

Bridget Moser, My Crops Are Dying But My Body Persists, Remail Modern, Saskatoon

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Bridget Moser

My Crops Are Dying But My Body Persists, video stills, 2020.

Photos : courtesy of the artist

Bridget Moser

My Crops Are Dying But My Body Persists

Halfway through Bridget Moser's *My Crops Are Dying But My Body Persists* (2020), the artist's hands are seen gingerly applying Band-Aids along a slice of processed white bread. "We're living on this meaningless island and I think it's getting sick," she speaks flatly in voice-over. "Maybe it's already very unwell. How do you know if your body is toxic?" It's too easy to find COVID-19 narratives everywhere these days, but calling Moser's new video timely still feels like an understatement. Conceived as a single-channel video installation, Moser was to open *My Crops* at the Remai Modern just as public institutions across Canada began closing their doors in March. Instead, the Remai presented the work online, giving me the opportunity to watch Moser sprawling awkwardly on a dusty-pink couch in matching satin pajamas, a posture not entirely dissimilar from my own during self-isolation.

A potent blend of prop comedy, absurdist theatre, and late-capitalist anxiety, Moser's work regularly situates her body amongst processed foods and Amazon-sourced items—each with that particular sheen of something pulled straight from its packaging—enacting increasingly uncomfortable vignettes. In *My Crops*, she tenderly braids strands of cooked spaghetti, to the atmospheric sounds of Enya; she strokes a decorative skull with a latex glove filled with baked beans. Moser often appears to be striving for something larger—be it serenity, catharsis, self-actualization, enlightenment—yet her goals are routinely thwarted by the conditions of her performance itself. These failures manifest in small, mundane ways but accumulate nonetheless: she reaches forward until her arm drops with a dull thud; a leaning row of uncooked hotdogs tumble one by one in slow, greasy movements. Even in the work's climax, where Moser performs a pained, visceral striptease down to a flayed muscle suit, the camera lingers beyond the music's end and the artist is left crouched on the floor, staring blankly into the distance as if she's unsure of what's next. "The antidote to guilt is action,"

a computerized voice intones earlier, speaking as Moser's quasi-spiritual guide. "My muscles are weak from lack of action," she replies, almost defensively. "I am a low-grade type of meat."

Watching Moser while self-isolating at home takes on a particular resonance. This is in part because she's uniquely adept at transmitting the often-banal anxieties of having a body—"I take showers just to pass the time"—but on a deeper level, she embodies many of the tangled desires and complications that thrive in capitalist life. Amongst her endless array of carefully staged knick-knacks, she declares: "I would like to feel *safe*, and when I say safe, what I mean is *comfortable*." As our current moment continues to wedge apart everything that could have been tenuously, disingenuously understood as "normal," Moser's humour—and deft critique—undoes the fictions we tell ourselves in order to navigate an uncertain world. As *My Crops* reveals these narratives to be toxic, it also revels in their deep relatability—all the mundane and agonizing ways we find ourselves the butt of the joke. Faced with this introspection, Moser casually deflects once again: "But enough about me. Let's talk about you. What do *you* like about me?"

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