

Annie Gauthier and Milutin Gubash *You, Me and You*

by Jasia Stuart

I put the word 'love' into google today and I get 1 420 000 000 results. This is my confirmation that the subject of Milutin Gubash and Annie Gauthier's collaborative work is not something obscure. For your sake, reader, I hope it is a subject you know at least a little bit about, whether personally or vicariously.

To take on 'love' in anyway way is quite a feat, and judging by number of times I have given or been given advice on the subject, love, as well as the interactions we enter into on its behalf, are a subject humankind could use a little help with. Not to mention that because we are nosy, voyeuristic creatures, most of us are more than willing to hear a little dirt on other people's love-lives.

This condition of romantic hopelessness, un-drownable curiosity and willingness to suffer repeatedly in the hopes of outwitting loneliness are what makes *You, Me and You* so essential, so brave and so potentially foolish on the parts of Annie Gauthier and Milutin Gubash. Their non-looping video work presents ten hours of footage of the two artists going about their lives as part of a couple; talking, sleeping, lying in bed and making love.

The strategies at play in *You, Me and You* include a disarming intensity of disclosure, insurmountable quantities of material, and the disconcerting simplicity of direct dialogue with the audience. The extent to which the subject matter is highly personal yet still universal creates an almost forced identification with the artists on display. It is like my sex-life, my private conversations and personal living space are out on display in the gallery, without my permission.

Accompanying this sense of involuntarily proximity, of the work hitting too close to my own experiences as part of a couple, there is a certain lingering sense of bad taste in offering up their personal lives to the public. This kind of behavior is, after all, for tabloid coveted celebrities and sexual deviants, and behavior is one frontier where blurring the boundaries between 'high' and 'pop' doesn't feel so comfortable.

Another thing that puts me on edge about *You, Me and You* is the absence of clear boundaries between the subjects and the audience. The people talking to the camera are not perfect looking actors or ritualized outsiders, and the stories they tell feel more familiar than foreign. In the absence of any special justification for why Annie and Milutin are on display, I start to feel ill at ease; perhaps now that I have witnessed their personal secrets, they have access to mine.

Like stumbling across a personal email addressed to someone else, *You, Me and You* also gives me the guilty delight of gaining access to a private medium, something created for an audience of one. By opening this up to the public, I feel a glimpse of something un-fakeable, something that crosses the distance I usually leave between myself and objects in the gallery.

This is not to say that Annie and Milutin are unaware that their acts are becoming art, which will be placed in a gallery for exhibition; their attitude toward the camera in the video is far from naive. But what is interesting about the situation is above and beyond their awareness of me the viewer, the art world etcetera, there is another more immediate audience present: each other. Despite its public presentation in an artist run center, *You, Me and You* is something the artists are clearly doing for each other, each becoming the other's the mirror and ideal viewer. In addition to being partners in a romantic sense, they are reflecting and creating each other's identity in this video.

If the exhibition was simply a case of putting an uncomfortable amount of the artists' personal lives on display, it might not come as close as some art historical precedents for doing exactly this. But you and me, unknown and distant strangers to the artists, are not the only audience this work was created for. The allure of this piece comes from watching two individuals narrate and explore their lives in relation to each other, and while we have been permitted to watch, and our presence is acknowledged, it is not our permission or approval that the artists are looking for.

Their preoccupation with each other may be what allows Annie and Milutin to bravely offer up not just the racy part of their romance, but also their everyday reality for closer inspection. In so many ways, this piece is a very bold offering; exploring a subject so abundant and well discussed that it could have easily become either trite or cheesy. It is not only their passion that comes across, but also the difficulties of dual existence, each partner telling a slightly different version of their joint story. If they were less in love they might worry that they are giving too much away, but their mutual fixation is so strong that I have a hard time seeing anything other than the reflection of my own experiences.

Jasia Stuart makes, writes, replicates, defaces, repairs, cuts things up and aspires to become a magician. Previously, Stuart lived in Valencia, Spain, studied in Calgary at the Alberta College of Art and Design, and collected humming while living on the side of Buffalo Mountain. Stuart is currently thinking about eggs and pining for her recently discovered twin who is currently stuck in a parallel universe.

This text is part of a writing series by members of articule, reflecting on the works presented during the gallery's 2009-2010 programming season. Nadia Kurd's text has been produced for Annie Gauthier and Milutin Gubash's exhibition *You, Me and You*, presented from April 2-11, 2010, and is also available as a pdf on the gallery's web site.

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