

Try This at Home

CECELIA CONDIT
"TICK TOCK. TICK TOCK. BOOM."
GOSWELL ROAD
11 SEP – 25 OCT 2020

Experimental filmmaker Cecelia Condit was born in 1947, had her first museum solo show at Cue Art Foundation in New York in 2008, and went viral beginning in 2015, and again since then. Today, some write to her to ask if she wants to be their grandmother, other leave comments under a Reddit thread titled "Possibly the creepiest thing I've ever watched".

Since the early 1980s, Cecelia Condit is known as the author of femigore fairy tales set in the meek decor of American suburbia, where tidy, single-family homes breed dark secrets that occasionally surface in macabre tabloid headlines. Dealing with the experiences of the average woman, yet subverting fear, aggression, and violence through dark humour and well-rhymed musical poems, her work gained attention from a small group of feminist-video art buffs. While the 1983 video *Possibly in Michigan* (her best-known, and in her words, funniest work) has been widely shown, and is currently in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and Centre Pompidou, it is her sudden rise to internet fame that provided the backbone to its presentation at Goswell Road in Paris.

With "Tick Tock. Tick Tock. Boom." the project space run by artist duo Ruiz Stephinson presented two videos by Condit, *Possibly in Michigan* and the 2020 *I've Been Afraid*. The works were placed in dialogue with a curated feed of some of the twenty-thousand and growing interpretations that followed the upload of two musical clips from *Possibly in Michigan* on TikTok last



@umbranwitch, TikTok video with audio clip from Cecelia Condit's *Possibly In Michigan*, Installation view

year. An instant earworm, the snippets from Karen Skladany's songs "Oh no, no, no, no ... silly" and "Animal/Cannibal" triggered lip-sync performances most of which also engaged with the core themes of the work: female trauma, patterns of abuse, resilient sisterhood,

and toxic masculinity. Condit's full, twelve-minute video centres on two friends, Janice and Sharon, with the latter played by Jill Sands, a recurrent actor in the artists' videos from 1981–87. Whether shopping for perfume or seeking refuge at home, they are

Photos courtesy Cecelia Condit & Goswell Road, Paris

followed from afar by a masked man, successively camouflaging himself as Pig, Wolf, Frog Prince, Prince Charming, and ultimately, a cannibal with a gaping mouth. At the end, the two friends rebel, break the curse, and savour his body with a cigarette and a glass of red wine to seal their solidarity pact. There are, however, many parallel narratives woven into the original, such as the anecdote that Condit read about in a newspaper where a woman put her poodle in the microwave so as to dry it, only to see the whole thing explode – the "oh no, no, no, no" bit refers to that story. The erratic, non-linear strands woven into the narrative strongly contribute to its allure today in what sixteen-year-old Virs Dillard called the

"creepy cute" effect, and what others have deemed the now infamous "cursed images" on Tumblr.

At Goswell Road, the presentation of the videos on screens and in physical space allow for a step back from the feed and a certain mise-en-abyme. It is not, however, an invitation to "slow down", a frequent headline of articles appalled by the perceptive-cognitive acceleration brought about by the social-media platform. Neither does the presentation aim to regain the support of a more conservative fringe of art-viewers who have disapproved of every new media from film to TikTok. Rather, the face-off between the two screens, one showing Condit's work, the other 'Tik-Tokers', opens up an interval for a kind

of chronopolitics. Its speeded temporality is one too quick to attach itself to physical bodies and personas, therefore it is rather oriented towards the ways in which libidinal forces circulate and weave together a strain of shared, recodified effects. Those are neither singular nor collective, but a chain reaction enabling, to borrow a phrase from philosopher Francesco "Bifo" Berardi, a "happy singularisation of the self". If TikTok intrinsically enables such a practice, too quick for introspection and too interpersonal for voyeurism alone, it is Condit's sole merit to have produced the same texture from within another medium, video, that did not originally call for such use.

Ingrid Luquet-Gad



Still from *Possibly in Michigan*, 1983, video, 12 min., colour, sound

Courtesy Cecelia Condit