

MEDIA RELEASE

Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement **Opens February 13th at New Media Artspace,** **Baruch College, CUNY**



Video still from *Future Mechanism Replacement*, Lily Benson, 2015
Image courtesy of the artist.

NEW YORK, NY- February 13, 2019 – [Baruch College](http://baruch.cuny.edu) presents *Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement*, an exhibition of video works by Lily Benson, curated by Katherine Behar, Assistant Professor of New Media Arts at Baruch College.

The show will open on February 13, 2019 and run through May 3, 2019 at the New Media Artspace gallery in Baruch's Library and Information Building, 151 E. 25th Street. The New Media Artspace will host a casual discussion with the artist for Baruch students on Tuesday, February 26th, from 1:30–3:30 PM in the New Media Artspace and room 415 of the Library and Information Building. Members of the public who wish to attend may RSVP to katherine.behar@baruch.cuny.edu. A public artist lecture will be held on Tuesday, April 2nd, from 6:00–8:00 PM, at the Baruch Performing Arts Center's Engelman Recital Hall.

Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement brings together four works by the New York-based filmmaker and artist Lily Benson. Throughout her work, Benson “re-visions” odd episodes lost to history. Rather than simply recuperating or retelling the strange stories she unearths, Benson approaches research with a humorous sensibility and in the spirit of intervention. Her films unsettle characters and events from the past, diverting them from expected outcomes toward alternate horizons, untapped feminist futures, and nascent dream states.

The exhibition title is inspired by techniques Benson learned in her training as a hypnotist. Like art, hypnotism reroutes received wisdom, re-visioning and revising internalized ways of seeing and being. Benson's films release potential queer futures from inherited legacies of the past. 3D animation liberates imagery, while creative storytelling augurs alternate narratives. In this light, the works collected for *Future Mechanism Replacement* all refuse the trope of mechanistic causality that anchors belief in historical determinacy as well as habitual uses of technology.

In *A Tour of the Self-Cleaning House*, Benson revisits the eponymous invention of Francis Gabe, an autodidact who aimed to liberate women from housework by inventing, building, patenting, and personally residing in a home that accomplished its own housekeeping. Despite the absurd inadequacies of its actual mechanisms, Benson suggests that the house is a mental refuge that projects future well-being.

Feelings adopts the banal format of broadcast commercials, employing 3D-modeling to advertise apathetic "feel good" personal products. Mechanisms that serve no apparent purpose, the items in these spots seem uncannily futuristic yet quotidian, as if issuing from a parallel universe.

Buttery Coldness emerged from Benson's discovery of *The Cold Woman: On Sexual Coldness in Women, Its Origins, and Its Cure*, a 1957 book by the Danish margarine tycoon, Poul Thorsen (1884–1962). The film draws parallels between dominant sexist attitudes of the time, Thorsen's practice of hypnotism as a technique for controlling women, and the history of margarine, which itself embodies a "mechanism replacement" as an engineered foodstuff designed to replace butter. Invented by Napoleon to affordably feed the masses, margarine was "the subject of hundreds of legal battles over the psychologically deceptive powers of food dye" in at the turn of the century.

Finally, *New Stratas* derived from Benson's realization that her grandfather had been "trained by the U.S. military to successfully perform amputations with only hypnosis as anesthesia."* Experiments with hypnosurgery were contemporaneous with the artist and filmmaker Oskar Fischinger's invention of a filmic mechanism that sliced through melted colored wax and photographed the morphing frames, producing hypnotic swirling imagery. To create *New Stratas*, Benson recreated this effect using analog paper marbling on 16mm film leader.

New Stratas exemplifies Benson's abiding interest in the capacity of filmic imagery and mental imagery to heal, to alleviate pain, and to retrain our thinking. The works in *Future Mechanism Replacement* all participate in this activist therapeutic logic. In the artist's words, "In bringing light to sidelined events, I seek to expose precisely why they were concealed, and in doing so, [to] reveal the power structures at play during their time. . . . My work seeks to replace internalized oppression with [a queer] redistribution of power."*

* Lily Benson, personal correspondence. January 2019.

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Lily Benson is a filmmaker, visual artist, and hypnotist. Her work examines feminist history and reconstructs it into new narrative forms. She currently works as a creative adviser at The New York Times and is the co-founder of Cinema COBRA, a curatorial platform for expanded cinema. Her work has appeared at places like CPH:DOX, Rotterdam International Film Festival, The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Anthology Film Archives, The Hand Gallery, The Brooklyn Museum, Freight and Volume, and Nicolai Wallner Gallery. She received a BFA from The Cooper Union in New York City and an MFA from Malmö Art Academy in Sweden. Lily is on a mission to make our world a more experimental place.

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Lily Benson: Future Mechanism Replacement is curated by Katherine Behar, Associate Professor in the Fine and Performing Arts Department in the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College, CUNY. The exhibition is made possible by support from the Baruch Computing and Technology Center (BCTC), the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, the Newman Library, and the Globus and SWUFE Funds. All images appear courtesy of the artist.

Gallery Location: New Media Artspace at Baruch College, Library and Information Building, 151 E. 25th Street, New York, NY 10010

Gallery Hours: The New Media Artspace is open to the CUNY community during regular library hours. Members of the public may request access to the New Media Artspace at the security desk at the second floor entrance to the library. For this week's public hours, please check the gallery website: www.newmediartspace.info or dial a docent at 626-312-1664.

The New Media Artspace is a teaching exhibition space in the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at Baruch College, CUNY. Housed in the Newman Library, the New Media Artspace showcases curated experimental media and interdisciplinary artworks by international artists, students, alumni, and faculty.

About Baruch College:

[Baruch College](http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/) is a senior college in the [City University of New York \(CUNY\)](http://www.cuny.edu/) with a total enrollment of more than 17,000 students, who represent 160 countries and speak more than 100 languages. Ranked among the top 15% of U.S. colleges and the No. 4 public regional university, Baruch College is regularly recognized as among the most ethnically diverse colleges in the country. As a public institution with a tradition of academic excellence, Baruch College offers accessibility and opportunity for students from every corner of New York City and from around the world. For more about Baruch College, go to <http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/>.

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