

Room 1

CHRISTIAN MESSIER

I AM THE GOD OF HELLFIRE AND I BRING YOU... FIRE

The title of Christian Messier's exhibition offers a clue to his disturbing and fantastic world. *I am the God of Hellfire, and I bring you... fire* is a lyric from Arthur Brown's only hit, titled Fire, released in 1968. This reference to the British psychedelic rock signer provides a link between the 1960s, that emblematic era of drug culture, and the two bodies of work presented at CLARK. However, the comparison ends there as the two series share little in common beyond the deliberately disquieting clash they create.

The first series of work presents disturbing images of demonic possession, including the story of Anneliese Michel, a well-known and documented case of exorcism. The young girl's physical and mental state began to decline in 1968 when she suffered numerous seizures and apparent demonic hallucinations. Her parents ordered a series of exorcisms, which can still be viewed on the Internet. The bone-chilling excerpts immediately bring to mind the cult film *The Exorcist*, which has haunted the imagination of many people since its release. For this exhibition, Messier has drawn inspiration from the most striking images that document various cases of possession. Similar in style to abstract expressionism, the artist's paintings are quite gestural in nature, giving form to the suffering that distorted the faces and bodies of the possessed. This approach has a direct link to performance: using gesture as a form of empathy for his subject. Messier embodies his subject as a way of putting himself in their place.

The second body of work, a series of watercolours, appears more playful and humorous. Messier depicts various incongruous scenes where one can see, among other things, a woman observing in horror her eight legs, or two identical men examining each other in surprise. In these works, the artist imagines a series of acid trips. The style and technique of these watercolours is closer to illustration, and, in contrast to his paintings, give a certain distance to his subject matter. Here, Messier produces a visual lexicon of possible hallucinations, which could seemingly go on forever.

These two bodies of work oscillate between humour and horror, and the artist seeks to represent his subject's experience through paint and watercolour. His choice of medium responds to the emotional and physical states experienced by the possessed, or by individuals under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs, and allows a distinction to be made between the hallucinations of a person suffering from a diagnosed illness and those provoked by drugs. In one case, a disturbance persists over time, while in the other, a momentary state leaves behind a host of surreal images.

Manon Tourigny / translation : Jo-Anne Balcaen

BIO

Christian Messier lives and works in Montréal. His performance work has been presented in several events in over a dozen countries including Canada, the Live Biennale, in Vancouver; Viva! Art action, in Montréal; the Biennale d'art performatif, in Rouyn-Noranda; 7a*11d, in Toronto; the Manif d'art de Québec, and the Rencontre internationale d'art performance de Québec, in 2000 and 2002. His paintings have been shown at l'Oeil de Poisson, in Québec; Galerie Verticale, in Laval; l'Écart, in Rouyn-Noranda; Galerie Laroche/Joncas, in Montréal; Galerie l'Oeuvre de l'autre, and Le Lobe, in Chicoutimi; and at Regart, in Lévis. Christian Messier is represented by Galerie Laroche/Joncas.

Room 2

ANNA HAWKINS

HOW TO CUT AN ONION

Anna Hawkins' overall practice is based on re-enactment, that is, the replication or repetition of historical elements or scenes derived from the Internet. In her video work, she re-appropriates images found on the Internet to (re)construct various *tableaux*. The artist points to the astounding proliferation of images and videos available on different platforms that in effect create a new information paradigm, whether it be to learn about serious subjects like art history, or banal ones like how to fold a table napkin. For example, in 2014 Hawkins created a video titled *With Outthrust Arm*, which appropriates video images of the sculpture *Laocoön* captured by tourists and posted on YouTube. Here, she isolates different parts of the sculpture as shown in the videos, and then reassembles them to recreate the entire piece, as with a collage or a puzzle. In this digital rejoinder, the different image qualities from each clip intertwine to transform the original work. The artist is also interested in the numerous tutorials available on the Internet, which guide viewers in learning everyday skills and tasks. In her video *Ham-Handed* (2014), the artist composes a face from found images of painted portraits as well as original images she herself has shot (a pair of hands imitating the act of painting or drawing on a surface). This work prefigures her presentation at CLARK.

Visually, Hawkins works through chroma keying, a technique used in video and filmmaking that allows several images to be inserted into a single composite image. In the history of recent video, this technique was used most notably in the 1970s by artists such as Gary Hill, Nam June Paik, and David Cort. The end result is similar in effect to the idea of *bricolage* or collage, which allows the creation of multiple combinations of forms or image associations. Today, chroma keying often involves the use of "green screen", which allows chosen elements to be filmed in isolation for later integration into the final film. The artist makes direct reference to the use of this particular green in her video *How to Chop an Onion*. Here, she pushes the experience of *mise en abîme* a bit further by inserting herself into the scene, imitating the same gestures that appear on screen in an attempt to interact with or create a dialogue with the other. These interactions are sometimes clearly visible since the images from YouTube are occasionally in black and white, while her own superimposed images are in colour.

While Hawkins puts herself on display, her isolated gestures, rather than herself, become the subject of her work. The demonstration is visually deconstructed and reduced to its essential core. What's left is a precise action, like cutting an onion or blow-drying one's hair. Despite our quick and easy access to information on the Internet, our knowledge – and our recall – remains fragmented nonetheless.

Manon Tourigny / translation : Jo-Anne Balcaen

BIO

Born in Baltimore, MD, **Anna Hawkins** holds a BA in Art History from the University of Pittsburgh and an MFA from Concordia University. Working primarily with video, her work is concerned with the ways that images, gestures and information are transmitted and transformed online. Recent group exhibitions and screenings include the UCLA New Wight Biennial (Los Angeles, USA), X+1 at the Musée d'art Contemporain (Montreal, CA), the WRO Media Art Biennale (Wrocław, PL), and *The Laocoön Dilemma* at Galerie Sturm (Nuremberg, DE). In the summer of 2015, she was a participating artist in the Symposium d'art contemporain in Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec. She exhibited a solo project, *With Outthrust Arm*, at Artspace (Peterborough, ON) in 2015 and in the spring of 2016, Eastern Edge Gallery (St. John's, NL) will present a solo exhibition of her work.

Anna Hawkins would like to thank the Centre CLARK team, Ingrid Bachmann, Stéphane Calce, Benoit Chaussé, Sheena Hoszko, Collin Johanson and the Symposium d'art contemporain de Baie-Saint-Paul.



**SYLVAIN CAMPEAU (CURATOR),
CHANTAL DUMAS, MARTINE AUDET,
JOSÉ ACQUELIN, MICHEL F. CÔTÉ,
FORTNER ANDERSON, CHRISTIAN CALON**

PHONÉSIE : POÉSIE ET ART SONORE

For the first Poste Audio of 2016, writer and curator Sylvain Campeau presents a three-piece program that brings together poetry and sound art. This method goes well beyond the simple musical accompaniment of text, and instead involves a dynamic combination of the two mediums. Visitors to CLARK will be able to consult three distinct projects. *Havres* by Sylvain Campeau and Chantal Dumas is a multilingual, three-character narration around the historical sites of Old Montréal. *Personne ne sait que je t'aime* unites the poetic voices of Martine Audet and José Acquelin, with sound work by Michel F. Côté. Published by Planète rebelle, the work unfolds in short fragments, as if crossing through a series of rooms. Finally, *In the Time* is an audio composition by Christian Calon, from the CD Annunciations by Fortner Anderson, a pioneering figure of Montréal's spoken word scene. More info : www.centreclark.com/en/projects/phonesie

Mediation

ARTIST TALK

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2016 _ 3pm

CLARK invites you to meet artists **Christian Messier** and **Anna Hawkins** as part of our cultural mediation activities hosted by **Marilyn Farley**, with the support of the *Programme montréalais*

Fundraising Event

NEW FORMAT FOR L'ENCAN CLARK !

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2016

It is with great excitement that, in a few weeks, we will be announcing l'Encan CLARK's new format. In the meantime, please mark April 28th in your calendars ! You won't want to miss this happening that promises to be memorable and in CLARK's signature style.



January 14 to February 20, 2016

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AND I BRING YOU... FIRE**

Room 2

ANNA HAWKINS

HOW TO CHOP AN ONION

Poste audio

PHONÉSIE

POÉSIE ET ART SONORE

**A PROJECT INITIATED BY
SYLVAIN CAMPEAU**

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DE MONTRÉAL



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