

JILL STANTON: I Know This Sounds A Little Weird

2016 14th Annual Artist-In-Residence Exhibition; Harcourt House Artist Run Centre

October 6 – November 25, 2016

Nomination for 2017 Eldon + Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize

Jill Stanton is an Edmonton based visual artist and one of Alberta's most prolific artists of the younger generation. She holds a BFA in Printmaking and Drawing from the University of Alberta. With an ever-evolving curriculum vitae Stanton's list of solo and group exhibition is quickly expanding. Most notably she currently has work on tour with the Art and Design in the 21st Century Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition (TREX) program. She was featured in Future Station: 2015 Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art and was offered a solo exhibition in Manning Hall at the Art Gallery of Alberta. She has garnered many private and public mural commissions across Canada, including an impressive project on the underpass of Hunter Street Bridge in Peterborough, Ontario, completed in the summer of 2016. With her background in drawing and printmaking, she freelances as a graphic illustrator and was a lead artist and Print Shop Coordinator at the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts in Edmonton.

Influenced by environment, female artists and self-portraiture, comics and illustration, Stanton's style has become known for its fusion of high and low art. Her unique designs feature simple but striking lines and application of bold colours, which she applies with conceptual gusto in her works based on themes of nature, technology, and the future. Her expressive body of work spans various scales: from small drawings in graphic novels and comic books to exploring patterns and environment in large-scale murals and transitory public pieces. Says Stanton: "... I am interested in how murals can change scales within environments that people are used to seeing on a daily basis ...". Currently, Stanton is working on a long-form graphic novel, scheming over blank walls, and experimenting with video and performance art.

In 2015, Stanton was selected to be the 14th Annual Artist-In-Residence at Harcourt House Artist Run Centre (ARC) which ran from November 1, 2015 to October 31, 2016. During this time she was also active as a facilitator of several art education workshops and lecture programs at our centre. Stanton's exhibition, **I Know This Sounds A Little Weird**, was a culmination of her yearlong artist residency and was presented to the public **from October 6 to November 25, 2016**. It is the intention of the management of the Harcourt House ARC to nominate Jill Stanton's impressive works from this exhibition for the prestigious 2017 Eldon and Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize.

Completing the install within one week's time, Stanton transformed the entire space of Harcourt's Main Gallery into a creative sensory laboratory. **I Know This Sounds A Little Weird** was an ambitious multi-media exhibition that featured a full 360° gallery mural. Her compositions employed the entire space with conceptually sophisticated imagery spilling from the walls, to the plinths, to the floor and back up again. The sculptures included in the show (the head and four plasticine/found material pieces) were also used to create the 12 minute long video loop sequence that ran the duration of the exhibition. Notably, Stanton also created the soundtrack presented in the video, adding to the impressive scope of her capabilities as a multidisciplinary artist.

I Know This Sounds A Little Weird explored themes of female identity and the duality of reality verses representation. By developing an alternate self as her protagonist, Stanton was able to subtly dig into deeper issues of social, cultural and personal expectations and censure. Her elaborate character study is a deep and honest analysis of unabashed desires and longings for self-love and freedom in a culture designed to feed on inadequacies.

From a formal point of view and in relation to this mural project, for Stanton, painting is balance. Her work is a fusion of confidence, consciousness and instinct. Gracefully bordering the classical and the contemporary, Stanton's exhibition walked a fine line of voyeurism and self-awareness both in process and perception. Her designs featured an assemblage of floral patterns, bold colours and characters derived from her imagination and her surrounding environments. Executed in primarily semi-representational idiom she allowed the viewers to have an immediate response to the colours, textures, patterns, forms and sounds they were experiencing.

From a conceptual point of view, Stanton created a world which urged the viewers to immerse themselves within her life sized comic book and examine each piece as both singular and complete in their existence and relationship to one another and the overall world. While on a more metaphysical level, this world eloquently addresses up the essence of human existence. Her expressive and philosophically challenging imagery connected to a deeper humanism that, as a general theme, reflects *la condition humaine*. In this she attempted to wrest that fundamental grain of truth, regardless of whether that truth bore a joyous or an uncomfortable countenance.

Using the language of comics, Stanton creates figurative narrative art that is deeply meaningful in context and sophisticated in form. While her work is contemporary in nature, it nevertheless respects and draws upon a long tradition of great mural painting in Western art.

Seen as the author of profound metaphors and imagery, the power of Stanton's work stems from a forthright analysis of contemporary social processes and self-examination with a healthy dose of cynicism and dark humour. Thus on behalf of Jill Stanton and her incredible exhibition **I Know This Sounds A Little Weird**, please accept Harcourt House Artist Run Centre's submission for nomination of the prestigious 2017 Eldon and Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize.

ARTIST STATEMENT

I work with female identities in relation to vanity, narcissism, self-loathing/self-love, and self-curation of digital/real life ("IRL") presences. The protagonist I use in my work is my doppelganger, named "Sybil". I am developing the Self (or anti-self) as protagonist, building alternate-reality universes surrounding Sybil through graphic narrative, video, environmental works (murals) and elements of science fiction, mythologizing her as a proxy for a broad female experience in general, as well as the "female artist" specifically.

I am interested in female artists and their self-portraiture work. Much of the well-known self-portraiture created by women depict themselves not descriptively, as many male self-portraits do (paint palette in hand, stoic and serious, peering at the viewer through the canvas), but rather use the woman's likeness to play a character (eg. Cindy Sherman, Amalia Ulman), thereby using themselves as a symbol or metaphor for broader female experiences.

I Know This Sounds A Little Weird is a play on the female artist's self-portrait/character study, featuring Sybil falling in passionate love with an alternate-universe version of herself. While sitting on the riverbank one day, Sybil is shocked to witness an exact replica of herself appear before her very eyes. Her normal "dumb face", but somehow better, more interesting, perfect. The pair fall in love, and have a passionate summer romance. She is enthralled with her double, who is just like her but somehow better in every way. Then, as suddenly as she appeared, the alternate-universe Sybil disappears. The original Sybil is left alone, with only a handful of improperly developed memories, and the constant reminder of her lost lover's face, within her own reflection on the water, and everywhere she looks.

Here, I am giving the curated self—the self we are careful to present to others, online in photos and in real life with our public actions—an actual, physical presence, a real person we feel we can't be without. We can fall madly in love with our deliberate, outwardly presented selves, but feel different and inadequate behind the closed doors, inside our own heads.