

Connectivity via Decay

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Kate Casanova addresses career-spanning concepts including bodily connectivity, decay, and the cyclical essence of natural and unnatural worlds in her latest solo exhibition, *Entropic Fuzz*, for the Nemeth Art Center.

Casanova capitalizes on the Nemeth's spaciousness by creating an immersive environment not punctuated by singular highlights, but rather, an all-encompassing survey of her multi-media practice. A developed narrative emerges from an array of consistent themes discussed in an updated, looser manner.

By combining video, sculpture, and fungi – the exhibition serves as an intersection between digital and material imagery. The works are untitled and provide necessary support for one another – creating a sense of visual unity void of individualism, laced by Casanova's non-authoritative guidance. Viewers are encouraged to explore the entirety of the collection, using the cross-section of media to unpack the underlying commentary.

Binaries and social dichotomies dominate the discussion, particularly oppositions related to human vs. nonhuman and natural vs. manmade. Casanova frames these concepts through pairings that demonstrate decay or cyclical relationships. For example, the collaged video momentarily depicts diamonds falling into perpetuity. With this, the idea of a naturally formed object, manipulated and fetishized by humans, escapes a traditional life cycle. The hand of consumers and digitalism contribute to the kitsch behind natural items, offering utopian quips such as, "Diamonds are forever."

But most importantly, the pairings illustrate the desired dichotomy without eliciting a specific response from the audience. Casanova serves as liaison to the ideas, stirring awareness around overlooked social structures. The purpose is not to reach a conclusion, but instead, further the consideration. The work is helpful, not bossy. Casanova explains, "I hope my viewers get a little stuck... rather than necessarily having that clarifying moment, I'd rather get them farther away from those perceived polarities."

This sort of non-linear, existential questioning is similar in process to Swiss artist duo, Peter Fischli and David Weiss. The pair playfully investigated an endless number of curiosities, all varying in complexity. Fischli and Weiss took to unraveling concepts of dualism, coining the term "popular opposites," focused mainly on topics such as beauty vs. kitsch, fiction vs. reality, and banality vs. sublimity. And like Casanova, the results often evaded conclusion, creating what

they described as a “desirable state of bewilderment.”¹ The application of the quizzical approach is obviously quite different, but the non-directive thought provocation from both the Swiss team and Casanova are charmingly comparable.

In order to make the visual dialogue work, Casanova had to find the distinction between embracing vs. harnessing. The collection addresses nature, the body, and digital media without manipulating outcomes or putting it into a chokehold. Creating an environment that allows mushrooms to destroy the sculptural works that would normally be perceived as sacred, without the initial guarantee of growth, illustrates Casanova’s position within the binary discussion. She relinquishes control to first-handedly emphasize the show’s thesis.

The use of collaged video content demonstrates the embrace of a medium that still, somewhat surprisingly, seeks the acceptance of certain art world critics and participants. Casanova validates it by employing content that adds an updated narrative to past art historical concepts.

A portion of the video dedicates itself to lemons, both visually and aurally. Additionally, physical lemons are tucked elusively within the robust sculptural landscape. Viewers are positioned to consider multiple insights to the same concept – deciding whether spoken word, digital renderings, and physical objects can all function on the same grounds. This perceptual conundrum relates back to Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs*, when the hierarchy of language and understanding was complex enough without the addition of digital media.

Casanova’s approach raises the question of whether one delivery is more “right” than the others. The moment the viewer is perplexed by this idea, they enter the wrong vs. right binary. Another dichotomy of many, illustrating that Casanova’s main points are not the final word, but more of a visual gateway into further contemplation over established oppositions.

In contrast to other elements of the exhibition, the sculptural portion focuses less on opposing dichotomies, and more on connectivity. The bulbous forms litter the Nemeth floor with the suggestion for visitors to lounge within the installation – reminiscent of a refined beanbag pit. Curiosity piques upon discovering the discreetly placed lemons and television screens within the sprawling installation.

Constructed with re-purposed fabric and packing peanuts, the deeply jewel-toned pieces first allude to the viewer’s physicality – as the works tease at the possibility of participation, and play to the familiarity and comforts of sweater-like

¹ Peter Fischli and David Weiss: How to Work Better, 2016. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York. <https://www.guggenheim.org/exhibition/peter-fischli-david-weiss-how-to-work-better>.

material. Secondary consideration falls onto the maker's perspective. The oversized, yet manageable forms create a sense of romance between Casanova and her studio practice. The process of scavenging the material and forming the physio-centric objects alludes to a literal and figurative act of connectivity between artist, space, viewer, and object.

By embracing a newfound messiness in her practice, Casanova was able to formulate an exhibition that carries an enormous bulk of her frequently explored content. Despite the wild variation in media and presentation, the collection reads with cohesion due to the expert execution of its underlying themes.

Kate Casanova is a Minneapolis based artist and Minnesota native. She serves as adjunct professor at University of Minnesota and Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Casanova has been involved in a variety of group and solo exhibitions, and is currently represented by Kolman & Pryor in Minneapolis. *Entropic Fuzz* is curated by Aaron Spangler and Michael Dagen, who have teamed up to bring regionally based shows to the city of Park Rapids.