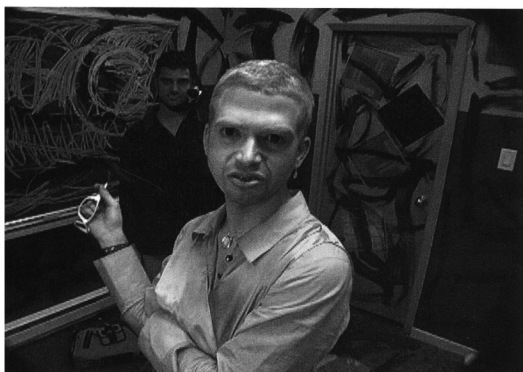


Flash Art

RYAN TRECARTIN

ELIZABETH DEE GALLERY



RYAN TRECARTIN, *I-Be Area*, 2007. Video still, 108 mins. Courtesy Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York.

Characters whine “Just Delete Yourself!” But wait until after you have seen *I-Be Area*, Ryan Trecartin’s latest romp into YouTube cyber-reality. This feverish 100-minute video hosts a diverse cast that includes children, a pregnant woman and a group of twenty something characters of vague gender. A fusion of *Pee-wee’s Playhouse* and *Desperate Living*, the piece is shot in an amateur style, conceived, scripted and edited by the artist. The front of the gallery holds a series of prop installations that were used in the video.

The settings are mutable and move without visible reason between a suburban home, a classroom, a garage and a bedroom, with a foray into a suburban office park and a corn field in the snow. A psychedelic sensibility permeates this campy almost-narrative to chaotically surreal effect; split screens and roving flashlight beams contribute atmosphere. Trecartin plays several characters including Pasta, whose identity morphs with changes of wig, costume and garish makeup including colored teeth. Voices change pitch, as characters have tantrums and interact.

The clever yet incongruous statements that the characters spout off manage to keep us engaged. Not always tied to the action, the statements can be nonsensical. What seems like brainless banter often contains impossible existential aphorisms — “I am temporary.” “Eat yourself, you’ll get full and it won’t matter” — that keep the viewer pondering and cracking up.

Statements repeat with demented emphasis: “here now” and “me you” run through the work. Cut, copy and paste provide a parallel for identity issues involving same-sex parents, adoption and cloning. “This is who I am and this is how I feel,” and “I want my own channel,” are spoken by those infected with the fame-and-fortune bug. There is a creative/destructive subplot with slapping dolls, breaking windows and destructive statements: “the world ended three weeks ago.” This work investigates the tools and tirades of the next generation. Fresh and fearless, Ryan Trecartin’s *I-Be Area* dares to take us to the ‘edge of understanding.’

Gregory Montreuil