



Moving Pictures

Alison Crocetta's films enter a different realm

MATT MORRIS // JUN 29, 2011

Newly opened at the Weston Art Gallery, the survey of 15 of Alison Crocetta's revelatory film and video works takes up the entire space for the entire summer, a rarity for the downtown gallery.

I can't recall ever seeing an exhibition with so many films on view simultaneously; it's comprised of more than two hours' worth of footage, much more than I could hope to write about here. Crocetta has created a whole different realm, with its own sense of time, continuity and order. In nearly all of the works, one or more figures prompt some

transformation of the surrounding space by initiating an act of art — sculpture, performance, drawing and sound.

Crocetta came to film by way of sculpture. She holds an undergraduate art degree from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University and an MFA with an emphasis in sculpture from Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia. She currently is an assistant professor in the Department of Art at Ohio State University.

A trio of her films is on view in the street-level space, housed in a sculptural contraption that is like a miniature, private stage or the accordion-folded bellows on early models of cameras. Collectively titled “Clear/Fill/Reveal,” all three look in upon the head and arms of a woman who is encased in a fabric enclosure similar to the one viewers peer into. She undergoes a series of rituals that augment the relationship between body and environment through the manipulation of objects. As an example, in “Reveal,” she plucks stiff little flowers from her bathing cap so that they litter the floor around her, while she rhythmically considers, “She loves me/She loves me not.”

While the constructed conditions for the works upstairs are a highlight, the downstairs galleries have also been excellently reconfigured with architectural additions, blocked-out light and benches equipped with headphones in order to better serve as a theatre where a dozen more works are presented.

“Infinity” is a subtle manipulation of footage from 1894 filmed for Thomas Edison as an experiment for matching up moving images to sound. While many of Crocetta’s works are silent, this one has an especially strange quality due to its absence of sound, as the oddly festive scene suggests the production of music. In it, a male couple dances in a gentle circle while a third fellow appears to be playing violin into a large metal funnel. The scene is mirrored so that two versions play side by side on a loop in a never-waking dream. The unheard violin music seems to funnel from one image to the other, without ever reaching us or the men.

“SOS II” shows a foggy mirror onto which someone draws out the eponymous distress signal, only to watch it fade away again. The recipient of this call for help is only an abstract concept. As viewers, we are implicated by seeing the letters written and erased, without being able to involve ourselves beyond observation.

Crocetta's work isn't just the straightforward documentation of a series of repetitive tasks. They are stylistic experiments in dusty white spaces, fluttering and grainy film, androgynous costuming and a yesteryear aesthetic that uses images of old-fashioned carnivals and circuses, and a reading from Faulkner to cite earlier examples of whimsical spaces and mysterious characters.

Dreamiest of all the works is the film trilogy "Gather/Shed/Lift," with a score by Crocetta's collaborator Barbara White. A Pierrot clown is engaged in the work of changing her space with process-based sculpture, set to fluttering, curious music recalling the accompaniments to early silent films.

In "Shed," her polyp-covered robe is completely shorn of the small bundles, and in "Lift" enough silvery balloons are attached to her helmet that she might float away. Crocetta prolongs these transformational states by looping them into scenes in perpetual flux. We look into these changing fantasies only to realize that our world is not so different. Crocetta calls attention to realities of relationships, metamorphosis, isolation and existence that are ultimately timeless.

ALISON CROCETTA's film and video exhibition continues through Aug. 28 at the Weston Art Gallery (650 Walnut St., Downtown). Buy tickets, check out performance times and get venue details [here](#).

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