

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

5216 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77006
CAMH.ORG | @camhouston

Press Release

Exhibition

Jordan Strafer: Trilogy

July 28–November 26, 2023



Jordan Strafer, *SOS* (video still), 2021. HD video, color and sound, 11:08 minutes. Courtesy the artist.

#JordanStrafer
#Trilogy
#atCAMH

Press Contact

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HOUSTON, TX (June 2, 2023) – Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH) is excited to announce the upcoming exhibition, *Jordan Strafer: Trilogy*, the artist’s first solo museum exhibition. Both perversely pleasurable and pleasurably perverse, Jordan Strafer’s videos are absurd, fantastical, humorous, and, at times, violent meditations on power and the uniquely human capacity to inflict violence, be it physical, psychological, or both. The exhibition presents Strafer’s recent trilogy of videos *PEP (Process Entanglement Procedure)* (2019), *SOS* (2021), and *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER* (2022), alongside a selection of related works on paper by the artist.

In her highly narrative videos, Strafer draws from both autobiography and a range of cultural sources to create what the artist refers to as “Mad Libs-like” collages of visual and textual references that include public speeches, psychoanalytic theory, film history, and literature. Allusions to popular culture such as Gwyneth Paltrow’s 1999 Academy Awards speech, *The Wizard of Oz*, Judy Garland, and the televised testimonies of Anita Hill and Christine Blasey Ford are mixed with the artist’s personal memories. To make her films, Strafer often employs

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Jordan Strafer, *SOS* (video still), 2021. HD video, color and sound, 11:08 minutes. Courtesy the artist.

both dolls and human actors, reflecting her interest in the ways that dolls, masking, and other types of stand-ins can serve equally as archetypes of identity, objects of projection, and surrogates or doubles for real people. Periodically, human or silicone hands enter the frames to wipe a doll's tear with Q-tips, or to caress and reposition it, simultaneously suggesting care, control, and containment. Strafer's videos address the insidious and violent nature of whiteness, privilege, and misogyny, while serving less as a judgment on violence and cruelty than as a testament to their very existence.

Taking the form of both single and two-channel video installations, Strafer's films emerge as a series of familial psychodramas turned horror films in which no one survives unscathed. The three works were made in the wake of Strafer's father's death, and indeed ailing or malaligned fathers carry throughout, walking the line between care and cruelty. Also included in the exhibition are a selection of drawings from the artist's *Pink Drawing* series, which consists of 75 small scale graphite on onionskin paper works begun in 2017. Produced while Strafer was grieving the loss of her father, the drawings are based on screenshots from movies, blogs, TV shows, cartoons, and other sources that the artist collected over the years and subsequently traced. As with her video works, in the *Pink Drawings* the artist employs imagery from pop culture and mass media, including Betty Boop and Bambi, stills from films such as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), gruesome news headlines, as well as diagrammatic charts and positive affirmations.



Jordan Strafer, *PEP (Process Entanglement Procedure)* (video still), 2019. Two-channel HD video, color and sound, 15 minutes. Courtesy the artist.

“Strafer's films are an urgent reminder that artworks need not only offer a reparative version of the world, but can and should hold up a mirror to our basest and baddest of behaviors,” says Rebecca Matalon, Senior Curator at CAMH. “In fact, one of the most troubling and compelling claims of Strafer's films is our dual capacity to be both perpetrators of violence and its victims. While her works follow in a long legacy of artists who have mined bad behavior, abjection, and family trauma, Strafer's trilogy of works suggests she is truly one of the most important artists working today.”

Jordan Strafer: Trilogy will be accompanied by an exhibition catalogue copublished by CAMH and Colpa Press, San Francisco. The publication will feature an essay by Rebecca Matalon, Senior Curator, CAMH, and a conversation between writer Bruce Hainley and Kyle Dancewicz, Deputy Director, SculptureCenter, New York.

Jordan Strafer: Trilogy is organized by Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and curated by Rebecca Matalon, Senior Curator, with Olivia Ek, 2022–2023 University of Houston Curatorial Fellow.

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Jordan Strafer, *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER* (production still), 2022. Two-channel HD video, color and sound, 19 minutes. Courtesy the artist, photo by Mariana Sanchez.

CAMH Mission

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents extraordinary, thought-provoking arts programming and exhibitions to educate and inspire audiences nationally and internationally.

General Information

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, in the heart of Houston's Museum District.

Hours

Wed	11AM-6PM
Thu	11AM-9PM
Fri	11AM-6PM
Sat	11AM-6PM
Sun	11AM-6PM

Admission is always free. For more information, visit CAMH.ORG or call 713.284.8250.

About the Artist

Jordan Strafer (b. 1990, Miami) is a New York-based artist working primarily in video. She received her BFA from The New School in 2016 and her MFA from Bard College in 2019. Strafer's work has been included in group exhibitions at SculptureCenter, New York (2020); Red Tracy, Copenhagen, (2020-21); The New Museum, New York (2021); Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt, Berlin (2021); and Ludwig Forum, Aachen (2023). Strafer's video, *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER* (2022), was presented as part of the Currents section of the 60th New York Film Festival in 2022. Solo presentations of her work include *PUNCHLINE* at Participant Inc, New York in 2022, *LOOPHOLE* at Secession, Vienna, and *MERCY NO NO* at Heidi, Berlin in 2023.

About Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

Established in 1948, CAMH is one of the oldest non-collecting contemporary art museums in the country, and is internationally known for presenting pivotal and landmark work by artists recognized as the most important of the 20th and 21st centuries. CAMH's mandate is to be present, to connect artists and audiences through the urgent issues of our time, and to adventurously promote the catalytic possibilities of contemporary art. CAMH's programming, both in and beyond the Museum, is presented free to the public, and advocates for artists' essential role in society.

Support

Jordan Strafer: Trilogy has been made possible by the patrons, benefactors and donors to CAMH's Major Exhibition Fund: Chinhui Juhn and Eddie Allen, Louise Jamail, Sissy and Denny Kempner, Dillon Kyle and Sam Lesseter, MD Anderson Foundation, Rea Charitable Trust, Sarofim Foundation, The Stolbun Family, Louisa Stude Sarofim, and Texas Commission on the Arts.

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