

THE ITHACAN

Artistic video blurs reality into fantasy

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February 4th, 2010

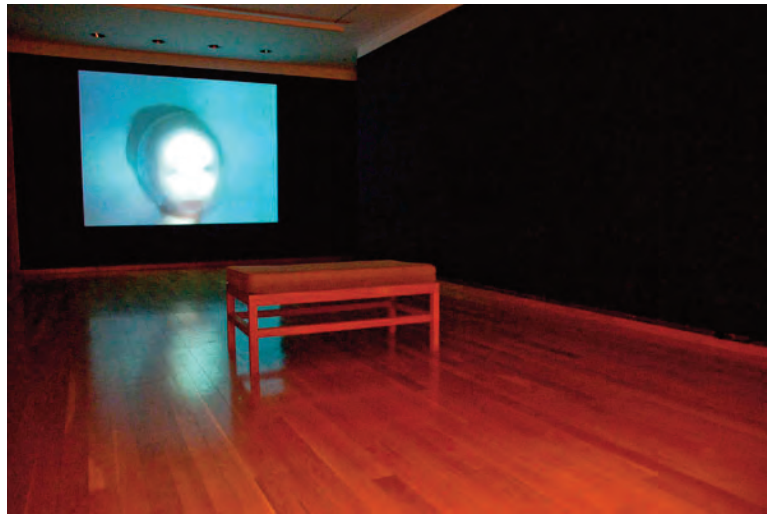
Some people take portraits in the middle of a park. Others take portraits in a department store. Artist Sam Jury takes portraits in the middle of a dream — or at least that's what she tries to make viewers think.

Jury's mixed media piece "Forever is Never" is an enlightening video that allows the viewer to step into another world, as the artist muddles the line between real-world portraiture and the fantastical world only possible through imagination.

Best described as a video collage, this single-piece exhibition housed on the lowest level of Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art is about six minutes long and runs on a continuous loop. The mixed-media video combines hundreds of photographs of a blank sculptural head that has different portraits projected onto it. The human imagination is left to manipulate the images into a portrait. While viewing "Forever is Never," observers get the feeling they are in another dimension between the tangible real world and the fantasy world Jury creates. What's created amounts to a hallucinatory state.

Constantly transforming images make up for the silence of "Forever is Never," since there is no sound track or dialogue of any kind. Instead the image speaks to its observers, asking them to discern it themselves. Aside from the portrait, the rest of the video is set against a dark green color, a smart choice because the skin tones of the portrait are fully discernible.

Though the video at times seems to jut off the screen like a 3-D movie, most of the time the work resembles a painting, albeit a moving one. Jury's arduous process of combining several hundred images of different types looks like soft brush strokes one would find on a painter's canvas. The portraits used in this presentation are from different places and time periods. Because of the wide variety of photographs used, the screen resembles a strobe light switching from overexposed, washed-out images to dark, somber ones. The resulting portrait is a constantly evolving person. The green background also changes in sync with the images, creating a full-on sensory experience. Some spectators may think the portrait looks like an angel, a smiling young



woman or a creepy alien being. There is no right answer, making the figure in "Forever is Never" open to interpretation.

Like the piece she creates, the artist is a mysterious figure in the art world. Jury isn't a household name yet, but she does have immense talent, as is shown in this piece on display. Thus far in her career, she has had a limited number of exhibitions on display, but with the talent she showcases in this exhibition, it's clear she could become an impressive figure in the future.

While the museum labels "Forever is Never" as an exhibition, there is only one item on display. It would have been nice to see more of Jury's work. It is a tease to just see one video because her work is uncommon.

Another slight negative is the projection system. The constant hum emitted from the device is distracting. Eventually, the exhibition's audience will forget this and the installation will pull them in. Take a few minutes to get adjusted to the exhibit, and it's easy to lose track of time watching this video.

The exhibition isn't a still image, yet it shouldn't be considered a film in its typical sense. The enigmatic piece is both captivating and grotesque, creating an awe-inspiring image. The looping silent video won't thrill everyone who sees it, but it will get everyone to think about what they are looking at.