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JG,
Uncertain Landscapes
November 3rd, 2017-January 5th, 2018

Whether in quick passing, or intentional admiration, the placement of JG's *Uncertain Landscapes* in Xpace's window space allows for any individual to view the colourfully collaged imagery adorning the wall and floor. The imagery featured in this work are analogous to JG's past works within print-making, comic books, and illustrative mediums. *Uncertain Landscapes*, however, contains a new medium exploration by JG in the form of hand-cut wood paintings, and references their denouncement of institutionalized standards of art-making through the presentation of various hyper-aesthetic impersonations of nature. These impersonations take the form of florals, plant-life, people and material objects. This mirroring of reality through their illustrations is synonymous with JG's main thematic explorations in this exhibition: the visibility and non-conformity of queerness.

'Queer' is an umbrella term that has been claimed by many individuals living outside of and apart from the binary, heteronormative, cis-gendered world that praises these types of existence as a social 'norm,' and thus inherently desirable. Thus, aesthetics can be a powerful tool of rejection, self-determination, and means of validation for many individuals; including, but never limited to: trans, two-spirit, gender non-conforming, non-binary and androgynous people. These tools can take the form of clothing, makeup and accessories that allow for expression that does not attempt, as JG describes, to "impress or assimilate to what

is already being consistently represented by popular demand.”¹ Much like gender and sexuality, the aesthetics of queerness are unfixed and multi-faceted. Fashion is a mechanism of queerness, of which one’s aesthetic appearance carries with them an emotive statement to the world.

In order to capture this concept, JG draws from drag culture and science fiction. While at first glance, these two may seem mutually exclusive they are, in fact, relatable in a number of ways. Science fiction is a genre that is celebrated for its separation from and manipulation of perceived reality. The concept of drag exists in the same vein as this as well, where often folks within LGBTQ2S+ communities manipulate, distort, but also reject hetero and cis-normative reality through aesthetic presentation and performance. In the drag queen’s case, this frequently takes the form of appearing in highly femme² personas. In *Uncertain Landscapes*, a hint to this aesthetic is visible in the form of a pointed black heel attached to an ambiguous body, glossy, pursed, lips featured on the floor, and the makeup faces of both the human and anthropomorphic floral figures. The drag queen’s appearance is a signifier by which the world reads ‘feminine’ while paradoxically signifying the drag queen’s rejection of the expectations of femininity, as well.

The wall and floor frames that separate *Uncertain Landscapes* create a utopic and fairy-tale—like setting. The far wall features a triptych portraying a scene of an ambiguous high-heeled figure being presented a bouquet by a tiger, while a genderless character takes a dip in a swimming pool. As well, various anthropomorphic plant life and fruit are featured across both the wall and floor. Despite the fictional environment created by JG, I chose to liken this presentation in the title of this paper to a ‘wilderness’ to assert that queer existence is not make-believe, but rather a reality that exists and is untamable within traditional notions of conformity.

¹ JG, Xpace exhibition proposal, 2017.

² Much like ‘queer’, the term ‘femme’ has been claimed by individuals within queer communities that dress and present themselves in aesthetically feminine ways. This appearance is also not fixed to the binary associated with femininity.

To identify as queer and within the LGBTQ2S+ spectrum often involves creating a new space within the world; a space that exists as the individual's own, but is also a space that is communally shared and supported through a connection that JG refers to as "queer mutuality." Queer mutuality takes on many different forms; it can be found in the relationships [queer] individuals make with one another and the support, love, and validation that is received through shared experiences. The bustle of thistles depicted on the wall panel hint to this connection as well. Thistles are a distinct flora identifiable by their bright purple colour, but also feature a sharp, needle-like exterior. The placement of these flowers within the wall frame juxtaposed with the high heel and lips notes the artist's exploration of the perceptive qualities of queer visibility and how this visibility is often based on an individual's outward presentations to the world. Through this display, JG literally turns to the streets to ask - what does it look like to live and exist within non-conformity?

For those who self-declare their queerness, this work is for you. For those outside of this, consider taking it as an embracing of queer-being and the spectrum of which that statement belongs. As well, take this work as a moment of reflection of the ways in which societal norms and pressures attempt to enact erasure of identities. The uncertainty in the title *Uncertain Landscapes* does not denounce queer existence and presence, but instead reminds everyone that identity, much like art, remains in a non-definite, ever changing, and beautiful flux.

-Emily Peltier