

BY STEPHANIE BUHMANN

WONDERMARE

Through August 8

At Apexart

291 Church Street

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In "Wondermare," Susan McIntosh and Albert Wilking present a world as un-settling as it is dizzyingly colorful. Costumes and animal-inspired masks are mixed in with a selection of films made in collaboration with various artists. There is no checklist for the eclectic works on display, leaving the impression that this exhibition was conceived as a "Gesamtkunstwerk" (according to the curators' belief that ours is "a world out of balance" if not a "house of cards on the brink of a catastrophe.").

While "Wondermare's" aesthetic is somewhat neo-pop punk, its context is based on Lewis Carroll's classic "Alice in Wonderland." Many of the fantastical costumes and flickering images on multiple screens were inspired by one of Alice's most famous remarks: "I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole—and yet—and yet—it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life! I do wonder what can have happened to me!"

"Wondermare" is exactly that place — located on the other end of the rabbit hole; a place that is surreal, at times nightmarish, and which tastes of the insane. The press release informs us that it is meant to reflect the adult world and the various rites that lead to obtaining "a civilized persona." As an interactive exhibition, "Wondermare" aims to provide an opportunity for the audience to re-consider their own passage to adulthood.

We are asked in which of the "Alice in Wonderland" characters we can detect our childhood selves. Were you "Alice, a naïve child/woman who wraps herself in consumer goods," the curators wonder, "or maybe you are the Mad Hatter, the bad boy enabler who gloriously advocates addictive destruction...?"

We are encouraged to have our individual answers filmed in front of a green screen. A different background and context will later be added to the footage, enabling us to become the stars of our own film narrative.

Though the exhibition feels disjunctive and its ambitions could be more clearly articulated, it is important to note that "Wondermare" is a work in progress — a conceptual organism that will only discover its true potential through the audience's willingness to participate.