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NY CULTURE

New Museum Triennial: Art for a Digitalized World

New Museum Triennial exhibition highlights wide range of 'exuberant' works by young artists

A performers in the activation of Eva Kot'átková's work 'Not How People Move But What Moves Them' at the 2015 New Museum Triennial. *PHOTO: MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **ANDY BATTAGLIA**
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On a recent morning in a studio on the Bowery, talk-show host Casey Jane Ellison had a pressing question for a panel gathered in advance of the New Museum Triennial opening Wednesday.

"What is the most insane thing about art?" she asked her guests, two other artists and a patron. "Is it the money? Is it the content? Is it the people?"

Her tone suggested that she thought it was all three—and that insanity might be a

virtue.

Special episodes of Ms. Ellison's web series "Touching the Art," now in its second season online on the Ovation network, will screen on a loop in the lobby of the New Museum, as part of its triennial exhibition titled "Surround Audience." They are among works by 51 young artists and artist collectives hailing from 25 countries.

The show defines art broadly, including sound, dance, comedy, poetry, installation, sculpture, painting, video, and yes, a web-based satirical talk show. Half the pieces were commissioned for the exhibition, which runs through May 24.

Artist Casey Jane Ellison is projected on a monitor as she hosts her talk show 'Touching The Art,' part of her exhibition at the New Museum Triennial. *PHOTO: KEITH BEDFORD FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

At the shooting for a particularly reflexive episode of Ms. Ellison's show, the topic under discussion was the significance of triennials and biennials—curated roundups of new art—in an age of abundant, often hypercompetitive art fairs.

"What is a triennial?" asked Ms. Ellison, 26 years old, in a deadpan manner that signaled her sometime persona as a standup comedian.

"It's kind of like a sports competition, definitely not like the Super Bowl," said the artist K8 Hardy.

"What is the Super Bowl?" Ms. Ellison asked.

The exhibit, said co-organizer and New Museum curator Lauren Cornell, is "very exuberant and very surreal."

Visitors preview artist Josh Kline's new installation 'Freedom' (2015), at the New Museum Triennial. *PHOTO: MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

In it, artists address life in an increasingly digitized, hyper-aware world through topics such as virtual reality, drones, avatars, product design and advertising. One work by the artist collective K-Hole takes the form of an ad campaign for the triennial, doubling as both genuine marketing and conceptual critique.

Other chosen works poke provocatively at notions of gender, race, nationality—and the relationship between artists, their identities and their audience.

"We were thinking about people who are assuming a spot in their own audience or allowing for different vantage points to come at their work that they didn't intend," said video artist Ryan Trecartin, who co-curated the triennial along with Ms. Cornell.

New York-based Juliana Huxtable, for one, said most people who know her "are aware of me as a night life and Internet figure, so I'm happy [the curators] understand all the aspects of what I do and the connections between them."

The exhibit includes self-portraits of the 27-year-old transgender artist posed in digitally enhanced settings with fantastical colors and editing effects that make her look, at times, like an online avatar.

Is she excited to move her art off the Internet and onto museum walls?

"I think I'm really excited," Ms. Huxtable said. "It's not about privileging that over other ways of creating, but it's an opportunity to translate the work I do for different people. Not everyone relates to or understands the world of Tumblr or social

Artist Juliana Huxtable poses in front of her artwork at the New Museum Triennial. *PHOTO: MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

networking."

José León Cerrillo, an artist from Mexico City, achieved a different effect with a minimalist sculptural installation that plays tricks on the mind and the eye. The works, which define space with a skeletal metal framing, greet viewers right off the elevator, arranging the room with what seem like visions into extra dimensions.

"I think of them as screens into the act of looking," Mr. Cerrillo said. "The idea was to point into the void."

For a series of dance performances that will be presented throughout the triennial, Niv Acosta —who grew up in Washington Heights and the Bronx and now lives in Brooklyn —drew inspiration from the portrayal of the black American experience in science fiction.

"I've been thinking about...how it's translated into being like an alien culture," said Mr. Acosta, 26. "Often the people in these projections are female-bodied or female-presenting, bodacious and dancing."

For his piece, Mr. Acosta and three other dancers will take over the New Museum's theater and gallery spaces to interpret "The Star Wars Holiday Special," originally made for network television in 1978, and now viewable online.

He said his favorite scene features the African-American actress Diahann Carroll singing inside a machine called the Mind Evaporator.

Artist Niv Acosta performs an excerpt of 'DISCOTROPIC' in the Sky Room at the New Museum. *PHOTO: MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

"It's a super-pervy but also majestic moment," Mr. Acosta said. "It's exciting for people who are queer-identified and also black to think about what our lineage is in the terms of sci-fi and disco. These are our ancestors in a way."

The exhibition, in all its analytical energy and cultural commentary, is particularly suited for New York, said co-curator Mr. Trecartin, himself a Los Angeles native. "It's so much a city for showing things in their final state...a place for things to go to be presented and judged, and I like that there's a city so exhaustingly all about that."

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