ART HAPS is excited to be the exclusive media partner for Four More Years: Recess Benefit 2013 on May 28th at (Le) Poisson Rouge. Jacolby Satterwhite is a Brooklyn-based artist and will premiere a new performance at the benefit.

Jacolby Satterwhite
Still from Reifying Desire 5 (detail), 2013
HD digital video, color 3-D animation, 8:45 mins.
Courtesy of Monya Rowe Gallery

Abbe Schriber: Your ongoing video and performance work, “Reifying Desire,” probes many conceptual questions—some of these ideas include commodity fetishism and commodification of the body; futurism
and the cyborg; motherhood and kinship; queer space; and the politics of movement, to name just a few. And your work is fundamentally tied to the work of your mother, Patricia Satterwhite—who draws objects of her own invention based on goods and wares being sold on channels like the Home Shopping Network—and what you have termed the “personal mythology” that we find in consumer items and recognizable objects. Do your performances change when removed from the context of her drawings?

Jacoby Satterwhite: The performance doesn’t change when removed from the context of the drawings because the drawings act as a restraint device for my movement vocabulary. I have a phenomenological relationship between my body and the objects illustrated in the drawings. My movement is provisionally choreographed based on repetitively miming an interaction with the utilitarian objects. I artfully vogue and gesticulate pulling ropes, stabbing with knives, building, attaching, consuming, regurgitating etc. This is how I generate storyline and language without oration. Bleeding this character into real space is a way to give the audience an opportunity to see a pared down, non-animated version of how I use my body to perform this new media practice. Live performance also gives my body the opportunity to be play with different set of parameters and possibilities for failure.

AS: Based on that framing of live performance: you often perform in public spaces, but have also performed in gallery spaces, as you did at the Studio Museum as part of our exhibition Fore. What is the difference for you? How does the performance change based on the site? Is the choreography spontaneous, or planned for those moments?

JS: My video installations are a binary between real space and queer space. My live performance blurs the boundaries between the two due to its ambient and endurance-based nature. I repurpose and reactivate live space through performance. The performance queers the space and reconfigures the audience perceptions of their role. This turns them into mutual performers; the result is a space that is no different from my surrealist animations.

AS: Can you say a little more about your process, particularly in creating the utopic (or dystopic?) universes and futurist characters that make up your videos? What is your relationship to science fiction and Afrofuturism—or to virtual reality more generally?

JS: The spaces I create in my videos remove the normal functions and
animistic properties from objects; therefore they re-contextualize the purpose of my body. It’s a way of neutralizing body politics, and focusing on a general creative and surrealist practice. It’s also a method of dealing with difficult content, which is also the purpose of Afropublur, Dada and Surrealism. Those movements were created to resist the problematic concepts generated by the history of painting (Dada / Surrealism) and racism in America (Afropublur).

AS: Tell me more about the piece you’ll be performing at the Recess Benefit.

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JS: For a lot of artists, humor and parody have been used as a layer or strategy to subvert serious ideas. Considering my personal, political, and rigorous experiments in new media, I need it as a device to inspire me to reach new platforms visually and theoretically. I like the friction caused by disparate ideas overlapping.
Jacoby Satterwhite received a MFA from University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia in 2010; a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore in 2008 and completed a residency at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine in 2009. He recently was the recipient of a 1st year and 2nd year Fine Arts Work Center Fellowship (FAWC) in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and The Headlands Center of Arts artist residency. Satterwhite currently has exhibited in Contemporary Arts Center Houston in the group exhibition “Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art” through February 15. He contributed to Clifford Owen’s “Anthology Project” at PS1/MOMA. His work has recently been exhibited in “Shift: Projects I Perspectives I Directions”, The Studio Museum in Harlem; and Fore, the fourth iteration of the “F” series which includes Frequency, Freestyle, and Flow. He also has shown in “First Look: New Art Online: Aboveground Animation: 3D-Form”, The New Museum; a Solo show at Monya Rowe Gallery; and a solo show at Mallorca Landings gallery in Mallorca, Spain. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Abbe Schriber is Curatorial Assistant at The Studio Museum in Harlem, where she organizes the ongoing project “Harlem Postcards.” She curated the exhibition Mendi + Keith Obadike: American Cypher.

Celebrate Recess’ four years of ambitious artists’ projects at Four More Years: Recess Benefit 2013 on May 28th at (Le) Poisson Rouge. The evening will feature a musical performance by TECLA, DJ sets by DJ Marty McSorley and DJ AJ Slim, artist performances by Elia Alba and Jacoby Satterwhite, artist installations by Zach Gage and John Miserendino, and an editioned benefit print by David Horvitz. Purchase tickets here.