

Signs of our Times

Lisa Birke, 2022, 9min 48sec

Exhibition:

Signs of our Times (Mar 17th – Apr 21st 2023). Single-channel video, group exhibition curated by David LaRiviere. Saskatoon, Canada: “20/50 Double Anniversary Exhibition”, PAVED Arts.

***Signs of our Times- tv window display** (Jan 16 – Jan 25th 2024). 11min 18sec, single-channel video reedit, part of the exhibition: *Tripping Time*, Stuttgart, Germany: Stuttgarter Filmwinter Festival of Expanded Media, exhibition presented at GEDOK Gallery.

Film Festival Screenings: Short Film Week Regensburg (Regensburg, Germany), VASTLAB Experimental 2024 (Los Angeles, USA), Festival Fotogenia Vol 5 (Mexico City, Mexico), Tortona IndieFilm Session (Tortona, Italy), The Magikal Charm Experimental Video & Film Fest (New York, USA), Moving-Image-Arts International Short Film Festival (Toronto, Canada), Arizona International Film Festival (Awarded: Best Experimental, Tucson, USA), Bideodromo International Experimental Film and Video Festival (Semi-Finalist, Spain), Video Art Miden (Greece), Fonlad (Portugal), Torrance Art Museum & The New Museum of Networked Art (Torrance, USA), International New Media Art Festival Videomededa (Serbia)

Awarded:

Best Experimental Short- Arizona International Film Festival, Tucson, USA

Semi-Finalist- Bideodromo International Experimental Film and Video Festival, Bilbao, Spain

Synopsis:

A seemingly endless parade of empty platitudes and paradoxical life affirmations trouble entitlement and question who determines and owns the American Dream. Original footage serve as visuals for a slightly redacted found audio track from a 1960 film in the public domain called “Your Name Here”, produced by The Calvin Company as a spoof on the industrial film.

Director’s Statement:

In Signs of our Times, a blond spokesmodel marches across a succession of natural backdrops, out-of-place in her inexhaustible wardrobe of slinky gowns à la Vanna White. The woman holds aloft a series of digitally composited 3D signs, advertising platitudes to a barren landscape, yet marching to a soundtrack full of pretension and nationalism. Empty and prescriptive, tongue-in-cheek phrases such as “live large,” “go with the flow,” and “survival of the fittest” create uncomfortable juxtapositions with the public domain audio track produced by The Calvin Company as a spoof industrial film production in the 1960s (eerily ahead of its time). The juxtapositions of image and sound bring up questions of entitlement, systems of colonialism, how meaning is created and demanded of our lives by society and mass culture, for whom, and at what cost?

***Please note that I have included a second version of the film in my materials. This film was reedited for a rear projection in a window to mimic a tv monitor grid for a gallery installation. This version of the work is silent.**