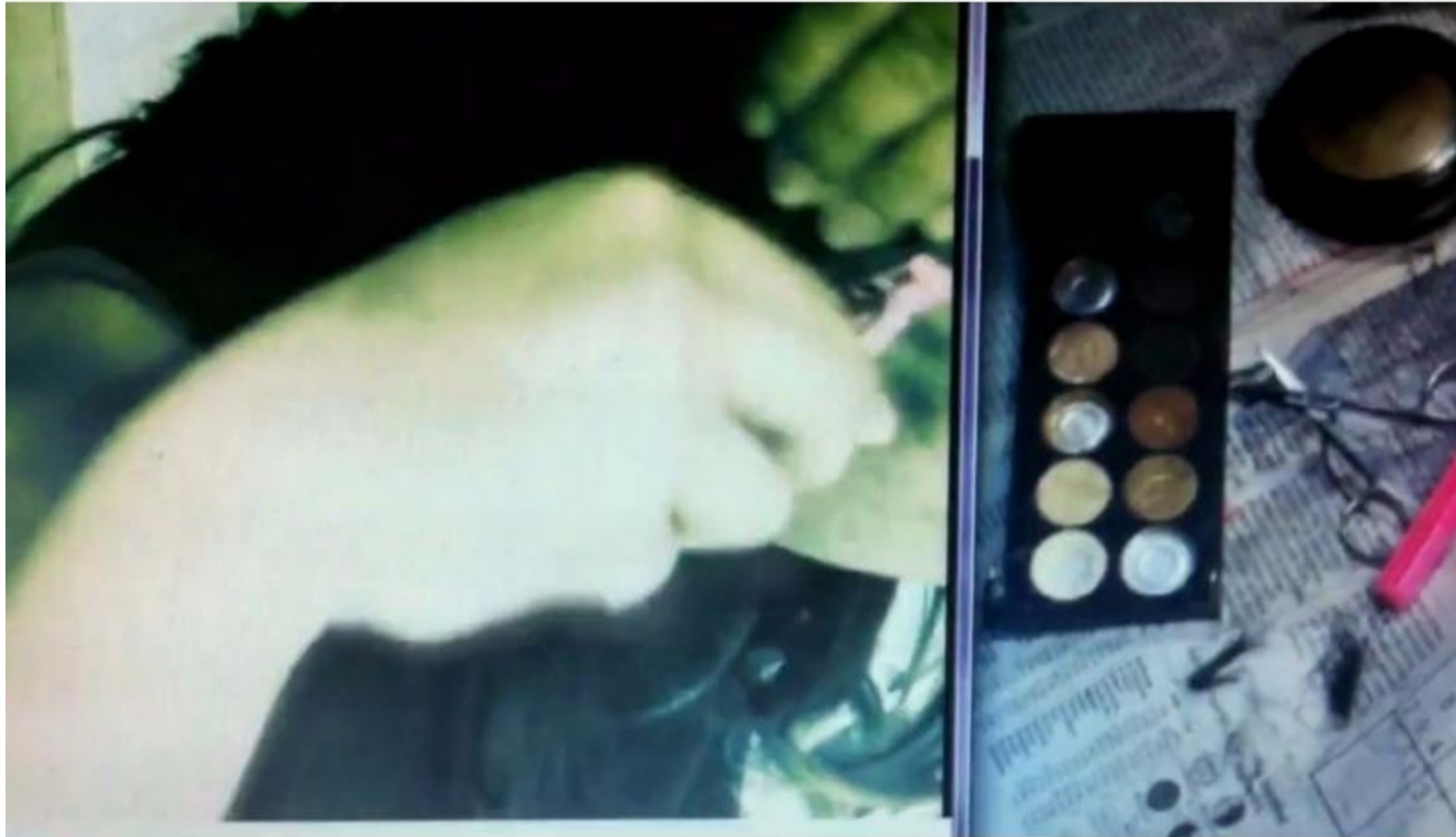
Hello Miki and welcome to ART Habens: your practice is marked with a deep multidisciplinary feature: ranging from photography and painting to video and post-conceptual objects, your approach shows a successful attempt to go beyond any dichotomy between conceptualism and a non-narrative approach, and we would suggest to our readers to visit <http://mikiaurora.com> in order to get a wider idea of your multifaceted artistic production. While crossing the borders of different artistic fields have you ever happened to realize that a synergy between different disciplines is the only way to achieve some results, to express some concepts?

Yes, existence in multiple mediums has been a crucial part of my creative identity. This probably is the result of my creative process continually stemming from an internal drive to instigate social change or to engage in some form of social sculpture—resulting in a clarity of exactly the kind of opinion, or narrative I would like to present in my work. Therefor the physical vessel for housing these narratives is something that generally comes much later on in the process of creation, far from the moment of a projects conception. It is rare that materiality or medium is the starting point for the



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creation of one of my works.

For this special edition of ART Habens we have selected Hollow/Static that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article: when we first happened to get to know it we tried to relate all the visual information to a single meaning. But

we soon realized that your investigation about female archetypes requests us to fit into the visual unity suggested by its effective non linear narrative, forgetting our need for a univocal understanding of its content. In Hollow/Static, rather than a conceptual interiority, we can recognize an attempt to enabling us to establish direct relations: would you say that it's more of

an intuitive or a systematic process? And in particular, how did you conceive the narrative for this interesting video?

The production process for *Hollow/Static* was definitely a balance between the intuitive vs systematic modes of operation. I used to be part of this loosely knit band of urchins who were

involved in the occult and lived on the street, in shelters and in social housing in downtown Vancouver. We used to always hang around Granville street and congregate in certain homeless shelters and covered areas. One day, I was out of the blue given the opportunity to attend art school in Barcelona by my family, and when I came back to Vancouver after that I immediately went back to hanging out on the street with this my old band of crust punk occultists, except this time I began spontaneously documenting them as well on camera. I ended up falling in love with one of them, a chaos magician named Scott who lived in a cockroach infested SRO. One day he was cooking up a batch of weed oil and ended up burning the soles of his feet with hot oil, and couldn't walk. This is who the man with the wounded feet in the video is, and all of the scenes of the derelict apartment are of that SRO. Obviously the injury was a really painful experience for us, and as I was reviewing the footage I captured later, I felt like it just made such a beautiful metaphor for the kind of tonic immobility that the whole lifestyle so represented. The ascetism, the disregard for the body as a means for tapping into a kind of spirituality, the attempts to distance ourselves from the horrors of the contemporary capitalist, patriarchal society. All of these people within that community were, like me, actively working to be as free from the mainstream society as possible. But the process of keeping ourselves separate from it kept us frozen in time, unable to do anything for a deeper purpose, because all energy was spent on survival, and running from the world which had hurt us all in unique ways. That is what the imagery of the injured feet depicts, running and running and never being able to go anywhere. And then of course this connects perfectly with one of those dark undercurrents of female existence which is the constant objectification and self-objectification resulting from existing as a woman in patriarchal society.

Which was one of the things I was avoiding by deciding to live that way in the first place. When I was in that world, the world of chaos magick, wandering the alleys of downtown and existing with others who had sworn to reject society, there was a bit of an escape from the kind of patriarchal oppression that you can experience in

the more conventional arenas of life, because these people were all trying to actively distance themselves from that culture of mindless objectification of women, they were spiritualists trying to seek things that were beyond all of the stuff of the material body, some in more direct ways, others in masochistic ways.

I have found that these horrific psychological traits like the conditioning of beauty culture, and the way it impedes the mind, was very similar to the kind of immobility caused by those broken feet. How long can you look into a mirror? Physical beauty, like asceticism, is another form of escape from the true darkness that lurks in the psyche. Both of these ideas are based in using something physical, something external - living in squalor and struggling to survive, beauty and the distraction of selfies—to keep away from the true darkness lurking within the subconscious. Of course, this is not always the case with such things, but it was the essence of the work in question and of that time in my life.

By definition video is rhythm and movement, gesture and continuity. In your videos you create time-based works that induce the viewers to abandon themselves to free associations, looking at time in spatial terms and I daresay, rethinking the concept of time in such a static way: this seems to remove any historic gaze from the reality you refer to, offering to the viewers the chance to perceive in a more atemporal form. How do you conceive the rhythm of your works?

The production of my video works is certainly a very rhythm based practice, the movements and shifts produced are done so automatically, like a heartbeat.

In many of your works, as in the interesting Paradise/Matrix and in the video performance Call to Arms you investigate about you once defined the dark psychological undercurrents pervading modern Western society, you often subvert the perceptual parameters that affect the unstable contemporary sensibility: many artists from the contemporary scene, as Judy Chicago or more recently Jennifer Linton, use to include socio-political criticism in their works. It is not unusual that an artist, rather than urging the viewer to take a personal position on a subject, tries to convey his personal take



Ocean

3.6" x 1"
tears (artist's), glass phial

about the major issues that affect contemporary age. Do you consider that your works are political in this way or do you seek to maintain a neutral approach? And in particular, what could be in your opinion the role that an artist could



Paradise/Matrix

14" x 14"
acrylic, found objects, on canvas

play in the contemporary society?

I don't think that my works could be called neutral, though I guess it is not often that my art pieces present a clear yes or no answer to binary

buzz questions that are often debated within popular discourse. The opinions presented in my works usually present an angle of examining the psychological factors that contribute to a circumstance, social phenomenon or archetypal



Pure Psychic Automatism

6.7" x 6.6" x 3"
glycerin, cement, plastic

trait, and I hope that by sharing these psychological insights, viewers can tap into deeper states of empathy and awareness towards the subjects referenced in the works.

Social sculpture is such a valuable practice for artists, it so often that the mainstream world undermines the ability for art to influence the constructs of our civilization. They are so unaware of the fact that they are heavily influenced by the aesthetic of their surroundings, and the effect that the imagery their minds are saturated with has on their subconscious. It's for this reason that artists are in such a prime position to utilize their various mediums to influence peoples perceptions. It is the perceptions of reality that our society is holding

that are actively shaping the structure of the world we live in.

*We have appreciated the deconstructive exploration of the dichotomies between inside and outside that emerge in your post-conceptual objects **Shoulder to Cry On** and **Objectified Corporality** highlights the elusive but ubiquitous connection between conscious and subconscious levels and urges the viewers to get involved in the variety of feelings and ideas you convey in your pieces in a personal way. While addressing the viewers to relate themselves with your work in such an atemporal way, your work shows an effective combination between experience and imagination. German sculptor and photographer Thomas Demand once stated that: "nowadays art can no longer rely much on symbolic*



Shoulder to Cry On

32" x 22"
tears, mascara, cotton t-shirt



Genesis

9.4" x 6.5" x 6"

blades, resin, acrylic, ash on hymn book



Bending Spoon

7.7" x 2"

rhinestones, found objects

strategies and has to probe psychological narrative elements within the medium instead". What is your opinion about this? And in particular, I would take this occasion to ask you if in your opinion personal experience is an absolutely indispensable part of a creative process... Do you think that a creative process could be disconnected from direct experience?

I believe that it is possible for one to experience their practice as disconnected from direct experience, but that even then, the creative production is being influenced by the effect that one's experiences have had on their subconscious. My works, however, reflect a consciously confessional practice, very much based on my lived experience.

A wise use of found object plays a crucial role in

your practice and brings to a new level of significance to the creative potential of aleatory process in the construction of meaning. While walking our readers in performative aspect of this work, would you like to shed a light about the role of randomness in your approach in general? In particular, do you think that chance could play a creative role?

Sometimes I think that the process of collecting found could result from the chance encounters of those objects, but the fact that I have chosen to pick up one found object as opposed to another constantly brings the realm of chance back into the realm of choice. It is an oscillating dichotomy, even though I feel so in control just like in life, as in the art practice, chance will also play a role in whatever we seek to accomplish,

there will always be a factor of universal chaos at play.

Over these years your works have been exhibited in many occasions and you have also recently curated C+nverg=nc- in Vancouver: one of the hallmarks of your works is the capability to establish direct relation with the audience, deleting any conventional barrier between the idea you explore and who receipt and cosequently elaborate them. So before taking leave from this interesting conversation I would like to pose a a question about the nature of the relation with your audience: in particular, do you consider the issue of audience reception as being a crucial component of your decision-making process in terms of what type of language for a particular context?

C+nverg=nc- was curated with my partner Raghunath Khe, in conjunction our wedding. I think it did definitely tap into that immersive space, that, as you mentioned, transcends the conventional barriers between the work and the viewer, particularly with this project is a perfect example of that. For instance, a performance piece included at **C+nverg=nc-**, featuring local artists Ciara and Zox Svetorovich, centered around the relationship between the technological / industrial and mammalian aspects of the human experience, and possessed a great deal of physical tension—almost violent.

So it was interesting to see the way the guests some of the guests reacted to it in the middle of the cocktail reception. We also included the work of Genevieve Belleveau, an ascetic performance artist from LA, whose piece titled *Intimate Ikebana* involved these one on one rituals during which she presented guests with a sacred mushroom tea, which had been christened with the petals of my actual bouquet. So during the curatorial process it was of course important for me to consider the way these works would interact with the people and environment, and I personally feel that it is something that is integral part of the art making process. The perception of the work is an inextricable part of the work itself, and whether that perception involves an open reception of the piece or a more obfuscated understanding—neither is more valid—either way it needs to be taken into account.



Dystopia Dreaming I, video still (model: Lindsay Starbird)

Thanks a lot for your time and for sharing your thoughts, Miki. Finally, would you like to tell us readers something about your future projects? How do you see your work evolving?

Thank you! I am most excited about my upcoming curatorial project, *Dystopia Dreaming*, which will be a multidisciplinary experience

happening on Dec 5 at Red Gate Arts Society in Vancouver.

I will be exhibiting interactive work, in particular I'm excited about a happening-style performance ritual I have designed which will center on a collective catharsis from the internalized misogyny that is currently plaguing contemporary

society. There are a limited number of places available to attend the ritual, so any one who is in Vancouver that would like reserve a place in the happening can do so by contacting dystopiadreaming@gmail.com. Thank you so much for the stimulating conversation.