

Control



Shana

Moulton:

Picture Puzzle Pattern Door

April 16 – August 2, 2015

ybca



The Programmable Self

Ceci Moss

Shana Moulton's first video in the *Whispering Pines* series, *Whispering Pines 1* (2002), features the character Cynthia clad in a pastel housedress, a round hemorrhoid pillow sewn into the fabric around her rear. Making her way through the aisles of a grocery store in this outfit, picking cans of beans off the shelf and clutching her aching prosthetic backside, Cynthia seems lost and unhappy. Generic muzak streams in the background, while a slowed voice (possibly an internal dialogue) repeats, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." The camera then zooms in on the pillow, which becomes a portal to another scene set in a miniaturized living room featuring a small toy parrot's blinking LED eyes. The words "To Be Continued . . ." in a teal-colored italics scroll across the parrot's zoomed-in face, and the video ends.

Whispering Pines 1 was the debut of the Cynthia character—who has since become a continual focal point in Moulton's videos, installations, and performances—but Cynthia actually developed through sculpture. Moulton had created a series of dresses with built-in medical devices, such as the hemorrhoid-pillow dress. Seeking to activate these textile formations in a new context, she produced a character for the dresses and started making videos, beginning with *Whispering Pines 1*. Just as the dresses inform the movement and narrative, for instance a housedress with a built-in neck brace, as the series developed, the kitschy tchotchkes, healing devices, and thrift-store finds that inhabited Cynthia's world became characters themselves. Ranging from pore-cleansing strips that summon a sphinx to a Magic Eye poster that opens

into another dimension, everyday items are imbued with magical qualities that transform, transfix, and speak to Cynthia.

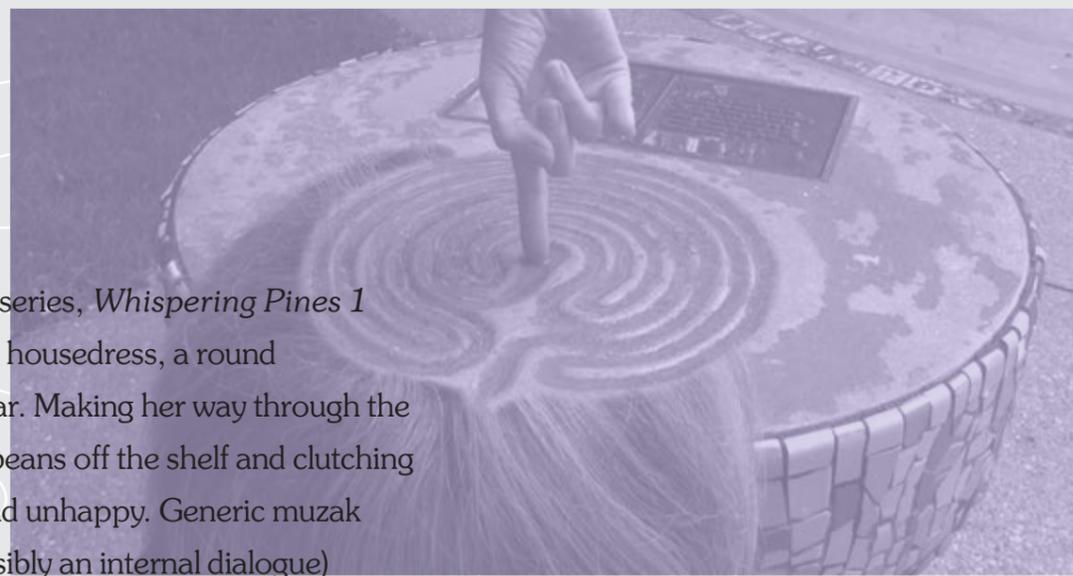
In the new video *MindPlace ThoughtStream* (2014), shown in the multimedia installation for *Picture Puzzle Pattern Door*, Cynthia battles irritable bowel syndrome through a heating pad, biofeedback, ASMR, and Activia-brand yogurt. Layered over this story is another one of universal consciousness and inner peace. Voice-overs by Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor of the well-known TED talk "My Stroke

of Insight" and shaman Patricio Dominguez (whose reference to a "picture puzzle pattern door" in the 2010 documentary *DMT: The Spirit Molecule* is the exhibition's namesake) accompany Cynthia as she strolls along a Pacific Ocean beach or walks through a meditation labyrinth. Whether she's instructed to tap into the reflective euphoria of her right brain or whiz through the hallucinatory picture puzzle pattern door,

Cynthia's physical pain is revealed to have a spiritual facet. At one point in the video, a vocal track from k.d. lang's hit song "Constant Craving" is played forward and backward, with a repetition of the chorus "Constant craving . . . has always been." As in Moulton's other videos and performances, the mute, curious Cynthia tries to heal and find happiness, but contentment somehow eludes her. Constantly craving, Cynthia strives for an unfulfilled betterment that is both spiritual and physical.

The connection between an elevated state and satisfaction is a familiar one, especially within the New Age culture that Moulton draws upon. Self-realization promises an improved reality and planet through the individual's psychic breakthrough. Utopia begins with the self. California's own recent history as the testing ground for the self-help movement is very much swept up in this story; indeed, Moulton grew up in the California foothills and *Whispering Pines* was the name of the mobile home park where she lived. But interwoven with Moulton's brightly colored sets, surreal humor, and mystical doodads is an earnest analysis of the lofty promises of self-improvement. Through Cynthia's travels and misadventures, the "New Age" looks a lot like commercial culture, with its keen attention to productivity and efficiency. From the programmed self to the programmed world, Moulton's videos, performances, and installations consider a distinctively American path toward spiritual enlightenment, one that believes that positive thinking paired with the right instruments and hard work can create a new reality.

The exhibition *Picture Puzzle Pattern Door* also reflects on the preponderance of dualities in the (western) collective imaginary: inside and outside, mind and body. The design of the show is split into two spaces: a fanciful doctor's office waiting room, and a multimedia installation that serves as a gateway to Cynthia's interior journey. Props from the video make appearances in the faux waiting room, such as the



Shana Moulton, *MindPlace ThoughtStream* (video still), 2014. Courtesy the artist and Gimpel Fils, London; Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich; and Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris

biofeedback machine Cynthia uses in *MindPlace ThoughtStream*. Embedded into the seating of *MentalWave SitPlace* (2015) for visitors to use, these machines monitor physical functions of the body and translate this information into an electronic cue such as a beep or tone, which the user then recognizes and responds to, for example by slowing their breathing or meditating in order to slow their heart rate. Used by alternative health practitioners, biofeedback is based on the principle that the mind can control the body through careful training. Long-standing cultural and philosophical assumptions are packed into this small device, from the basics of cybernetic feedback to Descartes's mind/body split. Objects are actors in Moulton's practice, and in this instance they reveal their grounding in a cultural tradition that privileges duality.

But outsiders are changing. In the era of smart environments and the internet of things, objects and the space they inhabit have become animated, responsive, and lifelike, much as in Cynthia's own world. But their inner workings are obscured, and as such, they take on a mystical, otherworldly quality. Building off these circumstances, Moulton's signature psychedelia opens up an environment we already inhabit.



Above right: Shana Moulton, *MindPlace ThoughtStream* (video still), 2014. Courtesy the artist and Gimpel Fils, London; Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich; and Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris

Artist Bio

Based in New York and Münster, Germany, Shana Moulton (b. 1976, Oakhurst, California) earned a BFA from the University of California, Berkeley and an MFA from Carnegie Mellon University. She also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine and de Ateliers, Amsterdam.

Most recently Moulton has had solo exhibitions at Gimpel Fils, London (2014); Project Space 1646, the Hague, the Netherlands (2014); Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv (2014); Nieuwe Vide, Haarlem, the Netherlands, (2014); La Mama Galleria, New York (2014); Smack Mellon, Brooklyn (2013); Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples, Italy (2013); and Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris (2013). Recently, she has participated in group exhibitions at Cricoteka, Kraków, Poland (2014); Abbaye St André Centre d'art contemporain Meymac, France (2014); the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014); Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris (2014); Art Exchange, Colchester, England (2014); BALTIC 39, Newcastle

upon Tyne, England (2014); and Monkey Town 4, Denver (2014). She has performed at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2014); the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2013); Performa 13, New York (2013); Western Front, Vancouver, Canada (2013); the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2012); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012); the New Museum, New York (2011); the Kitchen, New York (2010); and Exit Art, New York (2010). She has held artist residencies at Smack Mellon (2012–13); the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (2008); and Harvestworks, New York (2008), and has received grants and fellowships from Creative Capital (2013), New York Foundation for the Arts (2012), Harvestworks (2010), The Foundation for Contemporary Arts (2009), and the Experimental Television Center (2009), among others.

She teaches art at the Kunstakademie Münster.



Shana Moulton
MindPlace
ThoughtStream, 2014

Courtesy the artist and Gimpel Fils, London; Galerie Gregor Staiger, Zurich; and Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris

About Control:
Technology In Culture

Control: Technology in Culture, curated by Ceci Moss, Assistant Curator of Visual Arts, is Yerba Buena Center for the Arts's ongoing series of exhibitions showcasing work by emerging and mid-career artists who examine the social, cultural, and experiential implications of technology. The series seeks to prompt timely questions about the profound and far-reaching influence of technology in our daily lives by focusing on artists whose work spans a multitude of disciplines and relates to a diverse set of issues, including architecture, acoustics, psychology, labor, consumerism, the environment, and the military.

The term "control" refers to philosopher Gilles Deleuze's theory that, as a result of the ever-increasing role of information technology, Michel Foucault's "disciplinary society" of the 20th century has given way to a "control society" in the 21st century. In contrast to discipline, which *molds* the individual through confinement in factories, prisons, and schools, control is diffuse, adaptable, and ubiquitous, *modulating* rather than molding the individual.



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Public Program

ConVerge: Shana Moulton

Thu, Apr 16, 2015, 4–8 PM

Grand Lobby & Upstairs Galleries
Free

ConVerge presents an evening of performance and music with Shana Moulton and friends. New York-based mobile television studio E.S.P TV shoots a live taping in the Grand Lobby, featuring a performance piece by Shana Moulton and Nick Hallett, as well as an ambient music set by sound healer Karma Moffett. Performances are interspersed with a video program featuring Sabrina Ratté, Jeremy Couillard, Jeremy Rotsztein, and Peter Burr. This episode will air on the independent community television station *Manhattan Neighborhood Network*, as well as online.

YBCA ConVerge is a free monthly public gathering featuring creative and generative art practices. ConVerge is where community and innovative multi- and inter-disciplinary arts practices come together in our free and public spaces in a fluid, interactive, experimental format designed to engage audiences. YBCA's Grand Lobby and Front Door Gallery will come alive during ConVerge events with social art, live music, and inspiring curated performances, as well as drinks prepared by YBCA mixologists. ConVerge is a part of Third Thursdays in Yerba Buena.

About YBCA

Founded in 1993 out of an expressed need for an accessible, high profile arts center devoted to contemporary art of all genres, YBCA presents contemporary art from the Bay Area and around the world that reflects the profound issues and ideas of our time, expands the boundaries of artistic practice, and celebrates the diversity of human experience and expression. YBCA is an integrated site for creative endeavor; a unique fusion of art, innovation, and ideas in a social environment. It serves as a curated platform for the dynamic convergence of artists, inventors, thinkers, producers, and the community, working together to sustain multiple levels of participation, propel short- and long-term social change, and ensure contemporary arts and living artists are vital to our society. YBCA's artistic offerings include a year-round exhibition program, two annual performance series, a celebrated year-round art film program, a community rentals program making YBCA performance spaces available to Bay Area performing arts organizations at affordable rates, and award-winning community engagement programming. Distinguished by its widespread support of local, national, and international artists in the performing, visual, and media arts, YBCA is also recognized for its innovative approach to audience-centered programs and for its partnerships with other arts and community organizations. Through its programming, YBCA invites exploration and risk-taking, quiet reflection, and active engagement.

ConVerge Artist Bios

Peter Burr is a Brooklyn-based artist whose work has been presented in a variety of spaces including floating cinemas; cartoon schools; semi-legalized squats; libraries; museums such as the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Reina Sofia National Museum in Madrid, and MoMA PS1 in New York; and more.

Jeremy Couillard is a Brooklyn-based artist making 3D animations, kinetic sculpture, 3D and 2D prints, paintings, and installations. A new media professor, he has a BA from Michigan State University (2004) and an MFA from Columbia University (2012).

Directed by Scott Kiernan and Victoria Keddie, **E.S.P TV** utilizes a mobile television studio to explore the artist dialogue with broadcast transmission, analog and digital media, and televisual liveness. Their mission is threefold: to expand on the idea of an artist collaboration and the "live" experience, to preserve television as a relevant outlet for cultural practice, and to create programming that works to deconstruct the categorization of creative communities. www.esptv.com

Nick Hallett is a composer, performer, and cultural producer. He is the music director and producer of the *Joshua Light Show*—a team of live cinema artists with roots in the 1960s psychedelia movement—which appears worldwide.

Karma Moffett is a San Francisco based artist and musician who composes music designed to relax and heal through harmonic vibrations, to activate and harmonize the Chakra system, and dissolve the listener into a soothing and pleasing stillness.

Sabrina Ratté is a Montreal based visual artist—mainly working in the field of video—whose work proposes different visits inside architectural environments and landscapes generated by electronic signals. Her practice is also inspired by the relationship between electronic music and the video image, and she often collaborates with musicians for single-channel pieces as well as in live settings.

Jeremy Rotsztein, a Portland-based artist, works at the intersection of software programming and painting. By incorporating computer code at the foundation of his practice, he manipulates digital media at their atomic state to synthesize new forms.

Exhibition Credits

YBCA Exhibitions 14-15 are made possible in part by Mike Wilkins and Sheila Duignan, Meridee Moore and Kevin King, the Creative Ventures Council, and members of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

YBCA Programs 14-15 are made possible in part by Adobe, Gaia Fund, and Grosvenor.

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Design by Nicole Ginelli.