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THE BEAST LIVES ON

Charlie Rzepecky

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Figure 1. Charlie Rzepecky, *I WANT SOME T I NEED SOME T I GOT SOME T I TOOK SOME T*, 2020, mixed media.

MORPHED

Beast, a figure put together, big and strong, virile even. This article outlines the fusion of concepts that connect through my work but were perhaps previously unconnected – such as the presentation of transgenderism aided by the concept of clowning mixed with nihilistic neo-expressionistic painting methods. This fusion of seemingly dichotomous qualities becomes integral to understanding my paintings. The paintings are divided into two series: *I WANT SOME T I NEED SOME T I GOT SOME T I TOOK SOME T* and *OSCILLATE*. Specifically, the project that produced them refers to female-to-male (FTM) transition, diving into concepts of castration and breast anxieties which are a natural occurrence in this type of transition experience. Sex and gender merge in a show of dark humour. The paintings are the visual equivalents of deafening screams. They encapsulate experience and shove it in your face. No apologies. Ego, religion, homosexuality, psychosis, violence and gender are more than moderate themes. The paintings sample, mix and morph realities which aren't traditionally connected visually. Rich vs. poor. Insane vs. sane. Hell vs. Heaven. Male vs. female. Binaries are imaginatively interrogated time and time again, a source of frustration, a source that is unresolved.

CYCLE OF THE BEAST

In my work, a sense of decorum is washed away by the drums of the explicit.

My paintings unpack theories and concepts of transgenderism borrowed from Wu Tsang and Boychild, who are multimedia transgender artists. I am exploring figures which implement a new social structure, dissolving the dichotomy between male and female. A dream visualised. Painting with a transgender lens becomes a steady oscillation between the male and female binaries, the ability to see both sides in this showdown of the 'sexes.'



Figure 2. Charlie Rzepecky, *TRANSITION*, 2021, mixed media, 3.7 x 1.8m.

Through painting, I consider my process to be a type of 'clowning,' with a hope to heal via image. 'Monophasic consciousness' is a style of consciousness that fails to accept other forms of consciousness, and generally occurs in Western civilisations.¹ Failure to integrate the 'other' means that through monophasic teachings, consciousness and reality become biased and one-sided. When there is no other, then what we think we know becomes narrow.² These paintings are an integration of the 'other,' a transgender version of human, where dualistic binary thinking is challenged visually, in a shamanic way.³ In community practice, clowning occurs when one uses humour and magical knowledge to heal. Humour often plays on anxieties and fears, making light of tough situations and established schools of thought.⁴

Art is elusive – it's communication, and communication is certainly elusive. It's difficult to hold down, difficult to capture in a 'correct' way. Instead, it's easier to think of art as 'floating.' It will move with the tides, get pummeled by waves and hopefully float away on its journey to entice. Clowning becomes a way to emphasise this philosophy of 'floating,' as seen in my work. 'Symbolic healing' causes psychosomatic transformation and is instigated through clowning.⁵ Bio-reductionist concepts of disease and physical health are increasingly less received, people instead looking to alternative healing practices like clowning to instigate a fuller conception of health.⁶ Universality is at the core of concepts of clowning, from the anti-culturalist presentation to the transcendental role of clowning



Figure 3. Charlie Rzepecky, *WE ARE UNICORNS*, 2021, mixed media, 3.7 x 1.8m (left).
Charlie Rzepecky, *LAOCOONS REVENGE*, 2020, mixed media, 3.7 x 1.8m (right).



Figure 4. Charlie Rzepecky, *DISEMBODIED*, 2019-2021, mixed media, 4 x 1.8m.

To understand heterosexuality is to understand indoctrination. "Heterosexuality hasn't always existed."¹⁵ Currently, heterosexuality and its perimeters are beginning to dissolve.¹⁶ Bio-penises and bio-vaginas take over our porn industry, arguably as cultural propaganda.¹⁷ This means if a bio-penis doesn't penetrate a bio-vagina then it's not considered sex.¹⁸ Confrontation plays a major part in the viewing of the works. I am man. I am man with a vagina.

Charlie Rzepecky is a transgender artist who originally hails from Tāmaki Makaurau. He used to go by the name Charlotte Rzepecky when he was female. He has an MVA from Otago Polytechnic, specialising in painting.

behaviour.⁷ Wu Tsang and Boychild's work are indicative of my aspirations for my paintings, particularly where dark humour is used. Semiotics and symbols are used in clown performances to invert cultural rules, creating metacultural texts that provoke emotional responses.⁸ These emotional responses can be anything – not exclusively laughter – but they provide psychological healing.⁹ Transference and catharsis can occur in the clown's audience – transference being the process of psychoanalytically using a medium, often actioned by a therapist, though in this case a clown, to solve emotions originally felt in childhood.¹⁰ Often I see my paintings as this medium, which has resolved childhood fears in me. The painter, therefore, might positively influence another and successfully 'clown.'

Finding Paul B Preciado's book *Testo Junkie* has been a turning point in my painterly confidence.¹¹ I find their work ahead of its time, ahead of my time. I find *Testo Junkie* orgy-like. The people, the varying genders, predicaments, the collision of sex and politics. The coining of the term "pharmacopornographic" is stunning and fitting.¹² The concept of taking testosterone is linked to the "pharmaceutical exploitation of living species."¹³ My excitement in my own experience of testosterone is rooted in the beyond, beyond experience, beyond politics, beyond sex. Preciado says that heterosexuality is an institution that has its own sexual currency.¹⁴ Heterosexual delusion within society and the information consumed as a result has become a philosophical interest for me.

- 1 Michael Winkelman, *Shamanism: The Neural Ecology of Consciousness and Healing* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Matthew Stone, "All about the Boychild," i-D, 13 November 2013, https://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/qv887d/all-about-the-boychild.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Linda Miller-Van Blerkom, "Clown Doctors: Shaman Healers of Western Medicine," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, new series, 9:4 (1995), 462-75, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/648831> (accessed 15 March 2021).
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Beatriz (Paul B.) Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (New York: Feminist Press, 2008).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.