

Arundhati Misa :

Maja Čule
Mouth

Opening: 1st December 2017, 6-8:30PM
Exhibition runs: 2nd December 2017 – 17th February 2018
(Closed from 16th December – 9th January 2018)

Among civilised men, the mouth has lost the relatively prominent character that it still has among primitive men.

'Mouth' is a new video commission by New York based Croatian artist, Maja Čule. The title is taken from Bataille's *The Mouth*, and, like a lot of activities, it begins with the sound of rustling in the bushes. The initial aim for cavemen, when hunting and gathering, was to forage for food to feed themselves. Now the aim when hunting, and gathering footage, is to avoid consumer culture and in doing so live a more authentic life - you can be guilt free if you kill it yourself and circulate it on the internet.

Filmed in Central Park and the forest on Staten Island, Čule builds an allegorical documentary-narrative from her research interviewing hunters, and workers in government offices for wildlife protection. In a series of montages developed from improvisations with the cast, she firstly interrogates the ego of the contemporary hunter-gatherer, observing the male protagonist's need to be constantly watched and congratulated.

The behaviours of the central characters draw upon selfie videos made by aspiring Bear Grylls youtube personalities - *oh, it is a fun time to be in the woods*. Čule undermines the tropes of this identity with a withering gaze and occasional slapstick moments: clumsy men slip, laugh and potentially crack bones in the process of tripping over each other, fumbling in the dark with nature.

Scenes focussing on the character of Senka interrupt the above plotline with an opposing perspective. Senka works in the wildlife sanctuary, she looks after birds and she likes to keep the birds clean. She is very thorough. She watches turtles in heated tanks, and is a nurturing antithesis to the group mentalities which can produce toxic masculinity.

Shot on multiple cameras, throughout the film a nuanced look at the notion of 'surveillance' is produced: you are invited to watch the hunter/man watch the animal/prey, and watch his recording of this, or as MTV might ask you, *please watch the authentic man interact with his fellow authentic men*, whilst they search in their camaraderie for their next meal. Čule pushes this 'camaraderie' into the violent and absurd: ***fury makes men grind their teeth, terror and atrocious suffering transform the mouth into the organ of rending screams.*** The work tracks the desire of the individual to record his experience in the woods, exploring the making of miniature and self-directed documentaries, and questioning the consequence of masculine personalisation in contemporary media.

- Emily Pope

Arundel Misa :

Performers: Raasa Leela De Montebello as Senka, Maxwell Cosmo Cramer as Sam, Byrne Davis jr. as Bo, Roy James Wilson as John / Camera: Thomas Torres Cordova / Sound Assistant: Ziyad Baksh / Camera Assistants: Erick Arce, Samuel Sisante and Tea Qiu

Thanks to hunters: Jonathan Butcher, Kevin Glick, Richard Grant, Cadi Thompson and Whitney Hurt and organizations Rita McMahon from Wild Bird Fund New York, Bureau of Wildlife Albany, Wild Life Centre New York City.

Thanks to Arts Council of England for additional support



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**