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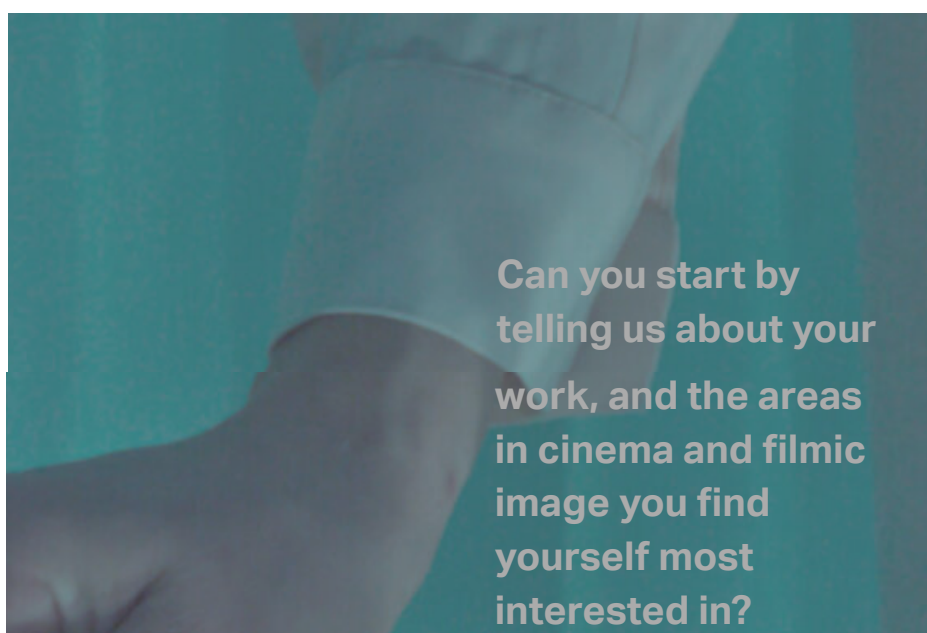
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EXPANDED CINEMA, AN INTERVIEW WITH LAURA GOZLAN

Stepping into exhibition spaces still feels like a distant memory, and the future of them seems hardly foreseeable. Taped up floors perhaps, like the current state of our supermarkets. I'm viewing Laura Gozlan's series *Youth Enhancement Systems (Y.E.S.)* in the wrong context; it's one of the hottest days of the year so far, and I'm eating a gifted slice of infamous Lockdown banana bread. Perhaps this is the new landscape of the art world post covid we've all been talking about: viewing pieces in a small, untidy very off white cube. On a screen, very surreally, Laura Gozlan, or should I say 'Mum' takes a hit of vaporised flesh, "mummy juice" from a bong. Not without a particular sense of humour, Gozlan addresses the seemingly bizarre and problematic yearning for immortality that has derived from a thread of Posthumanism. Billionaire's young blood transfusions spring to mind. In a series of rituals that attempt to defy ageing, Gozlan takes us through a pharmacopoeia of new age cosmetics, greyed corpse limbs are pulled from murky waters, skulls are bathed in a suspicious carbonated liquid. The artist pulls multiple references together, looking at occultism, the giallo, 70s and 80s horror films, feminist cinematic academia, scientific documents; the scope of her research is immense. It may initially seem peculiar to want to feature Laura Gozlan in a time like this. Yet, her work seems more relevant than ever. Shrouding her protagonist's desperation and obsession in irony and the absurd, *Y.E.S.* encourages the viewer to find humour in the utterly strange and futile attempts to become immortal. Through humour we find truth; perhaps being that we should not be detached from the reality and sincerity of our mortal bodies. It's an absoluteness we've all had to face more than ever, in these absurd, yet very real times.





My installations, videos and sculptures question the links between subculture and Posthumanism, their founding myths (New Age, Cybernetics) and their dystopias. Within the installations, I create video fluxes by assembling, in a non-hierarchical way, both images I borrow or shoot myself, and merging them with sound patterns that induce altered states of consciousness. This is accompanied by sculptural environments with Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* in mind. Through fragmentation, I conduct research on the three-dimensionality of projected images. I find as much inspiration in the *giallo* (1), as I do in thrillers of the 70s and 80s, and in scientific documents. All three unknowingly conceal archetypes and techno-utopian myths that inform us about their resonance with occultism and ideologies of these countercultures.

Lately, I have been reconnecting with filmmaking, placing myself both behind and in front of the camera, to play my own character. Mum, a middle-age woman who emulates the *Monstrous-feminine* by Barbara Creed (2). This text reflects how, particularly in horror cinema, patriarchal ideologies build an archetype of an monstrous and abject woman, with indications that her sexuality and reproductive function are a threat to the patriarchal order. It is obviously a question of deconstructing this archetype by exploiting its grotesque potential. I relied on a repertoire of films offering a whole typology of Monstrous-Feminine women ranging from *What happened to Baby Jane*, *The brood*, *The Exorcist* or *The Hunger* (3) and many others.

In your work, you have often looked at the new age, yet long existing rituals of warding off death, acquiring eternal life. I'm talking particularly about *Youth Enhancement Systems*, and more recently you have looked deeply at the sensations of the rapid, alien developments of adolescence in *Juveniles*. If they were characters, I would say that one is very detached from their mortal human body, whilst the other is hyperaware of their ageing. And yet both are fighting against it. Could you tell us about these works, and why we seem to struggle with being human?



I'm interested in the challenges that adolescence can represent for Posthuman ideology and I have been leading two intricate projects dealing with youth prolongation programs and the uncanny transformations of adolescence. Both projects were developed in parallel : *Youth enchantment systems* (4) and *Juveniles*, with curator Maija Rudovska (5), who had invited me to a residency and a collective show in Futura. She was exploring "the subject of fear and horror during the states of transition and change, – the way they become alternate states for expression, resistance and even healing".

Posthumanism supposes the obsolescence of our need for youth by eliminating the very idea of becoming. The shapeshifting that adolescence represents, its unpredictable

nature, and its autonomous plasticity makes this age capable of proposing strategies of resistance in the face of Posthuman ideology, while paradoxically being a figure of its culmination.

Youth Enchantment Systems explores the links between Posthuman life extension programs and the occult. It stages in a video trilogy a middle-aged bourgeois woman who gets high on mummy juice as a rejuvenation cure and performs a series of actions that obey a ritual logic: smoking organs with a bong, pulling limbs out of a basin.

The pharmacopoeia contains a liquid substance extracted from embalmed bodies that was used as a medicinal drug in medieval times and is called Mummia. It also considers Zombie drugs, *Krokodil*, which specifically produces striking physical lesions giving the body a zombified appearance. What if consuming the dead could slow the aging of the body? There had to be some element of grotesque horror in Mum's rituals to reconnect these posthuman life extension programs to their social horror dimension.

The character of Mum interacts through two videos with the environment of sculptures presented in *When the time swirls, when it turns into a black hole*. However, the question of life extension remains out of scope to give way to a narrative where she sequesters in the exhibition space of the *Juveniles* who make flesh with the labyrinthine and underground architecture of Futura.

Perhaps the crisis of humanism, as inherited from the renaissance, has only been mitigated by the emergence of Posthuman ideology, this struggle could be seen as a vector of

transformation to help us reclaim bio-engineering technologies for social progress.

Your body of work features a range of dissected images, pieces edited from a range of cinema and archives, as well as sculptures and wax casts of the body around the space. A continuation of the fragmented body, perhaps the Frankenstein mythic desire to overcome death. Could you tell us about how you edit genre films, and whether this is connected to the sculptural body parts, and further the relationship between the film and sculpture that features in your work?

The film genre and scientific documents that I dissect unknowingly conceal the ideological context of the era during which they were produced (6) but also archetypes the techno-

scientific myths that were conveyed during that very era.

The found-footage allows a blurring of the origin and the intention of these archives, either narrative or documentary, with my work. It makes the border between reality and fiction, past and future, porous. The fluidity of the editing allows me to break the initial continuity of the fragments as well as their temporalities in order to capture and restore a 'latent futurity' that already haunts the present. Futurity (7) defamiliarises what we take for granted, rendering the speculations narrated in the found-footage more tangible.

There is a common gesture in editing heterogeneous archives and assembling sculptures representing dismembered bodies within my installations in a 'Frankensteinian' logic of recasting a posthuman body. I consider these pieces as evocations of medical artefacts and prostheses rather than sculptures. If they are separated from their initial scientific use, they are all the same performative objects that I activate in the narrative during proto-scientific rituals. They are closely linked to the videos and allow the narrative to sit in the exhibition space more tangibly as well.



(1) Exploitation film sub-genre, mainly from the Alpine region, involving thriller, eroticism and horror movie genres in a very stylized and sometimes experimental staging. Giallo reached its peak during the Years of Lead, with filmmakers such as Mario Bava, Lucio Fulci, and later, Dario Argento.

(2) *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, Barbara Creed (1993)

(3) *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane*, Robert Aldrich, 1963 - *The Brood*, David Cronenberg, 1979 - *The Exorcist*, William Friedkin, 1973 - *The Hunger*, Tony Scott, 1983

(4) Youth Enhancement Systems, a solo show presented in Galerie Valeria Cetraro, Paris, September - October 2019

(5) *When the time swirls, when it turns into a black hole* curated by Maija Rudovska with artists O.B.De Alessi, Michael Salerno, Thomas Moore, Dennis Cooper, Laura Gozlan, Radek Brousil, Darja Bajagić - Futura, Prague, December 2019 - February 2020

(6) the Years of Lead in the case of Lucio Fulci's *Giallos*, the military-industrial complex for NASA's scientific archives.

(7) *Post-Cinematic Affect : On Grace Jones, Boarding Gate and Southland Tales*, Steven Shaviro, 2010

(8) *Russian Cosmism*, edited by Boris Groys, 2018

