

COMPANY

Women's History Museum

The Massive Disposal of Experience

May 5 - June 11, 2022

145 Elizabeth Street

Opening reception: May 5th, 6 - 8pm

For their second solo exhibition at Company, Women's History Museum explores themes of consumerism, the evolving modes of shopping, and the consciousness of commerce in a two-channel film titled, *The Massive Disposal of Experience*.

The film's narrative is centered around its main character Experience, a vintage clothing reseller in a not so far off future. We first find Experience in her bedroom hunched over her laptop searching and bidding on items and waiting for sales. In this competitive online landscape, she is desperately trying to set herself apart by advertising and is simultaneously letting out a hyperbolic cry for help over her own mental state in her listings.

We follow Experience to New York City where she drops off sales to unseen buyers and window shops while contemplating her role within the retail system. NYC's historic Garment District is the perfect backdrop for her rumination. The Garment District, once a destination for clothing factories and bustling with fashion related activity, is filled with vacant storefronts; factories are now overseas and stores have moved online. Experience's career is emblematic of a further shift of the individual seller as a store. People like Experience have become the proxy for the now defunct corporeal shopping experience.

Somehow, Experience's outfits change as she turns each corner. Perhaps there is a new technology where clothing is even more disposable and a new look is accessible for every moment. She dips into Times Square and she is now wearing a dress made of literal refuse: shopping bags, receipts, and magazine clippings, the waste of her work that she wears like a badge. Times Square has always been a paradox of grand visuals commingling with grim reality and nowhere else is the contrast so extreme. We see her standing in front of gutted stores with neon lights reflecting off of the windows, a metaphor of the hollow emptiness behind the commercial promise of advertising.

She starts to find mysterious clues and follows them down a hypnotic blue escalator that transports her into a virtual dimension. This is when Experience takes on a digital form of an avatar and finds herself in a new location — a shopping mall. She has never been in a mall before, to her they are relics of a past time. This animated portion of the film has parts reminiscent of early video games. The mall architecture itself is a composite collage of different malls throughout time, from the early art nouveau French arcade to the suburban mall of the 1990s. In this mysterious virtual mall, Experience must collect items to continue her journey, a metaphor for her real experience of escapism through buying. It seems as if in this virtual reality, Experience's lifetime(s) of shopping is coming back to haunt her in a spectacle created by humanity's late capitalist ills.

The film is accompanied by an immersive installation featuring costumes worn by Experience that hang on air-brushed animalistic mannequins. Some of the garments imitate Experience's feline avatar form, while others are made up of different fashion oriented detritus. There is a boa made up of hangers and vintage clothing tags, a dramatic ball gown composed of novelty "shopping" related t-shirts, a replica of a 1990s Vivienne Westwood corset made from vintage Westwood shopping bags, and an ensemble constructed from silver bags that Experience carries throughout the film. The room is filled with shopping bags and chairs that look like stacks of magazines, setting a scene evocative of the abandoned retail spaces and mall in the film.

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Special thanks to

3D Animation: Sacha Alexandra, Tammy Wei, and Brock Womack

3D Animation and sound: Aran Atsuo

2D artwork and set design: Jami Tortorelli

Filming: Aidan Barringer

Actress: Justine Crawford

Mannequin airbrushing: Will Sheldon