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Art: With Any Ever at the Power Plant

The energy of Ryan Trecartin

By [Sholem Krishtalka](#) • April 21, 2010 8:00 pm EDT



With Any Ever, the impressive installation of new work by Ryan Trecartin, the Power Plant has mounted not only one of the most ambitious shows in its recent history, but perhaps the most ambitious show in Toronto right now.

in its own room, with its own furniture. The main gallery – usually vast, open and airy – is completely unrecognizable, a labyrinth of screening rooms variously adorned with picnic benches, airplane seats, beds and conference-room tables.

In the past, I have jabbed the Power Plant for a perceived tendency towards dry minimalism. In many respects, Trecartin's newest work is vastly more difficult to engage with; the show represents roughly four hours of single channel video, which is intimidating enough as it is.

frenzied anarchy to an entirely new level. The show is not easy for those who've followed his work; for the uninitiated, it can be downright assaulting.

At the artist's talk he gave at the Drake Hotel prior to the show's opening, Trecartin mentioned that his new series is faster than anything else he's done; but then again, that's been the case with each new movie made. When I first saw *A Family Finds Entertainment* (2004), the 45-minute video that propelled him from nowhere to epicentre practically overnight, it seemed dizzying: characters shift and veer in and out of genders, garish makeup and Sally Ann costumes; as in all his videos, they speak in a strange sass-language, a concoction of slang, song lyrics, valley girl-isms – a text-message speech, sped up or slowed down at will. The general structure – pacing, editing, narrative – had the speed and logic of channel surfing. It was also hilarious, mesmerizing and seemed thrillingly new.

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tendencies exponentially; before, there was a more-or-less linear narrative construction. The seven videos that comprise Any Ever jump and clamour at the viewer from all over. It's like having seven simultaneous conversations while on a roller-coaster, on speed.

The common misunderstanding of Trecartin's world is that this speed and frenzy is an affectation. On the contrary, it is profoundly central to his method and conceptual structure. He is, after all, an '80s kid, and the speed that permeates his work (and, in his videos, it always entropically tends towards anarchic destruction) is a reflection of the kind of speed that has defined his life: the advent and subsequent ubiquity of computers, the internet, cellphones; the world has become a viciously impatient place, spurred on by the promise of instantaneous availability – everything now.

Trecartin's work is not quite a commentary on all that; he's never been one for political gestures or ironic distance. But it is the all-permeating context, regulating the way his characters speak, move and interact. It makes for a characteristically shrieking cacophony – not the most welcoming atmosphere.

Smith and hurtling it into a new century. Trecartin speaks to the formation of identity, desire and fantasy like no other young artist working today. His themes and ideas might flash at you like an epileptic fit, but there's something urgent and profound to be had in all the furious bombast.

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