

Susan Hobbs

Jeremy Laing

1979 born in Peterborough
2002 BAA, Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto
2022 MVS (studio), University of Toronto, Toronto

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2020 “*New Work*,” Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver
2019 *The Wall of Virginia Puff-Paint*, Paul Petro Contemporary Art, Toronto
2003 *Virginia Puff-Paint*, Zsa Zsa Gallery, Toronto

Selected Group Exhibitions

2023 *Piecedwork*, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa
2022 *Canadian Modern*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
 Master of Visual Studies Graduate Exhibition, University of Toronto Art
 Museum, Toronto
 The Aleatory Object, University of Toronto Art Museum, Toronto
 Performance Clash, Toronto Dance Theatre, Toronto
 A Rhythm, Not A Plot, Galerie Nicolas Robert, Toronto
2021 *Queer Dialogues*, Grinnell College Museum of Art, Grinnell, Iowa
 Adorned, The Plumb, Toronto
2018 *The World According to GARP*, Franz Kaka, Toronto
2017 *Coat of Many Colours*, The Loon, Toronto
2016 *Chroma Lives*, 21 Avenue Road, Toronto
2014 *The Politics of Fashion*, Design Exchange, Toronto
 This Is Not A Toy, Design Exchange, Toronto
2012 *History, Glamour, Magic*, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto
2004 *Sinbad and the Rented World*, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto
 Toronto Exchange Club, Parlour Projects, Brooklyn
 Explosion LTTR, Art In General, New York
 Sorry for the Inconvenience, Junction Arts Festival, Toronto
2003 *Fashion Queen*, Spin Gallery, Toronto

Screenings

Inside the Pavilion of Virginia Puff-Paint:

- 2011 Queer Cinema from the Collection, Yesterday and Today, curated by AA Bronson, Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 2008 Multiplicity of Desires, curated by Arjon Dunnewind, Impakt Festival, Utrecht, Holland
- 2007 Kinomuseum, curated by AA Bronson, 53rd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany
- 2004 Ocularis program, curated by Lauren Cornell, Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool

Selected Bibliography

- Amed, Imran, Tavi Gevinson, Tim Lim and Heather Sproat. *Pattern: 100 Fashion Designers, 10 Curators*. Phaidon Press, February 2013;
- Gotlieb, Rachel with contributions by Arlene Gehmacher and Alexandra Palmer. *Canadian Modern*. Royal Ontario Museum, 2022;
- Johnson, Jessica. *The Canadian School*. The Walrus, April 2020;
- Laing, Jeremy. *Touch It*. Canadian Art, February 2019;
- Laing, Jeremy and Will Munro. *The Pavilion of Virginia Puff-Paint*. Art Gallery of York University, 2006;
- Munro, Will. *History, Glamour, Magic*. Art Gallery of York University, 2012;
- Palmer, Alexandra. *Jeremy Laing*. Descant, Issue 138;

Jeremy Laing

The frame is the originating condition, drawing in as it keeps out, co-constituting interior and exterior, normative and otherwise. Filling in the frame with surface delivers partitions, screens, walls, windows, frames within frames: overlapping, intersecting, implicating. Each surface a sample; transtemporal, an extraction of what exists and a projection of what could come; a present promise of futurity; mimetic of itself, but a self-anticipating transition, and, perhaps, also in aid of one. Each sample a version, a façade, an identity; site of administration and control, but, simultaneously, of joyous, agential emergence; coterminous limit and potentiality.

Frequency. Between sample and self. Vibration. Between optic visibility, abstracted from surface, and haptic visibility, concretely related to it. Push-and-pull. Between a centred, distant view and coming close, spreading out. Flickering. Between eyesight and eye-touch. Hovering. Beyond the visible, a queer visibility: affective seeing, attuned to that which is not quite there, but is revealed, in anticipatory glimpses, by the trembling shape of one's desire.

Toggling. From visual sign to haptic sign, entwined but in contradistinction: a mirror, reflecting sensation, and the self had in sensing. Oscillating. From perception as geography—perspectival, points plotted to map—to sensation as landscape, an ongoing emergence; that which exists, between subject

and object, at the interface of the body. Moving. From this side to . . . no side, a non-binary transition; departure without arrival; a space, a duration between.

Individual narratives give way to a new context of irreducible totality. Texture (cumulative) echoes across scales, superseding-yet-arising from particularities and mutual non-identity. The material and ephemeral substance of surface is a conduit to particularity, a source of connectivity, a transitional portal. From the waning shadow cast by the fantasy of a fixed state and stable view emerges a non-hierarchical distribution of variation, never static—an *Infinite Sample Set*—evolving in dynamic relation to shifting orientations: yours, theirs, ours.

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About the Artist

Jeremy Laing makes objects, spaces, and situations for embodiment and relation. Through the synthesis of craft, conceptual, and social modes, their work explores the interrelation and transitional potential of people and things, materials and meanings, and questions the normative logics of who and what matters, is valued, or not.



Jeremy Laing, *Infinite Sample Set* (detail, in progress), 2022–ongoing. X-frame stands, found materials, grommets, variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artist.

ARTFORUM

Critic's Pick

Jeremy Laing

Will Aballe Art Projects | WAAP , 1129 East Hastings St., March 7–July 11, 2020

In Jeremy Laing's "New Work" at Wil Aballe Art Projects, cords and yarns are wound into soft line drawings held in place by ceramic hooks and vessels. These lines suggest organs and limbs—limp arms and dangling legs. And in works such as *Pattern Painting Sculpture*, 2020, and two pieces titled *Accessorized Single-Sitting Sampler*, both 2018–20, they wrap around rugs made from found yarns in firm embraces. Laing has adorned the latter works with crude stoneware buttons made from scraps of clay, and the places where he's punched through the surface—making holes for the fibers—look like skin broken open by hungry fingers. In the former work, the rug's monk's cloth is stained with the same muted hues as the white upholstery piping that borders the piece.



Jeremy Laing, *Pattern Painting Sculpture*, 2020, acrylic paint, yarn, and monk's cloth on stretcher, glazed stoneware, upholstery piping, staples, nail, 69 x 22 1/2 x 2 1/4".

Informed by different facets of Laing's practice—the artist has made clothes, videos, and sculptures, often in collaboration with other artists—these works articulate the aliveness of objects and diagram humans' entanglements with the nonhuman. Plastic hand-shaped fly swatters in pastel colors wave from a hanging pot in *Swat Pot for Three*, 2020, while in *New Nails Festoon, with thanks to Diana*, 2020, and "*Global Best Beauty*" – *as branded, with thanks to Margot*, 2019, materials that normally extend and adorn human bodies—dyed hair and acrylic nails—fan out in delicate, creature-like arrangements.

In "*Hollow Habits, for Liz*" – *the first gay I ever knew*, 2020, a pile of folded hand-dyed monk's cloth sits on the floor, enveloping the pear-shaped opening of a pot, protecting something both hard and fragile. Used first as picnic blankets and then as packing material for this show, the colorful cloths are imbued with the warmth of past use—their edges unwind in an open invitation.

— sophia bartholomew

ABOUT THE WORKS

Text by David Balzer

In what we call the West, under what we call capitalism, it can be startling when things without breath appear to come alive. This might be because we are surrounded by more manufactured things than we have been, with these things being at least once removed from the human hand, made with the aid of machines, or with the aid of artificial intelligence that moves these machines. If in the past we were grounded to the thing-world through what Karl Marx has called the labour theory of value, where we could gauge the worth of something through the amount of socially necessary work required to make it, accelerated capitalism erases the (often exploited) labour that drives it. The result is a kind of haunting. “Man [sic] never knows how anthropomorphic he [sic] is,” wrote Goethe a few centuries ago.

In 1946, George Orwell made fun of art writers who use phrases such as “living quality” to describe artwork. He thought it was meaningless. Yet it is true that Jeremy Laing’s work has a living quality and that this is meaningful. Laing’s things look alive because either they look like other things that are made and manipulated by human hands in order to help things function, or because they look like other things that are alive. Sometimes, both. Laing has been working in ceramics lately to create hard, glazed anchors for the soft parts of his sculptures. Some of these ceramics resemble large buttons, which serve the partial purpose of reminding us what buttons actually do, in addition to decorating—hold things together. Other ceramics are oversized hooks, and they do the thing hooks do, hold things up, but they are not hidden as hooks often are.

Laing also repurposes samplers from the design and beauty industries. A fabric swatch peeks out like a small appendage. Swizzle stick-like fake nails are fanned out in a spectrum of colours and patterns. Synthetic hair of various shades and hues is bundled in mini-ponies on an oversized keychain. These samplers, seen in the manufacturing and business worlds as tools for imagining something more complete, are, in Laing’s imagining, complete in and of themselves, kinds of organisms. When you put something on display in a gallery you try to make it as much like an object as possible: do not touch it. When you put something on display in a retail context you try to make it as much like a creature as possible: touch it, make friends with it, take it home. To touch Laing’s creatures would be to disrupt their delicate ecology. Still, they feel a bit like ladies in waiting.

Yes, it is queer. The soft parts go through and over the hard parts, which they resemble. The insides are on the outside. Laing uses the rope from cushion welting (lumpy, intestinal) to thread his ceramics. A dog toy is deployed as a readymade to look like a pair of low-hangers. And et cetera. "I never wanted to paint but hoped... that I might become an objet trouvé in the world of art," wrote Quentin Crisp, whose old mattress ticking was, months after his death, made into a coat by fashion designer Miguel Adrover. If Laing's works could talk, they might clap in approval.

Touch It

When I stopped making clothes, I started exploring textiles in a different way, but I never lost my fascination with the profane sensuality of materials

by Jeremy Laing

Experiences are more valuable than things, but what is an experience except a specific arrangement of things? A cumulative and tacit understanding of varied material aspects sensually absorbed, as well as culturally mediated?

In the sense of being aids or conduits to experience, every thing is a material, and therefore innately equal. We impose value—in the eye of the beholder, in the hand of the holder, in the mind of the maker—and things remain blissfully unaware of this. They may be the truest sadists, caring not for our pleasure, but absolutely foundational to our experience of it.

When I stopped making clothes I stopped making anything at all for a brief time. And while I don't intrinsically miss anything about making clothes, I certainly was not able to leave behind the hands-on, material exploration that had always been a significant point of genesis in my artistic process.

Seeking another way of approaching textiles, after clothes, I turned to a tufting gun, a mechanical yarn-drawing tool used in commercial carpet manufacture. The resulting works—extemporaneous, sculptural yarn paintings they could be called, perhaps, though “tapestry,” “piece-of-cloth” or “sampler” will also do—are made as much to be touched as to be looked at.

It follows that, while making them, a variety of texture-appraisals and hand-feels come into play, the better to invite and invoke broad sensual experience. Readymade



yarn, indeed stringlike things of any kind or description, anything that the tool can work with, suddenly became significant materials, as did the decisions that went into their making and my respective judgements about them. I stopped trusting my good taste, which of course isn't mine at all but a residue of the privilege of others—as I recall the critic and essayist Dave Hickey once putting it.

Any material will do for some yet-to-be-discovered effect but especially the material that I find most profane, since that designation is itself so rich that “beautiful” feels a bit lacking next to it. Better yet: the material has somehow been chosen by someone else, valued in ways I can only guess, and has come to me as discarded ends from other projects long passed or abandoned.

What follows are excerpts from a diary in which I have been working through impressions and feelings about materials as I encounter them.

i.

A tangle of noodle, dusty mould sprouted from its thin, twisted spine, the colour of a chino rag soaked in grey water, parched as grissini but incongruously possessed of a wet, kinky roil. Nice to fondle, pastiche deluxe, it has the unmistakable tinge of the synthetic: a perversion of good taste and less banal for it, if only it weren't an accident.

ii.

Puppet entrails unspooled, thick but with a comedically weightless bounce, in a dried sang-de-boeuf, visceral but powdery as pigment, hydrophobic, yet a colour to stain the hands. Thicker than rope, but possessing no substance at all, it could easily thread a tapestry needle.

From a grab-bag of discarded ends unfolds a typecast chronicle of high-chroma femme aspirations—world-making from the gutter in grand Queer tradition.

iii.

Saturated, and with the nuance of colour afforded bulk liquid soap. A knot of minty-fresh caterpillar, weighing little in the palm. Veritable chenille, this could only be for knitting a clinical, nightmarish cocoon—away from an open flame. I am attracted by my repulsion. Why should ugliness not be as much a virtue as beauty, if beauty be a virtue at all?

iv.

“Baby Coordinates”: bright, fake, flossy acrylic, collapsing the equally synthetic binary of gender into a casually coiled pastel curse, pink strands entwined with blue. Soft-edged, but no less insistent for it, a bias toward the poles with no space between, a

map with only two places, destination and no-go decreed at once. A generation's gift to the next, the baby blanket, concatenated invocation—pink and blue, but always pink or blue—ill-worn yet tucked tightly around a little body for so much longer than it takes to fall from use.

v.

Safety orange cord, fetishistically described by its maker in a sensual hard-sell: “Jet Set.” Braided firmly to avoid snagging and abrasion. Premium Husky Coating applied to enhance the glide and increase the abrasion resistance further. If you want the best in Slickness and Toughness, try Jet Set.

vi.

Today's haul: Flutter by Bouclair, a spool of drag-queen false lashes set in a sunset gradient of grenadine, bagged with Luzern Tweed, Swiss-ish, making a selling feature of sober, old-world, well-pastured provenance. Also false. Value Village, \$3.99.

vii.

Dollar store finds: curling ribbon, crimped polypropylene, the kind that would strangle a sea turtle after the presents have been opened and the fête over, in a range of deep oceanic blues. Silver Lurex thread, sharp, bright metallic-laminated foil; tangled nests of plastic raffia, the insipid hues of Easter; sisal twine, decorticated agave, perhaps the only natural fibre to be found in this temple of petroleum by-product. The unholy off-gassing incense stings the eyes.

viii.

From a grab-bag of discarded ends unfolds a typecast chronicle of high-chroma femme aspirations to be reformatted at will, world-making from the gutter in grand Queer tradition: Linie Smash Irisée Trend Collection, wispy and golden in her breakout role; Showboat, cerulean with a flinty vein; Cindy by Bouquet, dry, ropy, she's got that “cotton look”; Debbie Bliss, lofty atomic pink; Estelle Shimmer, sparkly but sophisticated, for whatever that is worth; Fixation by Cascade, the slubby matriarch with a bouclé twist; and finally, Club Soleil, an ingenue in the navy, red and white of Deauville.

ix.

Cotton—a box of baker's twine rescued street-side—undyed, loosely spun and seemingly elementary, its supposed naturalness an illusion created by a heavy history of industrialization, mercantile capitalism and subjugated labour. Coursing with coercion whether physical, economic or socially prescribed. Considered, for the

bulk of history, a great luxury due to the implications of its origins and production in human and environmental terms. Today, made to be disposed of by a market happy to ignore that slavery still exists. Classic cotton, cognitive dissonance by the bale, by the spindle, by the yard.

x.

Fade-and-shrink resistance comes with a price: a squeaking frison of acrylic, a bone-deep full-body shiver, triggering an instant recoil while also daring a second attempt to touch. What pleasure is this—to want to feel disgust's comfort again? The unreal colours match the synthetic feeling, each validating the other. A cheap substitute easily overshadows with qualities all its own—new pleasures—so that to wear cashmere feels like a loss.

