

:: GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY

Diana Cherbuliez: Trigger Warning

8/23/19 – 9/28/19

Grant Wahlquist Gallery is pleased to announce “Trigger Warning,” Diana Cherbuliez’s second solo exhibition at the gallery. The show will run from August 23 through September 28, 2019. An **opening reception will occur on Friday, August 23 from 4 – 7 pm**. The gallery will host a **conversation with the artist on Saturday, September 14 at 2 pm**.

Cherbuliez is well-known for working in a myriad of traditional and unconventional materials, frequently requiring her to concoct new means of making. She masterfully repurposes found or cast-off materials with personal and poetic associations to draw out their material and allusive possibilities in playful and heartbreaking ways. While her work often alludes to fairy tales, myths, and construction—that is, narrative and physical structures, and the way they complement each other—“Trigger Warning” takes on a new domain: the absurdity and loneliness, but also the connectivity and expansiveness, of life online.

The exhibition includes three pairs of bespoke boxing gloves, each titled *Concussion*. Though wearable, the thumbs are out (ouch!), and their design is based on Facebook’s “like” button. Ten years after its launch, the “like” button has morphed from a tool for ranking popularity and selling ads into the laziest mode of engagement, the one-click equivalent of “have a nice day.” What once indicated endorsement or encouragement is now an empty token and source of overwhelming anxiety for the masses engaged in internet popularity contests. These intricately constructed transformations of the ubiquitous icon into covetable 3D objects comically address the pugilistic nature of social media, our latest and greatest playground for the agonism of our disintegrating democracies under late capitalism. “Trigger Warning” also features *Their selves*, a series of variously-positioned cast rubber dolls clutching cell phones in both hands laying scattered about the gallery’s floor as though discarded by a child. The figures are simultaneously realistic and strangely cartoonish, gendered and sexless. Eternally snapping selfies, they contrast the deliberative, conscientious, and historically rare nature of self-portraiture with the narcissistic self-regard of Instagram.

Like many, Cherbuliez is an internet *flâneur*, and a number of works in “Trigger Warning” draw on the experience of scouring the web and diving down its various rabbit holes. For Cherbuliez this often takes the form of exploring on Google Maps street view locations far from Vinalhaven, the island in Maine where she has lived since the early 1990s. Following a trip to visit Robert Maillart’s Salginatobel Bridge, she explored the road traversed by the bridge online. Cherbuliez discovered a nonplussed woman turned towards Google’s strange camera car passing through her remote alpine hamlet; in other images she appears to return her gaze to her own land, rejecting or dismissing the intrusion. Detailing an unanticipated encounter with another nameless person across great distance—though the woman’s face was initially visible, Google caught their mistake and later blurred it—two photographs materialize comfort in solitude and the disjunction between expectation and the actual appearance of real people.

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Cherbuliez was awake late at night on December 2, 2016. That evening, the warehouse inhabited by the artist collective known as the Ghost Ship in Oakland, California, burned. Killing 36, it was the deadliest fire in Oakland history. Cherbuliez, who had lived in the area while a student at the San Francisco Art Institute, took to street view to see if she remembered the building; apparently scores of others were doing the same, as whenever she approached the Ghost Ship's location the site began to load increasingly abstract, fragmented images. Cherbuliez cached many of them, a selection of which have become photographs and are on view here. The photographs are documents of loss, but also of a digital spectatorship that is an extension of the human impulse to crowd around a tragedy—a memorial in some sense *makes* a tragedy—of the ineradicable gap between ourselves and the sufferings of others, which are abstractions both figuratively and literally in these images.

Gift, 2000, on view for the first time in many years, is a hand scaled with match strike plates clasp an apple made of matchstick heads and beeswax. While in the present exhibition its gestural quality on one level echoes the miniature iPhones in the hands of *Their selves*—the substitution of Silicon Valley's Apple for Eden's fruit here attests to Cherbuliez's humor and talent for wordplay—it links "Trigger Warning" to some of the artist's perennial concerns: the potency of materials and the importance of handwork, the quest for and volatility of (self-) knowledge, and the promise and peril of connection and loneliness.

Diana Cherbuliez received a B.F.A. from SFAI and an M.F.A. from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, New York. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at, amongst others: Grant Wahlquist Gallery (solo and group exhibitions); the Portland Museum of Art, Maine; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, Maine; the Center for Maine Contemporary Art (group exhibitions and two-person exhibition with Alison Hildreth); Theodore:Art, Brooklyn (two-person exhibition with Tad Beck); Whitney Art Works, Portland, Maine; the Schlitkamp Gallery at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts; and June Fitzpatrick, Portland, Maine (group exhibitions and two-person exhibition with Alison Hildreth). A work from her first solo exhibition at the gallery was acquired by the Worcester Art Museum. Cherbuliez has attended residencies at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York, and the Villa Montalvo, Saratoga, California. She thanks the Maine Arts Commission for the Maine Visual Arts Fellowship and a Maine Artist Project Award.

The gallery is located at 30 City Center, Portland, Maine. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm, and by appointment. For more information, visit <http://grantwahlquist.com>, call 207.245.5732, or email info@grantwahlquist.com.