



Xpace Cultural Centre
2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xpace.info

Love is...Plastice
Corey Moranis
January 15 – March 4, 2016

Plastic be proud
Don't imitate anything
You're pure, pure, pure

-The Sugarcubes, "Dear Plastic"¹

Corey Moranis loves plastic. As a child, her parents suggested getting her a bicycle as a Christmas present; she preferred a small pink plastic chair instead (she got it, and still has it). She's a lifelong collector of plastic items like toys, which often serve as inspiration for her work and sometimes feature in it themselves. Moranis is fascinated by plastic's inherent qualities of colour, texture and materiality, by its very unnaturalness. Plastic is suggestive of nostalgia and kitsch, particularly for children of the 1980s, though Moranis feels this nostalgia without irony; for her, plastic is magic.²

Love is... Plastic is formed from manufactured clear acrylic rods, which Moranis has bent, twisted, knotted and dyed to form the shape of a heart. Suspended in the Window Space by brightly-hued pink and yellow cords, the installation takes its name from the 1960s comic strip created by cartoonist Kim Grove. Each of Grove's comics consist of a single-frame featuring a nude, big-eyed and child-like couple accompanied by a phrase beginning with 'love is...' ("love is... what can melt the

¹ The Sugarcubes, "Dear Plastic," *Here Today, Tomorrow Next Week!*, Elektra Records, 1989.

² Conversation with the artist, January 6, 2016.

coldest heart,” “love is... when your knees turn to jelly”).³ The installation’s knotted acrylic rods and colourful cords recall 1970s macramé wall hangings (which were often hand-crafted with synthetic cord). These references point to Moranis’ sincere appreciation for oft-maligned kitsch objects. Plastics were initially developed as sustainable alternatives to natural materials like ivory, wood, turtle shell and glass, often imitating their predecessors in colour and texture; plastic continues to substitute for pricier materials to this day, disguising itself in the image of more elegant components.⁴ Rather than a transformation of plastic into something else, or a so-called ‘elevation’ of kitsch to fine art, Moranis is interested in the value of the material in its ‘natural’ state as an un-natural and sentimental material.

In addition to her practice as an artist and jewellery designer, Moranis is also a baker. Though these mediums at first seem disparate, they are highly interconnected within her work. Moranis bakes elaborate, multi-layered and multi-coloured cakes, often several feet tall. Their outsides are coated with icing in patterns inspired by psychedelic textiles, and decorated with candy and plastic toys; their insides are made of kaleidoscopically marbled cake batter and edible glitter. They’re joyful, nostalgic, and unlike anything you’ve seen before, again demonstrating Moranis’ earnest affinity with kitsch. In Moranis’ jewellery line, Coco’s Frosting Shack, she dyes and hand mixes a rainbow of solid, liquid and powdered acrylics, along with edible sprinkles and glitter, and molds them into simple Lucite⁵ shapes. Each wearable piece resembles a slice of Moranis’ marbled cakes, and the designer refers to them as ‘frosting.’

With *Love is...* Moranis expands on her jewellery design practice and dives further into experimentation with the medium of acrylic plastic. She has shaped each acrylic rod by hand to form the installation. To begin, the rod is inserted into an ‘oven’, which heats it up enough to be malleable; once the temperature is reached, Moranis

³ *Love is... comic strip collection*, loveiscomix.com, January 6, 2016.

⁴ Susan Freinkel, “A Brief History of Plastic’s Conquest of the World,” *Scientific American online*, May 29, 2011: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-brief-history-of-plastic-world-conquest/>

⁵ Another name for poly(methyl methacrylate), a.k.a. acrylic

has about 10 seconds to bend, mold or knot the piece into the desired shape by hand while wearing protective gloves. Each plastic rod in *Love is...* starts out clear, then selected pieces are then dyed shades of yellow and pink. It's challenging to find information on how to dye industrial plastic online, so Moranis has experimented with several methods with varying degrees of success. Currently, she employs a process similar to that which is used to dye synthetic fabric. After mixing the dye with boiling water, the rod is added to the pot; once the colour has set into the plastic, the piece is dried, cooled, then buffed. Through the process of buffing, some of the dye is removed, producing a visible ombré effect.⁶ Moranis' material explorations in plastic, though more sleek, recall her experiments in wearables and edible confections.

Moranis is a collector, and her strength lies in her ability to collect nostalgic materials, techniques, colours and symbols, and reinterpret them in a way that fully appreciates and values their sentimentality. *Love is... Plastic* reminds us not to dismiss hearts and flowers, but to embrace wistful reminiscence.

-Emily Gove

⁶ Conversation with the artist.