

FILM

FROM MY INSTITUTION TO YOURS:
A VIDEO TRIBUTE TO MIKE KELLEY



Photo: Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York


**THE
TANKS**
AT TATE MODERN

Friday 31 August 12.00–21.00
Saturday 1 September 12.00–22.00

As a tribute to the influential American artist, Mike Kelley (1954–2012), Tate Modern hosts a two-day survey of videos by and with Kelley, to coincide with the opening of a new display in the *Poetry and Dream* collection wing on Level 2, featuring Kelley's 1994 installation *Channel One, Channel Two and Channel Three* and documentation of his early performance works.

Kelley's art is rooted in abjection, ritual and cunning ambiguity. It lays bare mechanisms of representation and communication, revealing cultural blind spots through the use of vernacular language and imagery, particularly drawing on American crafts and subcultures. His layered imagery, hijacked from sources as diverse as folk and outsider art, DIY manuals, comics, genre fiction, spiritualism, UFOlogy, pop psychology, punk, glam and psychedelia, is fused together through the use of a broad range of media, including drawing, performance, video, photography, painting, sculpture, sound, installation and writing. These elements are never simply appropriated, nor dissected in the manner of detached social commentary. From his early paintings and performances made while a student at CalArts to increasingly complex sculptures and multimedia installations, Kelley's work confronts the viewer with unexpected associations and sabotages expectations, often to tragicomic effect.

This attitude is also evident in his video works, from the early *The Banana Man* (1983), where Kelley poses as the character of a kids' TV show he has never seen, to the epic *Day is Done* (2005–06), a stage musical entirely derived from photographs of costumed people found in high school yearbooks and originally planned to have a running time of 24 hours.

The programme equally demonstrates Kelley's penchant for collaboration, through the inclusion of videos made together with Ericka Beckmann, Tony Conrad, Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose, Paul McCarthy, Tony Oursler, Anita Pace, Raymond Pettibon, Michael Smith, Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, and Cary Loren, founding member with Kelley of Detroit's seminal noise band Destroy All Monsters.

With thanks to the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, Electronic Arts InterMix (EAI) and Cary Loren.

Friday 31 August, 12.00–21.00

MIKE KELLEY
Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #36 (Vice Anglais), 2011, colour, sound, 25.14 min

Part of the multi-faceted project *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstructions*, in which trauma, abuse and repressed memory are refracted through personal and mass-cultural experience, *Vice Anglais* is a bizarre conflation of British clichés played as a crossover between a sadomasochistic pantomime and a Hammer horror film.

MIKE KELLEY
Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #36b (Made in England), 2011, colour, sound, 27.58 min

The script for *Vice Anglais*, loosely based on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's writings as interpreted by critic Robert M. Cooper, is re-enacted by an ensemble of British pottery items, taking Kelley's humorous intent to even more absurd and dead-pan extremes.

MIKE KELLEY
The Judson Church Horse Dance, 2011, colour, sound, 70 min

Film documenting an evening of performance and music by Mike Kelley presented at the Judson Memorial Church in New York City in 2009. It also includes *The Horse Dance of the False Virgin*, and *The Offer (Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #33)*, a composition for 12 horns and vocalist.

MIKE KELLEY AND MICHAEL SMITH
A Voyage of Growth and Discovery, 2010, colour, sound, 90 min

This feature-length video follows the existential journey of Baby IKKI (Michael Smith) as he travels through Burning Man, a festival of 'radical self-expression' held in the Nevada Desert, where he is faced with primal experiences and life-changing encounters.

MIKE KELLEY
Day Is Done, 2005–2006, colour, sound, 169 min

This epic stage musical, mostly set in a school gym, comprises parts 2 – 32 of Kelley's *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction* plays, derived from high school yearbook photographs of 'extracurricular activities' representing what Kelley termed 'socially accepted rituals of deviance.'

MIKE KELLEY
The Bridge Visitor (Legend-Trip), 2004, colour, sound, 17.53 min

Made for the exhibition *One Hundred Artists See Satan*, held at California State University in 2004, *'Bridge Visitor* draws upon 'legend trip' activities of my youth. Legend trips are adolescent group ritualistic activities, often in response to local folk tales [which] act as instigators for shared, potentially dangerous or frightening, experiences.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY
Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (Domestic Scene), 2000, b&w, sound, 29.44 min

The first work in the *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction* series. Kelley takes a still from a school play depicting two young men in a shabby apartment, and re-stages his version as a domestic psychodrama centred on a tormented relationship.

MIKE KELLEY
Runway for Interactive DJ Event, 2000, colour, sound, 48.23 min

This video documents a performance staged during the opening of Kelley's solo show at the Kunstverein Braunschweig, an improvised fashion show using doll clothes left over from one of Kelley's stuffed toy pieces, with an 'interpretive DJ' describing the performers' actions to the DJ spinning records in the marquee outside to create a responsive feedback loop.

MIKE KELLEY
Superman Recites Selections from 'The Bell Jar' and Other Works by Sylvia Plath, 1999, colour, sound, 7.19 min

'In a dark no-place evocative of Superman's own psychic 'Fortress of Solitude' the alienated Man of Steel recites those sections of Plath's writings that utilize the image of the bell jar. Superman directs these lines to Kandor, the bell jar city that represents his own traumatic past.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY AND PAUL MCCARTHY
Sod and Sodie Sock (Vienna Cut), 1999, colour, sound, 17.38 min

Set within the installation *Sod and Sodie Sock Comp O.S.O.* (1998), a large military camp with tunnels and a shower room, this video concocts a narrative through improvised vignettes referencing sources as varied as task-oriented performance, military humour, critical theory, alien abduction testimonies and teen comedy.

Saturday 1 September, 12.00–22.00

MIKE KELLEY

Cross Gender/Cross Genre Part 1, 1999, colour, sound, 61 min

MIKE KELLEY

Cross Gender/Cross Genre Part 2, 1999, colour, sound, 58.22 min

These montages of interviews and films documenting 1960s–70s queer and cross-gender culture, including footage of the legendary Cockettes, were originally created for the multimedia installation *Unisex Love Nest* (1999). It is a visual counterpart to Kelley's essay of the same title, outlining a network of influences on performance that has often been neglected by mainstream historical accounts.

MIKE KELLEY AND PAUL MCCARTHY

Out O' Actions, 1998, colour, sound (editing by Catherine Sullivan), 4.25 min

Out O' Actions follows Kelley and McCarthy as they organise a project for the exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949–1979* (MOCA Los Angeles, 1998). Curating itself is presented as performative activity, as the video's editing mimics the documentation of Otto Muehl's 1964 action *Mama und Papa*.

CARY LOREN

Strange Fruit: Rock Apocrypha, 1998, colour, sound, 60 min

A celebration of Detroit's florid underground music scene and radical subcultures, with a soundtrack by Destroy All Monsters, the noise punk band founded by Loren with Mike Kelley, Jim Shaw and Niagara (Lynn Rovner). In addition to interviews with some of Detroit's underground heroes, the tape 'also contains archival television footage [...], reenactments of period rock-oriented urban myths [and] the annual Ann Arbor Hash Bash.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY AND PAUL MCCARTHY

Fresh Acconci, 1995, colour, sound, 45 min

McCarthy and Kelley re-stage classic 1970s performance pieces by Vito Acconci as Hollywood soft porn. States McCarthy: 'In *Fresh Acconci*, the New York art scene is sandwiched with Hollywood. [...] The tape itself crosses lines of what is politically correct, exploitation and softening or obscuring the meaning.'

MIKE KELLEY

Tony Oursler and Anita Pace, Pole Dance, 1997, 1997, colour, sound, 31.18 min

A recreation of an early collaborative piece between Mike Kelly and Tony Oursler, choreographed by Anita Pace as a progression of synchronized movements for two actors interacting with long wooden poles. The interplay of the performers becomes a blank slate onto which a viewer might inscribe allegories of difference.

MIKE KELLEY AND PAUL MCCARTHY

Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone, 1992, colour, sound, 62.40 min

This collaborative video, based on Joanna Spyri's novel *Heidi*, was originally part of an immersive installation that was also used as the video's set. 'We were interested in addressing the fractured nature of filmic language [...]. In *Heidi* we toyed with this illusionary nature by treating the doubles and stand-ins for the actors as obvious sculpture, more in the manner of a puppet show than traditional film.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY AND PAUL MCCARTHY

Heidi's Four Basket Dances, 1992–2001, colour, sound, 15 min

Originally shot for *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone*, the four dances were described by Kelley as 'attempts at interpretive representations of the formal relationships between the color of each costume and the form of the basket paired with it.'

MIKE KELLEY, BOB FLANAGAN AND SHEREE ROSE

100 Reasons, 1991, colour, sound, 6.41 min

'This tape grew out of an event [for which] Bob and Sheree asked me specifically to read a section of my book *Plato's Cave, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile*, [...] a list of one hundred appropriate names for a paddle. Bob was surprised at the event when 'Mistress Rose' chose to spank him once for each name — one hundred times. [...] The result was so popular that we decided to recreate it for video.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY AND ERICKA BECKMAN

Blind Country, 1989, colour, sound, 19.57 min

A collaborative video very loosely based on HG Wells' short story *The Country of the Blind*, one of Kelley's favourite reads as an adolescent. 'I was both fascinated and repulsed by this tale of a man having to give up his eyes to live in an alien sightless society. In rereading it as an adult I was struck by the obvious fact [...] that it is a castration story, and by the thinly veiled sexual and racial fears within it.' Mike Kelley

RAYMOND PETTIBON

Sir Drone, 1989, colour, sound (featuring Mike Kelley and Mike Watt), 55.37 min

'Mike Watt (of the Minutemen and FIREHOSE fame) and I play two teenage punks trying to start a band in the 1970s. We struggle with various ethical and aesthetic questions raised by this endeavor. [...] All of the dialogue was read off cue cards. Despite their crudeness, Raymond's tapes are strangely moving: he is a brilliant script writer.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY AND PAUL MCCARTHY

Family Tyranny (Modeling and Molding), 1987, colour, sound, 8.08 min

MIKE KELLEY AND PAUL MCCARTHY,
Cultural Soup, 1987, colour, sound, 6.55 min

'Paul built a rough set approximating the type seen in television situation comedies. He called me in to help him out. When I asked what I was supposed to do he said, 'I'm the father, and you're the son.' That was it. When I arrived at the studio the cameras were turned on and [...] at least six hours of tape was shot. [These] two tapes are just short sections of this mass of material.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY AND BRUCE AND

NORMAN YONEMOTO

Kappa, 1986, colour, sound, 26 min

The classical myth of Oedipus is reinterpreted by the Yonemoto brothers through an ancient Japanese folk story, where Kelley plays the character of the Kappa, a water imp, whilst Jocasta is interpreted by actress Mary Woronov as a Hollywood vamp. A provocative fusion of Freudian psychosexual theory, references to Western art and Eastern fairytales.

TONY OURSLER

EVOL, 1984, colour, sound (featuring Mike Kelley), 28.58 min

Kelley plays a young man experiencing love and its opposite in a delirious dream landscape, created by Oursler through his characteristically makeshift, brightly painted theatrical props and a meandering narrative of erotic metaphors and stereotypes.

TONY CONRAD WITH MIKE KELLEY

BEHOLDEN TO VICTORY, 1980–83, colour, sound, 26 min

'*BEHOLDEN TO VICTORY* is an edited video version of [Conrad's] full-length super-8 film *Hail the Fallen*. [...] The actors were required to play as in a game - to follow certain rules, or to be more precise, to follow certain restrictions. [...] Thus the film consists of a series of scenes, of examples of correct behavior.' Mike Kelley

MIKE KELLEY

The Banana Man, 1983, colour, sound, 28.15 min

Kelley's first completed video project, in which he interprets a kids' TV character he had never actually seen. 'In my own performance work, character was a function of language. As ideas shifted, so did one's understanding of who was talking [...], and it is up to the viewer to come to terms with what this character is.' Mike Kelley