

LOOPHOLE

In connection to the opening of her exhibition LOOPHOLE at Index Foundation, Stockholm, we have a chat with Brooklyn-based artist/filmmaker Jordan Strafer who presents a fictional film inspired by a real life court drama, drawing visual cues from the dying genre of the erotic thriller.



C-P: In a past interview, you addressed your work being driven by the impulse to remake or re-enact artworks or memories, and art as a way of survival. In the same context you mentioned spending your prom night in the photo lab which might say something about your staunch dedication to exploring art making...

J.S: I don't think I could live without making art. My first motivation is to make a meaningful contribution to the field. I dedicate my life to it.

C-P: Reading up on your background it comes to light that both of your parents were criminal defense attorneys. How much do you think (if at all) this has come to shape your artistic point of view, growing up in a household rooted in the legal profession?

J.S: Because of my parents' professions, I learned from an early age the power of language to shape reality. I also learned the essential point that drives much of my work, which is that morality is not the law. Being an artist is not that different from being an attorney: one uses historical precedent and manipulates language to form an argument. People in both professions need to be prepared to defend their statement.



C-P: As a primarily video-based visual artist; who might be some of the filmmakers in or out of art that have made an overall impact on you over time?

J.S: I feel that nearly everything I take in influences my work.

Here is a list of specific artworks/films that have stuck with me in particular:

Safe (Todd Haynes, 1995); *Within Heaven and Hell* (Ellen Cantor, 1996); *Mitchell's Death* (Linda Mary Montano, 1977); *A Family Finds Entertainment* (Ryan Trecartin, 2004); *Love Streams* (John Cassavetes, 1984); *The Third Memory* (Pierre Huyghe, 2000); *A Matter of Life and Death* (Powell and Pressberger, 1946); *Hour of the Wolf* (Ingmar Bergman, 1968); *Chinese Roulette* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1976); The *Body Double* series (Brice Dellsperger, 1995-2011); *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1984); *Double Lover* (Francois Ozon, 2017)

C-P: Your exhibition *LOOPHOLE* at Index that previously showed at Vienna Secession (we love Secession!) informs real-life court drama as a nationwide spectacle; something that makes part of American pop culture, considering the Bill Clinton/Lewinsky case or the OJ Simpson murder trial in the 90's or most recently: the Johnny Depp defamation case against Amber Heard. Whether the memory of the Kennedy trial that you worked around is as commonplace as some of these other instances, it feels like you've chosen a very clever window to address systemic power and power relations.

J.S: When I was invited by Secession to do a show, I knew I wanted to make something that represented America. I had previously been thinking about the Kennedys as a potent symbol of American culture for my work *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER* (2022), so pulling that thread I remembered that my mother had worked on the 90's rape trial. I can't think of anything more American than a Kennedy tape trial. In my research I came across writing by linguist Gregory Matoesian analyzing the cross examinations in the trial, and the passages of the transcript analyzed by Matoesian became the majority of the script.



C-P: You also take cues from what is the dying genre of the erotic thriller that was such a cinematic fixture in the 90's and one our team grew up with and always joke about; the Baldwins, Kim Basingers, Sharon Stones and Linda Fiorentinos of this world. Those films had such a distinct recognizable visual language and we can almost feel nostalgic about those films and have backtracked many of them just in recent years. From an artistic stance, what makes them compelling in hindsight?

J.S: The mixture of fear and sex in the erotic thriller poses a clash that on top of a historical rape trial create an intense feeling of ambivalence within me that I wanted the work to linger in.



C-P: What's next for you in 2023 and what might be cooking in your studio?

J.S: I have begun a new body of work influenced by the Troubled Teen Industry in the US, experimenting with more sculptural installations and working with 16 mm film. A show of that newest work is up now at Heidi in Berlin. My next solo exhibition will open at CAMH Houston this July, showcasing my *Trilogy* works (2019-2022). Additionally, I will be producing a second part of LOOPHOLE next year.

/C-print

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LOOPHOLE runs until August 27, 2023 at Index Foundation, Stockholm.