



## LAURA GOZLAN

To introduce yourself, can you tell us about your background that brought you to art and articulates your practice quite accurately?

Before school, in the 1980s my father was an engineer in an American company. As an expatriate in the United States, the video store culture was important and I started watching horror and genre movies.

Later I studied at École Boulle, then a bit randomly at the TAIK School (Helsinki) I studied scenography but we had the opportunity to hang out in the cinema department. Then I went to Les Arts Décoratifs (ENSAD) to study scenography, that's when I started shoot my first films in Super 8. Then I went to Le Fresnoy with some more produced films. I wrote scripts but I was not interested in the writing conditions and the pyramidal modalities it required. I then started working alone on animation and more specialized pieces until I made projection environments.

That's where your background is interesting. Could your study of scenography have stimulated your visual research to move towards projection environments ? As the images you are working on and the scenographic elements both interact in these.

Yes, while being a flaw, it always puts a filter on to consider everything as a sculpture. I tend to reduce this perception to go towards things that have a use. I studied most precisely the filmic image. There is an ungrateful aspect in the scenographic objects, a relationship of scale and gaze that gives the illusion from a distance. These objects exclude a frontal relationship since one can move around and the illusion still operates. This relationship with cinema interests me, shifts occurs through fake, documentary and fiction: how can reality appear all the more fictional? The environments result from this. At the beginning it's diffracted projections highlighting objects on the projection path, it is these same objects that make the projection.

**You are referring to these shifts between reality and fiction that images reveal. Which forms or cinematographic contexts have particularly interested you?**

This triggers attention as soon as you face a disappearing, spectral image. I liked the context of the appearance of images, I worked with archives from the 1950s and 1970s, the period of the Cold War and the politics of perception. This is the moment that questions about the modification of states of consciousness and opinions arises. How to make a form of control through the optical device? Cinema as a mass medium sees the coexistence of commercial films that testify to a context - sometimes without being aware of it - with cultural productions that are intended to control public opinion, experimental auteur films, with a political project behind that speaks to the greatest number of people. Also, for a long time I have been interested in projects such as remote viewing or MK-ULTRA which, via ketamine and LSD, attests to behavioural changes with devices such as the sensory isolation chamber which recreates artificial psychoses. Perhaps this device naively reproduces the idea of a viewing machine, always for control purposes.

**Your films explode the image in space and come close in their exhibition to sculpture while creating a visual environment of projection. The term "screen sculptures" comes up several times in your work. I am thinking in particular of the works *Physical Self* and *Skinny Dip Unscensory* in which the screened films refract on glass, aluminium or mirror sheets surfaces. Can you tell us more about this process that leaves the flatness of the image and shape it in space?**

It's interesting because I tried to make screen sculptures later on, by actually using screens. The idea of screening as an obstacle to vision is what attracts most because it is hidden. For environments, I prefer to consider the idea of communion between spectators rather than defining something "immersive". It is the more or less modified state of consciousness that is shared. Finally, with sound and images as beams of light that attack the retina, it places in increased attention and brings people together in a certain way. These

environments tend towards a more affected and affective way of seeing images, in experience rather than in distance.

Would you describe your films as experimental or would you consider them differently? Your approach is also close to expanded cinema, which considers video as an art form through the use of technologies, environments, multiple and combined sources. Do you find yourself in this filiation as it also appears as an open and complex “category”?

At school it was experimental fictions, later on found footage and reassembling, editing became very present, although I prefer the idea of a second hand cinema. About expanded cinema, yes, completely. The term comes from the cultural industry and there is a strong connection with telecommunications. Historians list a series of practices but later linked. However, it is contextual and related to an era in its new age dimension, more specialized in technology and interactivity of the 1960s and 1970s. It's quite mixed actually, you can find McLuhan, the Velvet Underground parties or Stan Vanderbeek's Movie Drome which is reenacted in museums but it's not the same.

Several of your films, *Physical Self*, *Skinny Dip Unscensory*, *Through the Silver Globe*; take up the technique of found footage with a corpus of assumed and precise references: ‘B’ movies, Giallo, Zombie movies, science fiction films, documentaries from scientific archives. These sources formally embody references to stylised elements and seem to go through several obsessions in your work: scientific utopias, horror, the fragmented body. Can you tell us more about your approach to these stylistic codes and references?

The latest pieces have more recent sources from the 90's or such as film noirs, mangas, anonymous videos on Youtube which are proto scientific but quite precise in terms of their visual impact. Previously I worked a lot with the giallo and especially Lucio Fulci. His films are very well constructed visually, in sound, editing and filming figures. What is interesting is that these films are made for exploitation in order to attract people, either because there is sex, extreme violence or horror that appears with no filter or no critical device, more like fetishism. Fulci continues to have my interest, I have worked on the same images for a long time. The imagery of magical thinking, telekinesis, the relationship to ritual in murder and sex gestures, it comes from his movies. I associate this spirituality with scientific images that are sometimes more pragmatic but just as much imbued with a sense of strangeness. Together it creates a coherent object. Genre cinema sometimes tackles on speculative sciences and brings beliefs, ritual, codifications and surprisingly scientific films reveal this as well. Cult films like *On the Silver Globe* are so strange that they diluted more fiction.

About the movie *On the Silver Globe*, you have a work named *Through the Silver Globe* in which you work with found footage and editing process, can you tell us more about this piece ?

The idea was to work on spectrality, things disappear when they are created, and it is in their disappearance that they are best captured. The room during the exhibition *Fantôme (II)* at the Galerie Jeune Création in Paris also had the size of the isolation box. The work refers to Andrzej Żuławski's experimental science fiction film *On the Silver Globe*. The movie tells the story of a group of astronaut colonists who arrived on the Moon and regressed. As it is a civilizational setback, they begin to be inhabited by a magical belief and this gives delirious and psychedelic images.

You unload the images from the narration. Nevertheless, *a priori* decontextualized, they participate in a quite codified collective imaginary to which you precisely give substance.

There is a mourning that aspires into these images and yet a more abstract and broad narrative holds. The additional sound gives a rhythm of gaze and focus. Indeed, the images used are already constructed, they tell a story on their own. It's almost an internalized cinema, even if we're not sitting in the dark, we're positioning ourselves in something enveloping. The process of assembling, cutting and placing mirrors was quite simple, almost without an author. These films do not really belong to me when I edit them, there is a collective dimension present in the way these images are made and received, a more empathetic connection to the other embodied in this second state.

Beyond extracting images, in your approach you dissect images by the editing process that dislocates them, renders these images flexible towards a plasticity. Is there an analogy with the dissection of a body? You also refer more specifically to defragmentation.

It takes up the idea of defragmentation of a disk that is crushed to make a version of it. Everything is decontextualized into a single entity. Paradoxically, these genre films are almost impossible to decontextualize, they contain a lot without being aware of it. Genre films reveal the context of an era, a gravity felt in the natural setting, the actors, the details. These works are physical and venomous but constructed as a body composed of different gazes and scales of gazes. At some point in time, this is reflected in a larger history and political context, for example, related to the disenchantment of the Summer of Love, political and technological utopias

We were speaking about dissecting images, it refers to the body that is omnipresent in your work. For most of your exhibitions - *Physical Self*,



*Vitalium, Youth Enhancement Systems* ® – you have sculptures, wax casts (originally moulding of your body parts) that play with the space. They are never complete, sometimes hybrid, close to the prosthetic. Your body is finally infused in a space other than that of the exhibition.

I like to have a layout of pieces that tell a story. I don't come from sculpture, so it's related to time and the subjective perception that we can have of it. *Physical Self* was an environment creation with sculptures (*Breathing Skins* and *Inner Chains*) and screen sculptures that replayed what was happening in the film.

Jill Gasparina mentions about your exhibition *Youth Enhancement Systems* ® an important point in your approach: ‘‘(...) her works, and in the organic systems that constitute her exhibitions, where the shapes move from the screen to the physical space (...)’’ Can you tell us about the continuity that occurs between your films and your sculptures?

The scenography probably has its importance here. At a very young age I watched a lot of Lynch and Cronenberg where we can see objects that disturb in their construction, that delve into fiction and stand out almost as a character on their own. There is a connection to the emotional and fetishistic object. I have always been fascinated by the theatre of objects that tell a story, give life to an object from which magic escapes and tend towards immaturity, less in a conscious relationship with the other. Spaces also shape the way we perceive. It is a form of archaism to put the constructed image and space on the same level, the sensory relationship is different.

In several of your works the body envelope is often crossed by the recurrent theme of a physical change of state, which involves theories and practices for the quest for immortality – also marked by a cinematographic imagination – we can even speak here of metamorphosis in its ritual aspect. In what way is this change of state a subject, an object or even a tool in your practice?

It's really important. A feminist tradition of body representation emerges. This body is problematic through many angles because it differs from the one represented by men, often objectified. Even if it means that it is objectified, at the same time it reveals something of its problematic whose envelope is not finished, like an unresolved body. In my work there is also the recurrence of the sculptural gesture, to create a metonymy and to work on a fragment.

The exhibition *Youth Enhancement Systems*® establishes a continuity in your work and also initiates changes. From visually dark universes with enveloping projections, the viewer finds him/herself in a decorum veiled by yellow curtains with thick carpet where sculptures of body parts and objects are hidden, echoing

the video triptych *MUM pls* that the exhibition contains. In this triptych you stage your alter ego in ritualistic practices, in search of a cure of youth and cosmetics for an eternal life. Can you tell us more about this exhibition?

I used to play in my videos before, it's been a long time since I've shot any images because of the influence I had on my images and vice versa. It's difficult to free yourself emotionally. Recreating a body with images that do not belong to us is easier. For the exhibition *Youth Enhancement Systems®* sculptures are like trophies like body taxidermies. There is an attraction for figures that mix the object and the subject.

In your work you mention scientific utopias belonging to counter-culture which find a representation in cinematographic sub genres and establish links with post humanism. Can you tell us about your interest or fascination with post humanism? Especially present in your practice, you do not consider it from a futuristic prism but rather tied to ancient practices and occult sciences.

What fascinates me is the financial amount behind it. The interrelation of belief systems around immortality persists over time. It is also the fact of attaching oneself to a perishing body that fascinates me, making it into pieces of a corpse and relics. I like classic science fiction like K. Dick's with the idea of a semi-spiritual life. The decomposing body interests me because as long as the body exhales a scent it is still alive. After that, in what posthumanism generates, aging eternally young and not the other way around can seem almost grotesque.

You differentiate yourself from a technological, ultra-futuristic aesthetics often expected with pieces that articulate post humanistic and pseudo-scientific issues.

Exactly, it's almost kitschy already. I found it quite beautiful in *Youth Enhancement Systems®* it works with the idea of the bathroom, and the beauty salon which also gives something kitsch intertwined with the vaporous decor. In an aesthetic of an anachronistic woman from the 1950s with signs of eroticism although it appear to be a little cheap. The question of ageing arises, why shouldn't it be turned towards a fetishistic romantic necroticism that is a little embarrassing?

Yes because paradoxically to rejuvenate by a little extreme processes, it includes a kind of abject in the process.

That's what I find quite beautiful, there is the closeness to abjection.







