

ARTSY

Eve Sussman and Simon Lee stage an 18-Chapter Multimedia Installation in Philadelphia

By Rachel Heidenry, January 27, 2016



Eve Sussman & Simon Lee
Rabbit Recipes, 2015
Locks Gallery

You may not think that a cast inspired by Winnie-the-Pooh characters (a pig, an owl, a rabbit, two donkeys, two bears and a tiger, to be exact) would reference power struggles and factory labor. But Eve Sussman and Simon Lee's "No Food, No Money, No Jewels" on view at Locks Gallery in Philadelphia, does.



Eve Sussman & Simon Lee
Pig recalls how she met Bear, Chapter 5, 2015
Locks Gallery

The project—commissioned by the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York—presents an installation of videos, photographs, and sculptural works in 18 chapters. The inspiration behind the piece, which is described as "a film you walk through," came to the artists upon watching three men in Dubai, each on different scaffolding platforms, passing sand up a building. The precision of their actions and the seeming endlessness of their labor prompted Sussman and Lee to ask questions: Who are these people? What is their backstory?



Eve Sussman & Simon Lee
The Factory Night Shift, 2015
Locks Gallery

Throughout "No Food, No Money, No Jewels", a more universally political material than sand is the focus: water. In one chapter, for example, the actors bail water on an impressive multi-tiered stage; a choreography of slumping and disgruntled movements reveals the futility of their actions. The overarching narrative revolves around one character's mysterious disappearance and another's appearance. Each chapter offers its own perspective on the situation, becoming a soap opera between factory workers and their bosses. The mystery leads to a trial, where all stand accused.



Eve Sussman & Simon Lee
Script, 2015
Locks Gallery



Eve Sussman & Simon Lee
Are you satisfied? Chapter 3, in which we meet Pig and learn that she is a fat ass opportunist, 2015
Locks Gallery

Perhaps the most intriguing element of the installation is the script. Rather than writing original lines, the artists collaged quotations from famous individuals throughout history and spoke the words into actors' earpieces. The pig character, for instance, quotes Janis Joplin; one of the donkeys quotes Charlie Watts. Confused? Don't be. Each character's layers become the heart of the installation—clever words propel complex and shifting identities.



Eve Sussman & Simon Lee
That's easy intii?, Chapter 14, 2015
Locks Gallery

Existential, witty, and sharply critical, "No Food, No Money, No Jewels" leaves questions about assembly lines, labor, and the appropriation of words lingering in the air. After passing through its chapters, the installation remains mysterious, unresolved. The clues all seem to be there, perhaps they just require attention and, most important, ample time to reconstruct what actually happened.

—Rachel Heidenry

"No Food, No Money, No Jewels" is on view at Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, Jan. 15—Feb. 20, 2016.

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