

## REVIEWS

### NEW YORK

## “Beyond the Cartoon”

Cassina Projects // September 15–October 22

ONCE THE PURVIEW of couch-bound kids in footie pajamas on Saturday mornings, cartoons have long since grown up, moved out, and gotten jobs. Organized by the online art platform and curatorial collective Artuner and on view at Cassina Projects, “Beyond the Cartoon” explores—through video, painting, and works on paper—how the animated figures that began as youthful entertainment have gained relevancy in our adult lives.

Rachel Maclean’s nightmarish Rococo-cum-Lisa Frank video installation *Over the Rainbow*, 2013, makes us reckon with the saccharine insincerity of much of our visual culture. Filming entirely against a green screen, the artist has created an animated

candy-colored world in which she plays every character. It’s punctuated with pop culture and Internet references, such as an *American Idol*-esque audition and a re-enactment of the viral “Double Rainbow” YouTube video.

Andy Holden’s dual-screen installation, *Laws of Motion in a Cartoon Landscape II*, 2016, provides a crash course on the alternative physics that prevail in an animated world. A cartoon version of Holden guides viewers through the video, explaining that in an imaginary landscape, everything is seemingly possible, but certain actions—and reactions—occur over and over again, ad absurdum. Animated Andy suggests that the irrational world of cartoons parallels the

perhaps similarly unreasonable landscape of art history, where artists, by any means necessary, must always make new what has come before.

While Maclean and Holden insert themselves into a fictitious realm, Jeff Keen brings cartoons into contact with the real world. The late Keen, who was a fixture on the British counterculture scene in the 1960s and ’70s, is known for his experimental films that combined collage, animation, and live action, as exemplified in *Rayday Film*, 1968–78, exhibited here. Cacophonous and dystopic, the video’s subjects often don cartoonish masks or deface walls with like imagery, revealing how alienating or uncomfortable it can be when cartoonish imagery is exploited outside of its more innocent context.

Similarly, Rhys Coren and Paulo Nimer Pjota investigate our physical relationship to animation. Coren’s *Up all Night (If You Weren’t Afraid of Flying We Could Leave the Ground)*, 2016, a spray-painted and enameled work cut in the shape of a comic-strip thought bubble, forces its viewers into the role of a cartoon character as they fill it with their own ideas and assumptions. Pjota blends Mickey Mouse and Pokémon stickers, among others, with painted indigenous masks along the border of his installation, *Worst Come to Worst My People Come First*, 2016, which is comprised of an unstretched canvas hung on the wall and a resin basketball set on the floor. The center of the canvas is largely blank, although it bears marks of physical distress and past erasures—a reminder that lived experiences can’t be as easily cleaned up as a crushed or flattened cartoon character.

Works by Rose Wylie and Stephen Felton round out the show and provide a schematic interpretation of commonplace forms and figures. Their pared-down paintings read like doodles for a storyboard about everyday life, which, when abstracted, seems strange and fantastic—a cartoon in macrocosm. —Margaret Carrigan



FROM TOP:  
Installation  
view of  
“Beyond the  
Cartoon,”  
2016.

**Andy Holden**  
Installation  
view of *Laws of  
Motion in a  
Cartoon  
Landscape II*,  
2016.  
Dual-screen  
animation.

