

RHIZOME

Artist Profile: Petra Cortright

IAN GLOVER | Wed Sep 7th, 2011 10 a.m.



So Wet (2011), installation shot at Preteen Gallery

Nearly every video piece of yours seems to have the distinct aesthetic of webcam footage, from the fluttery movements to the unusual compression artifacts and use built-in filters and effects. Is there something in these particular 'defaults' that you're drawn to?

i like webcam bcause the vid files are a small size and i can make many tests because most of my outtakes are stupid. they arent filling up the harddrive and slowing down the computer. also it renders faster. and its not high def so its not a magnifying glass its a veil. also the effects on the webcam softwares are very beautiful and fun to work with. also i can

see myself and i dont need any help to film the webcam video, i can see myself an what i am doing so then i can see what is failing / working.

A great deal of your video work is posted on Youtube, often practically right alongside the videos that seem to inspire some of your performances (from random vloggers to the ubiquitous home videos of people dancing and lip-syncing). Do you think it's important that your work is presented in the same environment? Do you consider the 'baggage' of youtube (aggressive commenters, a somewhat intrusive user interface) when making the work?

i just use youtube as a tool, i cant say i am like "philosophically" into it. its convenient. but i have to say though that the comments are a special gift. always a highlight to get them because they are really real. also they are very funny. theyre all over the board, its more much intersting and more reflective of the internet and what its about and its more constructive and useful. and entertaining.

In an interview from 2008 you talk about making lists upon lists of ideas on your computer and then going on to lose them in folders with incomprehensible names in the computer - but a sense of spontaneity and a concern for the day-to-day interactions with technology really seems to be a hallmark of your work. What is your process when making work that makes it beyond that initial 'list' stage?

since 08 i become more organized i have maybe a ratio of like 1 out of 10 things now i will name the file by smashing randomly on the keyboard. i worked hard to disband the hell folder in early 09 which was unrecognizable file archive of things named 345jth43tog, 3490583oht, fhsg, fdghdg8r, ljfdhg, sdhg etc. its tempting to just do that but it makes me miserable thoes files become evil sources of misery and then the hell tree folder rises again. the key is to put things in a file folder with a correctly labeled name. then files within that folder can be named whatever because i know the general idea of whats going on :) uhh my process for working is maybe how a painter would work. i dont really work on big "projects" for the most part. i haven't figured out how to work like that without becoming overwhelmed. i think im more successful if i do something everyday, if im drawing/paintign in photoshop everyday and then taking some time to keep the sketches organized in documents folder. then later i can look back and select thigns that are working those are the pieces. making videos is a mystery

and it happens randomly.

Could you describe the method you use for pricing your Youtube videos?

i price my videos by view count, so the more views the higher the price. my boyfriend ilia ovechkin coded the catalog and he did such a great job - he figured out a way to solve a potentially big problem which was in case a video went "viral" (lol) then the work could be like \$200,000 or something and i dont think im ready to sell my work at that price yet heh so there is actually an equation in once it gets to a certain amount where the cents per view goes down once it reaches a certain view count, does that make sense i am probably sounding really confusing :) i started pricing this way from the beginning when i had to price work for the first time in 2009. i just wanted to figure out a way to make it easier on me so i dont have to struggle to try and price work because its uncomfortable, but i have to say that it becomes easier once you have something to reference back to, now i have a better idea of my price range but in the beginning i didnt know what was going on. i wish i could price everything this way haha. uhh i dont even think the link to the video catalog is on my website i cant believe i haven't updated that yet heres the link petracortright.com/videocatalog



Age?

25

Location?

santa barbara, california

**How long have you been working creatively with technology?
How did you start?**

i dunno if there was a start... i had a computer all my life and i always enjoyed making stuff like, in kidpix and designing landscapes in sim city 2000

Describe your experience with the tools you use. How did you start using them?

my early works (lol?) are from 2004 i starting using photoshop around 2002/2003 and just kept explorin in it

Did you study art in school?

i attended california college of the arts for one semester and then later i went to parsons for about 2 years so i haven't finished school and i dont have a degree. sorry mom.

What traditional media do you use, if any? Do you think your work with traditional media relates to your work with technology?

i cant think of anything i use or have used... i guess i make some work into prints. i am into prints on fabric now i have been making flags.. does that count? i tried painting but it was a disaster. my mom has a masters in painting and she said she wouldn't help me, she didn't want anything to do with the mess i was making. it cost so much money to buy all that paint too photoshop paint is free once u buy a computer and steal the software

Are you involved in other creative or social activities (i.e. music, writing, activism, community organizing)?

i have a huge weird range of interests... i love soccer i played seriously for a long time almost went to college for it, i did olympic development training for it too haha, i love swimming in the ocean, running - i ran a marathon last year, i love the beach, memorizing facts about animals and plants, i love botany, i love natural landscapes especially in california, i love camping and being outdoors, i am really into skin care and like spa shit, i love cooking, i love food probably with an abnormal desire, i am really into health food things and learning about ultimate health, i love martha stewart and sometimes when i can push through the embarrassment i will make some crafts like freezing edible flowers into ice cubes or something, i love flowers and flower arranging, i have to control my spending on flowers, i love nice candles i put a ban on buying anymore candles for a while because the ones i buy are like \$20 for one candle it adds up. im trying to become fluent in spanish, i love dogs i probably could have been a psycho dog breeder, i dont know. i could have had like 20 different careers, people who know me i think know this about me...

What do you do for a living? Do you think your job relates to your art practice in a significant way?

uhh can i skip this one lol. when i worked at office depot i had an office depot twitter account. the account was suspended, but it scraped it together here in a gif: petracortright.com/officedepot.gif

Who are your key artistic influences?

well maybe the question above answers that.. i have a lot of interests and those feel kind of the same to me as influences. usually a question like this i answer that martha stewart is a big influence, which is a sincere answer not trying to like be "quirky" about that. i really respect her and feel calmed by that whole world of like having a nice living situation, a nice organized desk with some flowers and some homemade snack makes me want to sit down and work in photoshop. and like a clean room makes me energized and want to use the space and make a video. i have zero energy and feel depressed when things are messy clutter is like the antichrist of me making work and so i have to make sure things are nice. its really crucial for me things feel in control and and pure and poised. if that is taken care of then i go run amock and make work.

Do you talk, email, or chat with other artists frequently? With anyone in particular? Have you met in real life?

yeah i love gchat, tinychat, i guess google+ has some promising new chat options. skypes just ok. i have met a lot of people irl, probably cuz i have lived so many places...

Have you collaborated with anyone in the art community on a project? With whom, and on what?

im not so good at it so i dont really do it that much. i mean i have done some music videos - for excepter and restless people. i have done some album art for ducktails... recently i did a collaboration with a mexican fashion designer roberto sanchez and photographer alvaro nates. we did a photoshoot when i was in mexico city for nylon mexico and metal magazine and then later i worked with the iamges and edited them with some effects to maek some pieces. i also did a collaboration for a mexican publication called caviar izquierda with franklin collao. We also did a photoshoot in mexico city in preteen gallery where i had a solo show this last april "SO WET", franklin did the styling and took the photos and later I edited them to make some pieces for print. that is coming out soon i think

Do you actively study art history?

i try to learn as i go, i feel like am not that knowledgable about art, i worry that i border on being stupid about it even :/

Do you read art criticism, philosophy, or critical theory? If so, which authors inspire you?

i feel like it makes me feel self conscious and stupid because i never know whats going on what they are talking about. but i try?

Are there any issues around the production of, or the display/exhibition of new media art that you're concerned about?

my stuff is so flexible, it is available to me made into many different forms. its nice to have many options. my lack of concern is probably one part laziness and one part a fact i am really hard on myself, and i usually trust that other people have better judgment about my own work more than i do. so if they have ideas for how something should be produced/exhibited. its less stressful to not be in control, but ultimately why does digital work have to be displayed in such specific terms. it doesn't really make sense to me to shut down options..i like things to be flexible!!!. :)