

NO FIXED ADDRESS

UK Artist Lucy Pawlak creates a “third space” on Fogo Island

For the past two years, UK filmmaker, installation and performance artist, Lucy Pawlak, has led a nomadic life that alludes to and re-enacts her explorations of fragmentation within her work. Through an impressive number of artist residencies in continual succession, moving from one residency location to the next, Pawlak has dwelled temporarily in places ranging from Austria to Greece, Banff, Vienna and Newfoundland’s Fogo Island.

Pawlak’s reflections upon the place she is in at a given time have a strong presence in her work. Fascinated by how space is produced through the camera, especially in relation to narratives, her work explores how place is portrayed and how stories are told through languages of cinema and mediated spaces.

Pawlak expresses a strong interest in the idea of the “third space.” Theories posed by sociologist Ray Oldenburg indicate that the third space is a site that functions as an alternative to home and work, a site that forms a vital social element to life and community. For Oldenburg the attributes of a third space include being in a location offering a neutral ground, a non-hierarchical space, a place where social interaction is an essential activity, and where those who come have a sense of belonging.

Pawlak’s work investigates the third space as a constructed space for community engagement. The erosion of physical public social spaces in tandem with growth in social media and virtual worlds prompts her desire to critically examine these digital realms. As part of this process she has been examining and reinterpreting psychologist Stanley Milgram’s conception of the “cyranoid”—a person who does not speak their own thoughts and words, but instead speaks thoughts originating in the mind of another

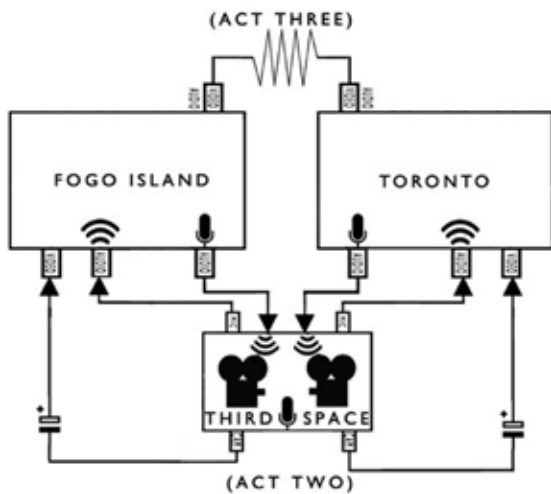


Lucy Pawlak, film still from *Arriving Without Leaving (guaranteed happy ending,* cinematography by Nicolas Villegas, 2013.



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Lucy Pawlak, performance plan for *Arriving Without Leaving (guaranteed happy ending)*, Art Metropole, Fogo Arts & The Institute of Immaterialism, Toronto / Fogo Island, 2013.

who transmits them via some alternative means. In her projects, the cyranoid as spokesperson, the disembodied voice, becomes a character of multiple personalities. Within such an experience the cues and nuances available through one-on-one, face-to-face communication are removed and mediated; participants must contend with the transference of their dialogue through the complexities of remote communication with all its technical mishaps, time lags and potential for mixed messages.

One of Pawlak's recent projects transpired at Fogo Island Arts during an ambitious five-month residency, an experimental venture called *Arriving Without Leaving (guaranteed happy ending)*. It is difficult to separate the Fogo Island Arts Residency from its context. Currently a lot of activity on the island revolves around the Fogo Island Inn. Pawlak's residency took place from mid-November 2012 to mid-April 2013, with her departure just one month prior to the Inn opening. She states: "... the hotel is ever present, I can see it from my studio and my house ... the politics of how things are done, all the decisions that are made, everything—the furniture, the wall paper—are all unpicked in discussions ... it's always there in the background." For Pawlak, "It's interesting and curious how a social enterprise, business, architecture, art [and a] community, might coexist."

Within that social context of the residency location, on a remote island in a Minimalist studio, Pawlak chose to merge her work with a large metropolitan city to facilitate a conversation between people on Fogo Island and Toronto. Her project was an experimental video conference between Art Metropole in Toronto and the Fogo Island Film House, consisting of three 'acts' and designed in partnership with the experimental publishing project The Institute of Immaterialism.

For the first act, Pawlak created a video that was screened and mediated in both sites to offer a "romantic interactive experience with an artist in residence." With Pawlak's guidance, viewers began

to feel that the papier-mâché hands presented on the screen were their own, an extension of their own physicality. Through this experience Pawlak explores how people can become immersed in an idea, and how the brain makes links and associations.

In the second act, participants at Art Metropole and Fogo Island Film House engaged in conversation through a third space—a Skype feed showing two people dressed up as mice, while the groups in each respective space fed them their dialogue. These mice-like characters were cyranoids; Pawlak created a connection to the notion of the avatar and raised implied questions regarding how visual cues based on physical attributes can be re-interpreted or obliterated through virtual engagement.

The final act was a facilitated Skype discussion between each physical site, which examined and debated issues and ideas explored in the experiment. Pawlak explains that during the mediated discussion, she aimed to address questions including: "Who gets to contribute to the picture? What happens when a spokesperson is speaking on our behalf or representing us? Who gets to be an author and who is an actor?" She adds, "For me, engaging with these questions through this convoluted form provided the perfect lens for looking at issues around mediated and remote communications, representation, branding and branded environments—issues that are relevant to Fogo Island ..."

Another project Pawlak undertook while in Fogo Island—in collaboration with Hilary Thomson, Nicolas Villegas, and Joaquin Del Paso—was engaging students at the high school in sound and video workshops. Pawlak invited students to transform their built environments, giving students the opportunity to find ways to re-present Fogo Island Art's Long Studio—perhaps the island's most iconic studio by architect Todd Saunders, a sleek, black box on stilts that rests on a windswept cliff atop crashing waves—through video.

Her final project on Fogo Island was a pirate radio show, broadcast for two days from a shed in the community of Tilting—a historic fishing village with a population of less than 300. Through the collaborative assistance of sound and installation artist Michael Waterman from St. John's, the radio project, called "Cough and Sniff FM," incorporated prerecorded interviews and other content, as well as live contributions from community members singing and telling stories. Pawlak was inspired by the local enthusiasm for various radio ventures that had taken place on the island in the past: "... in relation to the nature of the Fogo Island residency project I felt a strong sense of the importance of the social contract with people on the island. I wanted to initiate something shared."

For Pawlak, a "third space is the reality in the illusion." Her projects on Fogo Island investigated this paradox—the crossover of the physical and the virtual—forming a space that exists as an experience, without defined boundaries or static limitations; a place without a fixed state or a fixed address. ■

Kay Burns is a multidisciplinary artist currently based in Newfoundland, Canada.