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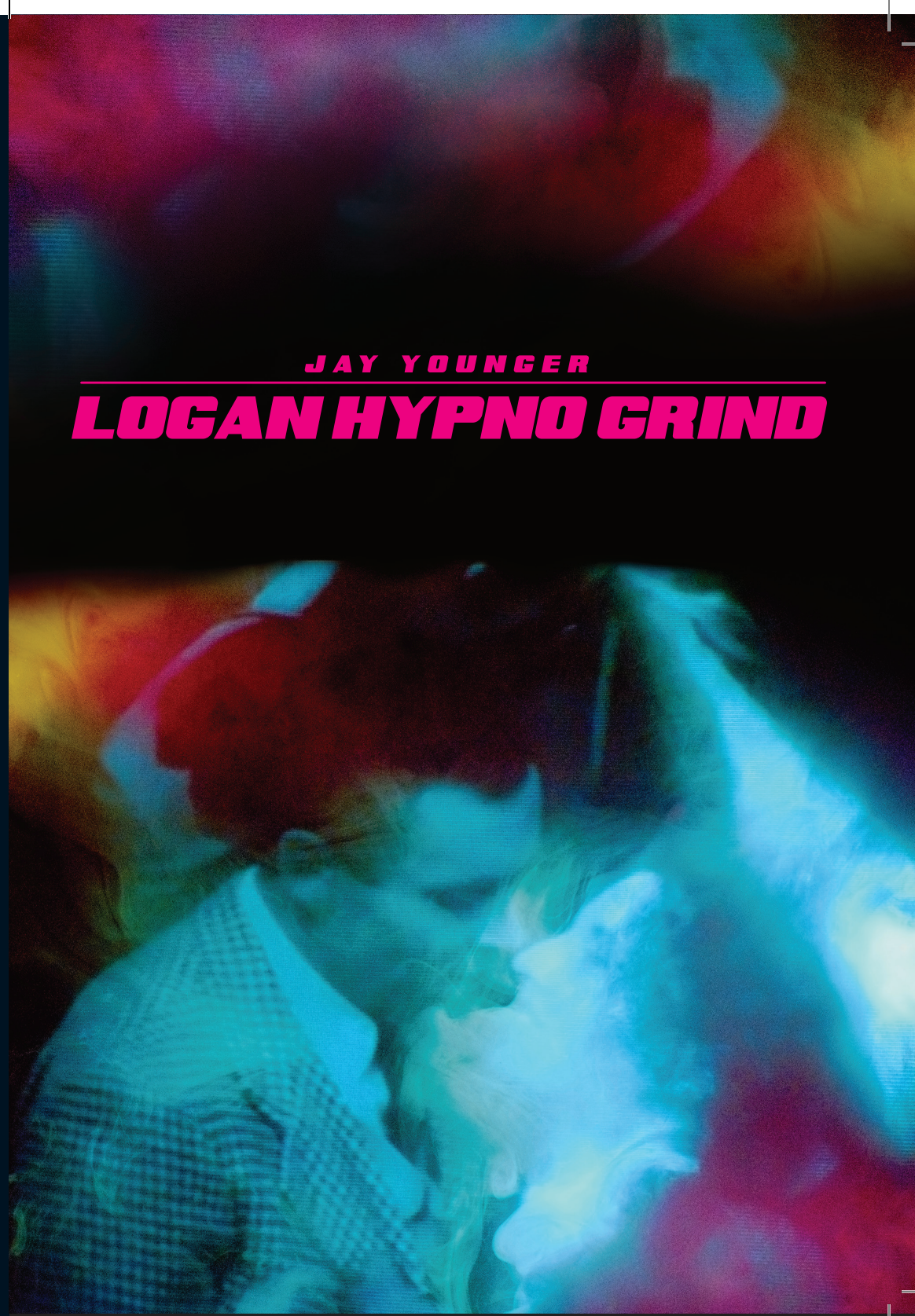
Cover image: Jay Younger, *Logan Hypno Grind* (video detail - *Lady Eve 1941 Barbara Stanwyck, Peter Fonda and crazy horse*) (detail), 2011, video installation, dimensions variable.

Logan Hypno Grind
10 August - 17 September 2011

Logan Art Gallery
Cnr Wembley Road and Jacaranda Ave,
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Open 10 am to 5 pm Tuesday to Saturday



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Logan Hypno Grind

Every generation has its own take on the question of reality. No sooner do notions of the real come within reach than are they dumped in the philosophical wheelie bin to be recycled as something completely different. If we compare, for instance, the raw monochromatic film footage of the neo-realist era (40s-60s) with the invasive technologies of reality TV, two startlingly different pictures emerge. When talking to Jay Younger about the diverse components making up *Logan Hypno Grind*, I was reminded of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1965 film *Comizi d'amore* (Love Debates) in which he asks "ordinary Italians" questions about love and sex. Pasolini's candid documentary with convincing scratchy sound might seem a long way from the *Logan Hypno Grind* but there are several common threads beyond the working class environments that both artists have preferred to work in. For Younger the interview is also central and introduces a sense of frank actuality to her work while referencing film (and entertainment) as an ironical way of counterbalancing entrenched belief systems. This (popular cultural) methodology also effectively demonstrates the ways in which her subjects exhibit certain values in relation to the ideas they consume.

It could be said that concrete mixers and sugar are recurring motifs in Younger's work. This exhibition sees the return of the *Gormandizor* (1993) in which she used a sugar coated mixer bathed in pink light to colonize a zone of masculinity in a work about women's sexuality. A video image of a woman laughing while dribbling honey and diamonds explored female erotic sensibility in the masochistic context of the macho-man machine that would ultimately be damaged by the sugar. Inclusion has been a core element in Younger's work as she explores various forms of participation from the donation of 60 vials of sperm in *The Sweet Core of Disobedience* (1992) to the interviews with women artists who were the key performers in *Big Wig and Charger* (1995). She extended her exploration of participatory practice in "before and after" interviews with agoraphobic women in *The Captivation Between Here and There* (2000), a convention frequently used in reality television.

Not one, but two concrete mixers are the centre-pieces for *Logan Hypno Grind* and again their mouths are open wide, at once vulnerable yet brutalist screens for Younger's analysis of modern love and marriage. For this outing the metaphor is further mixed as Younger almost cynically employs the durability of concrete to background a discussion focussing on that most flimsy of human inventions, relationships. Suspended both from the ceiling and from disbelief the mixers convey two streams of romantic commentary in the words of people who include a number from the Logan area. One mixer tells the stories of people who have been proposed to or have proposed. The other, as if in opposition, records the stories of those who have never proposed nor been proposed to. And the obvious question here is at what point do these personal experiences and understandings intersect.

Relationships are made to last and the institution of marriage is the rock solid manifestation of love's time machine. Or so we are led to believe. While the species can survive without romance, there has developed a need for love with all the trimmings and in many ways Younger's work focuses on these appurtenances as an effective way of analysing the stark realities of the situation at hand. In other words, this is the "fairy tale" packaging in which the promise of lasting love is wrapped. Taking cues from Jane Austen to Doris Day we in the West demand that true love is the only driver for a successful relationship. Arrangement in any form is the work of callous foreigners and staying single is kind of eccentric.

To this end Younger adds another element to her work with suburban flesh and blood, a composite video of Hollywood marriage proposals grabbed from classic films such as *Gone with the Wind*, *From Here to Eternity* and *Moonlight Bay*. Projecting this video onto a screen of smoke Younger highlights the swirling fog of illusion in which love persists. At this point the variable elements of *Logan Hypno Grind* close in and reflect upon each other. Stories of proposal reflect the idealised form of Hollywood's dream factory and thus, reality and fantasy merge into one perplexing *mise-en-scene*.

Image at right: Jay Younger, *Logan Hypno Grind* (video detail — marriage proposal interviews — not proposed to or have not proposed) (detail), 2011, video installation, dimensions variable.

Younger is an artist who has made a point of employing surfaces to expose precisely what lies beneath. Although her materials can appear to obscure meaning they have the opposite, sometimes purely physical effect: glitter, for instance, reflects more dirt than light and a sugar coating is corrosive. Younger's critical oeuvre has frequently explored the dark side with a deceptively light touch and *Logan Hypno Grind* is no exception. Sugar, smoke, light and sound along with the absurdity of suspended concrete mixers would seem to contribute little to the ancient discourse of modern love and yet ultimately they do. Younger's media are carefully selected and organised as conclusive statements that provide the key to understanding her work.

This particular installation emerges at a time soon after the highly publicised wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. It is a time when the loyal subjects appear to have forgotten how the preceding royal fairy tale of Charles and Dianna quickly degenerated into a tragedy of Greek proportions. It is also a period in which gay, lesbian and transgender couples struggle for the right to be married, generating new debate around an old heterosexual institution that so recently seemed to be in decline. Weddings are back, and with them the fantasy is reinforced. With this in mind Younger is not telling us anything we don't know but rather reminding us of what we have clearly forgotten.

The theatrical/cinematic structure of Younger's installation questions the foundations of cultural institutions with precision. While she has sometimes flirted with the naturalistic horror of political Grand Guignol her work is perhaps more aligned with the Theatre of the Absurd and its reliance on existential ideas. In a curious twist on the technique of chiaroscuro Younger plays dark values against the light and thus the set becomes tense. Concrete mixers taunt the audience with the idea that love and marriage is robust while images of proposing couples in flickering light simultaneously undermine our confidence. Sugar

coating serves as a bitter-sweet metaphor for a society entrapped by ludicrous dreams and improbable aspirations. Where light entertainment drives the most powerful of human emotions, Younger releases the immateriality of smoke to create a didactic environment that reflects time honoured delusion.

It is not so long ago when love and marriage would have been unlikely subject matter for an artist like Younger who had meatier fish to fry, like sex, death and beauty. Conventional love and marriage would have seemed trivial were it not for a convincing comeback. To some extent *Logan Hypno Grind* is a clear example of an unfortunate zeitgeist in which relationships struggle to maintain a questionable status quo. Just as Pasolini found medieval attitudes towards love and sex in post war Italy, Younger discovers that contemporary attitudes towards marriage if not static, are retrograde. Beneath the claims of extreme disillusionment with marriage, outmoded Hollywood values still persist almost completely unchallenged. Younger, however, has long been a voice for provocative inquiry and she does challenge the codes of love with a variety of techniques that juxtapose notions of the real with those of fantasy. Art and its materiality is the language she deploys to interrogate persistent orthodoxies and this is perhaps the only way to effectively capture the fluid nature of reality.