

At the centre of my ironic faith, Cassandra Cassandra, Toronto

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At the centre of my ironic faith

At the centre of my ironic faith lies a campfire... a bear trap... blinds crumpled on the floor? In this three-way show, objects are slippery, elusive, even mythic. The work of artist duo Asma (Mexico City), Marlon Kroll (Montréal), and Chris Lloyd (Brooklyn), demonstrates a mastery of materials that can only be expressed through their distortion. The artists leave hints of familiarity in their works, assembling them into something just a little beyond recognition.

In a work by Asma, a leather jacket hangs on a closet doorknob. Its surface has been singed with line-drawn landscapes obscured by folds in the fabric. Suspended from the ceiling, felted steel wool masquerades as a stained-glass window in which a skeletal hand plucks the stamen from a flower. A wood panel with a series of burned lines and inlaid metals, mimics the reflection one might see in a bathroom mirror. There is a doubling of sink, tiles, and soap dish, yet the returned gaze mysteriously lacks. Interspersed around the space, Kroll's contraptions winkingly bemuse. Bits of office furniture and pocket knickknacks are sublimated into quasi-kinetic sculpture with the aid of beeswax and painted muslin. Their perceived use taunts as they psychically oscillate between Rube Goldberg machine and live animal trap. Meanwhile Lloyd's chopped and screwed collage-drawings, as rendered through the lens of a glitter-glue wielding child, depict a pastiche of 11 O'clock news, Showtime movies, PBS documentaries, and other such late-night television offerings. Their naivety re-exposes a collective desensitization to the inherent violence of Americana. Each of the works seem at once entirely knowable and completely out of reach. A warping of their thingness binds them all together.

The show's title is borrowed from the first paragraph of Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, in which the author calls for an ironic political myth where contradictions are irreconcilable. She speaks of holding incompatible things

together "because both or all are necessary and true." The incompatible emerges in Asma's domestic reverence, Kroll's engineered whatsits, and Lloyd's static channel flipping. Each strangely at ease in their contradictions. Haraway locates her ironic faith in its blasphemy—a kind of faithfulness so intense it comes out the other end inverted. From irony's dominance among the Postmoderns to the reinversion of New Sincerity and back again, the ironic sustains faithfulness, as it cannot exist under the threat of complete disavowal. For irony to be kept alive, the thing to be pointed at must remain. This seems to be at play in the work here: never a complete disavowal of material origins, but a continual de- and re-construction so far removed from its genesis as to leave only reverberations of familiarity. A kind of faith that doesn't remember who or what it's faithful to anymore, only that it is.

Emily Cadotte

Cassandra Cassandra, Toronto

December 6, 2020–February 28, 2021

Asma

Still Life, 2019.

Photo : courtesy of Cassandra Cassandra, Toronto

Marlon Kroll

Of myself, 2020.

Photo : courtesy of Cassandra Cassandra, Toronto

Chris Lloyd

Manifest destiny suqs, 2020.

Photo : courtesy of Cassandra Cassandra, Toronto