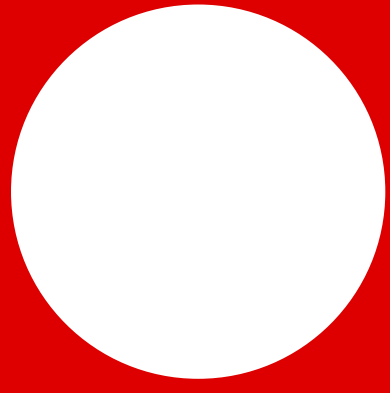




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THE MEANING OF LIFE BY HANNAH BLACK

FEBRUARY 11 TO APRIL 10, 2022
CURATED BY JENIFER PAPARARO

ART GALLERY OF YORK UNIVERSITY

agYU

The Meaning of Life

by Hannah Black

The exhibition *The Meaning of Life* by Hannah Black revolves around a video based on long interviews with three young women present when a protest tipped over into looting, an ecstatic collective moment. "This is the meaning of life," one performer concludes. Black understands looting to be a direct abolition of the commodity form, a temporary suspension of the domination of capital. She is interested in how commerce dominates the city landscape and forms a kind of second nature to which looting reacts.

However, the works in the show are contorted around the law: the video images of the performers are blurred out and specific names and places are cut to avoid police surveillance, and logos are missing from sculptural works. The law is a formal device shaping the artworks, like an Oulipian aesthetic constraint.

Another video, positioned secondarily behind the first, contrasts the erotics of rupture with attempts to give moments of uprising a more stable political meaning. This consists of an interview with two political organizers on attempts to fuse the intensity of riot with the measured language of policy. The first video attempts to capture the sensory and emotional clarity of looting, and is disfigured in the attempt. In the second, faces remain legible, but the problem of history does not necessarily do the same.

The two videos in the exhibition reflect Black's ongoing practice of using an intuitive, fragmentary writing/editing strategy to highlight the improvised poetry of conversation. The relation between the two videos, along with the objects displayed alongside them, attempts to express the gap between the complex mediations of politics, the law, and the chaotic image of immediate abolition, which we all differently register miss each other entirely and sometimes they converge, though always overshadowed by capital.

Working outwards from ecstatic recollections of shattered storefront windows, the exhibition reflects on the stubborn resilience of the commodity form (i.e. the structure of domination and exploitation in which we all differently live) and, equally, of resistance to it.

Also on view are a selection of video work by Hannah Black that uses the interview as a basic format and formal process. The interview in Black's work is polymorphic used by the artist as a means to investigate a succession of esoteric, psychological, and political subjects, while also being an itinerant subject and formal device. Black's interviews are relational, rarely presented as a singular and as such build relevance in their connection to each other. For example, *Raymond Rayney* or *Rayney Raymond* (2019) are two singular but interrelated videos with two overlapping protagonists, who both interrupt and augment each other but they combine into a single piece — triangulated with Black as she interjects — melded into a unified work through the editing process. *Aeter* (Jack) & *Aeter* (Sam) (2018) are also co-related, sharing a title, interviewer, setting, and lighting, but they are also singular Jack is one protagonist digests his own and the other is a recipient of a bone transplant. Printed transcripts for each video is available in the gallery.

Hannah Black works across mediums from video to performance, most recently exhibiting *Wheel of Fortune* at gtaExhibitions, Zurich, Switzerland (2021); *Beginning, End, None* at ORG Project (2020); and *Dede, Eberhard, Phantom* at Kunstverein Braunschweig Germany (2019). She has exhibited widely, presenting work at Performance Space, New York (2019); Eden Eden, Berlin (2018); Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2018); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2017); mumok, Vienna (2017); and New Museum, New York (2016). She has published widely, including in *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Tank*, *Harpers*, *4 Columns* and *The New Inquiry*. She is the author of *Life* (2017), which she co-wrote with performance artist Juliana Huxtable, and *Dark Pool Party* (2015), an auto-fictional collection of poems and texts. In 2022, Capricious Publishing released her novella, *Tuesday or September or the End*. She is represented by Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin, and Arcadia Missa, London.

The Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) is a public, university-affiliated, non-profit contemporary art gallery supported by York University, Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, and by our membership.

York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been taken care of by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many Indigenous Peoples from numerous First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

AGYU promotes 2SLGBTQIAP+ positive spaces & experiences and works towards being barrier free.

We are committed to anti-racism and working to eradicate institutional biases and develop accountable programs that support Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour.

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The Meaning of Life is commissioned by the AGYU and marks Hannah Black's first solo exhibition in Canada. It is curated by Jenifer Papararo, AGYU Director/Curator, produced with the support of Clara Halpern, assistant curator, AGYU. Exhibition production was lead by Carmen Schroeder and supported by Robert Ross, Micah Adams, Curtis Amisich, and Corrine Carlson on installation. Audio visual technical support by Jeremy Mimmagh.

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AGYU Staff List: Allyson Adley, Collection/Education Assistant; Clara Halpern, Assistant Curator; Liz Ikiriko, Curator of Collections and Contemporary Engagement; Huaihong Li, Administrative Assistant; Michael Maranda, Assistant Curator; Felicia Mings, Curator; and Jenifer Papararo, Director/Curator. Student Employees: Young Canada Works Communication Intern: Shadio Hussien; Work Studies: Darla Deigratia, Jordan-Layne Gionet, and Shriya Mujumdar.