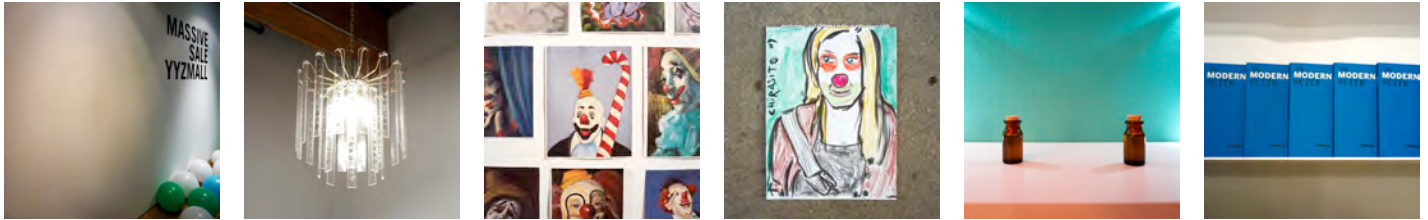


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Putting a Price on Creativity - Amanda Happé



It's typically the role of craft and design to bridge the divide between fine art and commodity, creativity and marketing. As part of their summer residency at YYZ in 401 Richmond, **Jennifer Marman** and **Daniel Borins** (collectively known as **Marmco**) decided to transform part of the gallery into a retail mall. "MASSIVE SALE: YYZ MALL" deconstructs any stigma around artists hocking their wares, as **Marmco** invited four artists to set up shop in response to the question: if they could open a store or small business, what would they dream of doing? The result is a rather intense experience, with four distinct retail spaces in tight quarters, that disallows any hope of passive viewing.

Nick and Karey Shinn bring their family business (dubbed Shinindustry International for the context of the exhibition) to the YYZ Mall. They are more commonly known as Shinntype, a family of creatives who collaborate in a number of art and design endeavours. Nick Shinn is a type designer, and on display are typography books and a chandelier featuring anagrams of the word "chandelier" in a font designed by Nick, called Panoptica.

Their goal, in designing the space, was to give more recognition to the concept of a family brand in the realm of business. They also wanted to personify the commercial aspect of their own business. Having a physical space, a store you can enter and speak to the people behind the work, takes their presence from a faceless website to a personal project of enthusiasm and family. They intend to keep the space alive, adding new content as the exhibition goes on.

The store of Ken Ogawa, the determinedly enigmatic 156 Ehohe, resembles more a physical incarnation of the artist's train of thought than a tightly conceived retail model. His collection of seemingly disconnected elements—such as a wall of swords (that aren't for sale, but "for protection only" according to Ogawa), a jumble of Christmas lights, and a display of the artist's own brand of perfume—is intent on keeping you guessing about the intended experience.

For a dollar, you can try your luck at the mini-golf hole constructed in this space. If you get a hole-in-one, you win a prize. You can also take advantage of the currency exchange to trade in your Canadian money for Ehohe. During the opening week, 4.7

Ehohe was going for \$10.20 Canadian, but the artist assured that it changes weekly. The Ehohe bills, decorated with national credos and depictions of important civic figures, strive to create a mystery and mythology for this imagined place.

We asked Ogawa about his inspiration for the shop, and he replied that "it was more about childhood memories. Making some smelly stuff is one memory," in reference to his surprisingly pleasant perfume. A selection of memories as the organizing principle makes the near-randomness make sense, but it still doesn't make for a cohesive experience. You are left with the overall feeling of being kept at bay—the artist invites you in and lets you browse, but ultimately offers you only a puzzle.

Either the most fun or the most terrifying space (depending on how you feel about clowns) in the YYZ Mall is Ulysses Castellanos's Chirajito Clown Painter. The walls are covered in shiny coloured circles and flashes of light from a disco ball. Vintage paintings and figurines of clowns are scattered around, and Castellanos's assumed character is everything you worry about in a clown. In full costume, he is visibly overheated, disheveled, walks with a disconcerting swagger, and his makeup looks like it was applied by the fists of his opponent in a fight.

His demeanour is the opposite. He is at once jovial and thoughtful. The offerings of Chirajito Clown Painter are a selection of vintage records and the chance to have your portrait done as a clown. He won't depict you as a scary clown, "only cute clowns," he promises. During Torontoist's visit to his shop, and subsequent portrait session, the artist had what he believed to be his first shoplifting incident; someone walked off with a two-dollar used record. Castellanos's shop is surprisingly aligned with contemporary retail models. It's more about creating an experience, and the chance to buy a piece of a that, than the product itself.

Intimidating Aleks Ognjanovich has set up War and Leisure, a shop that he describes as "men's leisurewear and accessories based on the dialectic of War and Leisure." This rather lofty summary fails to prepare you for the confrontational exchange that awaits you as you approach his counter.

There are no price tags, because "all prices are negotiable," according to Ognjanovich. If you're up for the battle, you can try to buy a shirt that looks like it's been through a bloody battle itself, or one covered in tiny soft pockets to hold your bullets. He also offers Rambo Bandanas, emblazoned with quotations from the Rambo movies and "made from real shorts!" A box of Prescription Poems in vials on the counter fulfills any need for an impulse buy. If you'd like a jump-start on the price negotiation for any of these items, Ognjanovich has a PlayStation in the shop, and if you can beat him at a game of World Series of Poker, Tiger Woods PGA Tour, or FIFA 07, you get 25% off.

Unlike most gallery exhibitions, the artists are expected to be "in-store" during business hours, which are Wednesday through Saturday, 12:00pm to 5:00pm. The only exception may be Ogawa, who has hired staff to man the store when he can't be there, adding to the marriage of art and commercialism.

The exhibition also features an extensive roster of accompanying events and talks. More details can be found [here](#). "MASSIVE SALE: YYZ MALL" runs until October 17.