Tiptoe of The Patchwork Pierrot:
A Search for Belonging in Nowhere Land

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Abstract

My studio-based research plays with the concepts of disguise, the trickster archetype, sweet kitsch, and sentimentality to explore and reclaim male femininity. These topics are explored through a performance piece which contrasts the visual aesthetics of a Pierrot character I designed within a supermodern, non-place setting. This paper argues that the ethos behind sweet kitsch and sentimentality becomes significant when contrasted with the concept of non-places, chromophobia, and network sociality, all hallmarks of supermodernity. If supermodernity is concerned with efficiency and uniformity, and rejects expression and personal connectivity, then sweet kitsch is the remedy to the isolation and disconnect it creates. The purpose of this paper is to explore what it means to create a sense of belonging and to give oneself permission to exist in a space which is indifferent to interpersonal connection, and how the act of performing a Pierrot character within an environment which is hostile to interpersonal connection can generate meaningful connection within one's life through sentimentality.

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Introduction

Clowns have always fascinated me. I began a relationship with clowns through their common association with children's media, in particular, television shows like *The Toy Castle* and *The Big Comfy Couch* which both aired when I was in kindergarten in the early 2000s. For me, the clown represents an expression of concentrated emotion that I experience as liberating. The clown characters I watched on television were able to navigate the world with earnest curiosity and a willingness to make mistakes, to laugh and cry, and to be silly. They do not always behave rationally, and that unpredictability can be unnerving to an audience. However, these are all qualities I enjoy about clowns. The clown represents the opportunity to exist as something that is not immediately understood, yet is profoundly emotional, and unconventional.

Today I find clowns in the form of clown shaped broaches, teapots, porcelain dolls, and other knickknacks on the shelves of vintage and charity shops. I am compelled to collect them, take them home with me, save them from the fate of being sad little objects discarded by their owners and collecting dust on a shelf. The feelings I had for clowns when I was a child is the same sentimental feeling I get when I see these clown objects as an adult.

As a child of the twenty-first century, there has never been a time in my life when I was not surrounded by vast stretches of supermodern transient spaces such as parking lots and wide roads broken up by strip malls and department stores that all feel haunted by feelings of disconnection and loneliness. As a child, and even now that I am in my twenties, it was hard to develop a feeling of belonging within these environments. When I traverse these landscapes, I cannot help but romanticize memories of painting in my attic, playing dress up, walking down a narrow street as a train goes by on the other side of a chain-link fence, collecting chestnuts off the sidewalk with my grandfather after school, or petting my cat while my sister and I gossip in our living room. None of these memories are

particularly glamourous, and often I am completely by myself in them. However, I still carry a sense of belonging and comfort from those instances.

Chapter 1: Pierrot

Pierrot is a melancholy, solitary figure from commedia dell'arte who communicates a state of innocence and vulnerability through his improvised pantomime. Commedia dell'arte was a form of theatre which began in sixteenth century Italy and utilized a cast of stock characters using disguise and caricature. Stock characters, such as Pierrot, Pantalone, Zanni, Harlequin, and the Lovers, had the freedom to ridicule and satirize society, and thereby the audience, from behind the mask of caricature. In her essay "Commedia dell'arte" for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jennifer Meagher describes Pierrot as the sweet-natured and naive character "who accepts blame for wrongs he has not committed" (Meagher 2007), making him the stooge or scapegoat in the comedy. Easily recognizable in loose "white garments with his face powered white" (Meagher 2007), Pierrot charmed audiences with his simple and sincere manner. According to Christopher Law in "Pierrot Through the Arts", "[t]he essence of the character - his unrequited love for Columbine…was sometimes lost, and he was frequently portrayed for purely comic purposes, foolish and bumbling (Laws 2013). However, Meagher describes how Pierrot "was later championed by French literati of the nineteenth century, who saw the creative and solitary Pierrot as a metaphor for contemporary artists" (Meagher 2007).

The role of Pierrot in performance art began to shift in significance from their origins as supporting stock character into the protagonist of their own stories. In the early 1800s, the mime, Jean-Gaspard Deburau, stepped into the role of Pierrot as a member of "The Funambules" and lifted the role from its comedic roots. According to Laws, Deburau's "self-restraint and nuanced style deepened the sense of tragedy and longing which had sometimes lain dormant in Pierrot, replacing the tendency towards broad gesticulating comedy" (Laws 2013). Through Deburau, Pierrot became a representation

of the “heartsick and tortured artist” (Laws 2013). As such, Pierrot is "the embodiment of a certain strain of artistic sentiment: sensitive, melancholy, and intrinsically alone” (Laws 3013). Pierrot’s sensitive and lonely nature and the importance of disguise become essential hallmarks of the role.

As one of the stock characters in commedia dell’arte, Pierrot is an androgynous, childlike and highly emotional figure. The popularity of Pierrot specifically can be traced to certain significant renditions of the character, for example, the role of the peasant in the playwright Moliere’s 1665 play *Dom Juan.* The iconic image of Pierrot, being a sad figure with a white face and black skull cap as seen in paintings by artists such as Seurat, Cezanne, and Picasso, was captured in 1945 by Jean-Louis Barrault in *Les Enfants du Paradis,* playing Jean-Gaspard Deburau in the role of the lovelorn mime Baptiste (Laws 2013).

In the essay, “Excavating an Allegory: The Text of *Pierrot Lunaire,”* appearing in *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute,* Susan Youens explains how the Pierrot of the 1800’s had become a “brilliant, tormented figure submerged in a bizarre, airless inner world” and “endemic everywhere in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century Europe” (96). Youens explains how the ubiquity of the character came to represent “an archetype of the self-dramatizing artist” (96), one who expresses through the safety and distance of the Pierrot to explore and convey his own inner state. Youens’ description provides an image of a Pierrot who conveys sadness, forlorn vulnerability, and loneliness, and who uses physical expression to convey sentiment, silliness and curiosity. She explains how the visuals of the Pierrot came to “symbolize and veil artistic ferment” (96) and to “distinguish the creative artist from the human being” (96).

By disguising the artist’s body, the peripheral details about who the artist is as a person are alleviated, lending them the freedom to emphasize the distilled emotion and ideas. Pierrot, no

longer used as a character within a play, evolved into a contemporary signifier for a profound embodiment of emotional expression and vulnerability.

In, "'Give a man a mask and he'll tell the truth': Arnold Schoenberg, David Bowie, and the Mask of Pierrot", Alexander Carpenter discusses the use of Pierrot by German composer Arnold Schoenberg in his 1912 melodrama *Pierrot Lunaire,* and in later pop culture by musicians David Bowie and Leo Sayer, who adopt and interpret Pierrot in their album visuals and live performances. As Carpenter states, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire,* which brought Pierrot onto a 20th century stage is "regarded as one of his most important compositions…characterized by parody and ironic detachment" (10). The figure of Pierrot allowed "the composer order to reflect upon his own past, in a voice that is both Pierrot's and his own" (10). As Carpenter notes, "…Schoenberg's affinity for the Pierrot commission stems from the fact that he is himself a Pierrot at heart: a creature of both calculated outward gestures and deep, even haunted introversion" (10-11). Like the characters in commedia dell'arte, the disguise frees the artist to express and share his inner emotional world through the mask of Pierrot.

Carpenter describes how Leo Sayer "chose the Pierrot image as a means to give the words of his songs intensified meaning, coming as they were from the perspective of the performer as a lonely clown" (15). On the cover of his 1973 single "The Show Must Go On", Sayers's face is featured painted like a Pierrot. The forlorn expression the artist wears reveals the less than positive meaning in the song's title. It reads as an expression of resignation implying sadness, disappointment, and failure. On the album cover, the emotional tone of the song is effectively implied with the face of Pierrot.

In "Saying Hello to the Lunatic Man: A Critical Reading of 'Love is Lost'", Eoin Devereux, Aileen Dillane and Martin J. Power emphasize the impact the early twentieth century rendition of Pierrot in Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* has had on the character's position in pop culture. From Marcel Marceau's "Bip the Clown" to Bjork's performance of *Pierrot Lunaire* live at the Verbier in

1996 and the 2013 cover photo for Lady Gaga's "Applause", Pierrot becomes a ubiquitous figure in pop culture. Schoenberg's composition "with its highly satirical surface" and "musical and psychological summation" eventually influences David Bowie's *Scary Monsters,* a transitional work, itself, and "a requiem for his earlier incarnations... a means to establish a foothold in the future" (Devereaux et al 2).

Pierrot becomes a safe container for the artist to work through the 'ferment' of change within their own work. The article also details the impact of David Bowie's use of Pierrot imagery in his stage performances as "tragic and dramatic and everything in his life - theatrical" (15), blurring the boundary between "performer and person or persona and person" (15). It describes how toward the end of the nineteenth century, "the artist definitively dons the mask of Pierrot, a mask that becomes a potent and paradoxical strategy…playing a role - a Pierrot - as a means of exploring and expressing one's authentic identity" (8). Accordingly, the music in *Pierrot Lunaire* is melodramatic and stands "in contrast to its sunny commedia dell'arte" (5). For performers like David Bowie, the image of the Pierrot developed into something iconic and able to be used as a signifier for a being that is forlorn and overcome with the emotion of change. Like Bowie, I am exploring the idea of identity through Pierrot. The Pierrot allows me as an artist to explore emotionality through play and spectacle.

Like Bowie, Lady Gaga uses the aesthetics of the Pierrot in the music video for "Applause" on her 2013 album titled *Artpop.* On the "Applause" song's cover art, Lady Gaga's face is painted white with various colours smeared across her eyes and mouth. In the music video she wears the iconic white and black of Pierrot. The runny eye makeup and smeared lipstick of the face on the song's cover suggests the exhausting emotional effects of yearning for an audience's applause and the critic's approval. The Pierrot references a vulnerability that perhaps, as the song suggests, Lady Gaga, herself, experiences as not only a performance artist but as a person whose work the music critic has the power to deem 'right or wrong' ("Applause"). Her embodiment of the Pierrot acts as a trope of failure and is an evocative

image for the nostalgia she sings about in the song. Lady Gaga is the public persona worn by Stephanie Germanotta, further disguising herself as Pierrot and singing and dancing about the addictive nature of fame and the artfulness both behind and as the performer. The Pierrot distances the performer from the critic's reaction to her work, providing a further buffer for the artist as a person. The song's cover image suggests the emotional effect the critic's reaction to an artist's work can have on the individual.

Gaga, like Bowie and Sayer, uses the disguise of the Pierrot as a means of self-exploration and as a signifier of emotional vulnerability. By dressing up, they figuratively strip down for their audience. The audience reads the image of a Pierrot as something highly emotional. Watching these performances of Pierrot makes me feel like I have entered a different realm with the artist all together. It is as if they have engendered a sense of fantasy around themselves that emphasizes their desire to be emotional and expressive which elicits a vulnerability and emotional response in myself as the viewer and inspires my own work with Pierrot.

Pierrot is a vessel of expression which transcends the self to express profound emotion on a fundamental level. In "The Clown: An Archetypal Self-Journey", Michael Bala describes the clown (and by association Pierrot) through a psychological lens as, "disruptive and integrative archetypal energies for the individual and the collective" (50) and sees the use of clowns and humour to "be a function of the Self that embraces suffering and transforms it" (53). The Pierrot is an archetype that typically expresses melancholy and what Pierrot and other clowns have in common is the ability to convey an earnest uncomplicated expression of emotion. The use of clowns as archetypes for emotional exploration is something I use within my own work.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The Non-Place

In the book, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, anthropologist Marc Augé provides insights on utilitarian buildings and infrastructure such as highways, big box complexes, and gas stations. The "supermodern era" he describes, prioritizes efficiency and uniformity over history and culture and requires the people occupying these spaces to be anonymous individuals in a constant state of transience. According to Augé, this end is achieved through design that is de-ornamentalized, minimizing features such as benches to offer a chance to rest and linger and favouring instructional signage and automated voices that reduce the need for interpersonal interaction. Augé explains that these supermodern spaces are not "relational, historical" or "concerned with identity" (63) compared to places like schools, local businesses, or one's own home. Augé observes that the effect of supermodernity is to disconnect people from feeling part of a collective by engineering a system that "communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce" (64). Yet it also does not allow them to be unique individuals in a meaningful way by creating a situation where time is spent in a "systematic, generalized and prosaic fashion" (75). The architectural features Augé identifies as emblematic of supermodernity are what he calls a "non-place".

According to Augé, transience, functionality, and efficiency are the hallmarks of a "non-place", for example, structures like airports, multilane highways, and hallways of office buildings where the primary function is transportation. As opposed to places like the library, one's home, a park, or even pedestrian-oriented commercial streets, non-places are liminal spaces where people are not meant to linger or to inform their identity. A key distinction to make is that while an individual may not be physically alone within a non-place, the space does not lend itself to fostering interpersonal connection with other people.

Augé frames supermodernity as a circumstance that is currently unavoidable and about which the reader can draw their own conclusions. This is an appropriate framing for the ideas he presents because although I can recognize some of the unfavourable effects of supermodernity, I can also recognize when they are best suited for specific efficient needs. A good example of efficient need was apparent to me in the warehouse type atmosphere used for implementing the COVID-19 vaccine to large groups of people. An empty warehouse facilitated the efficient transience of lines of people through the space. As a vaccination site, the warehouse was a former department store, literally making it no longer a place, but rather an empty space filled with a provisional maze of tables and chairs. An empty warehouse setting allows for social distancing, speed, and efficiency for the sake of the participants' health and safety rather than for visual or aesthetic appeal. The atmosphere did not encourage social connection or the desire to linger. A sterile, clinical environment is expected in a healthcare facility, but it is still far removed from the familiar atmosphere of my family doctor's office. Throughout the process I could not help but feel a sense of isolation.

A non-place, the vaccination center, in an empty department store in the middle of a sprawling 'big box' parking lot off a busy road, felt alienating. The process in place efficiently moved people through checkpoints of health and safety screening. For safety's sake, people were not meant to interact physically with other people or with anything material or tangible in the transient process. The department store walls were blank, white, with soaring ceilings. The linoleum floors were similarly blank, white, and expansive. Unlike vaccines I have received in the past, this one was not issued by my family doctor. In fact, the nurse did not wear a name tag. I did not know who they were. When they called my name to announce I was next in line, my name merely represented my place in the cue rather than representing anything descriptive of me as an individual. I did not expect to be treated as an individual here, and I did not need to be either; actually, I was quite grateful this system was set up with everyone's safety in mind. What I am trying to illustrate is that this same systematic, impersonal

environment is replicated in other situations too, like walking through the underground hallways of the subway system to catch the train, paying for your parking spot in a multi-story parking garage, or travelling through long hallways in an airport to reach a plane terminal. These sterile, isolated environments do not elicit the same feelings of gratitude in me in comparison to the vaccine clinic's safety measures.

According to Augé, supermodernity turns the world around us into:

> a world where people are born in the clinic and die in a hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shanty-towns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitue of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce (63-64).

For Augé, supermodernity ultimately requires the inhabitants to surrender to "solitary individuality" (63). Supermodernity creates the feeling that "people are always, and never, at home" (87). Every place we traverse feels similar, but not familiar. Augé states that supermodernity "naturally finds its full expression in non-places" (88). While I am able to appreciate the functionality, efficiency and necessity of a non-place like a temporary vaccination centre, the "solitary Individuality" (64) I am being asked to surrender to in a supermodern society can leave me feeling lonely and disconnected from my humanity. Augé's text is meaningful because he describes the ways in which our "supermodern" society is structured to leave individuals with a profound sense of alienation and disconnect from any collective identity.

This concept of solitary individuality is addressed by Andreas Wittel, a media studies and social theory professor at Nottingham Trent University. Wittel's essay titled "Toward a Network Sociality" notes that the phenomenon of the "new media industry," like non-places, is a by-product of supermodernity. Wittel describes the new media industry as a sector of the economy that prioritizes "networking practices" over "working practices" (53), where interactions between people are fleeting and centered around networking gain over long lasting personal connections. Wittel contrasts the idea of network sociality with the idea of community, which he states "entails stability, coherence, embeddedness and belonging. It involves strong and long-lasting ties, proximity and a common history or narrative of the collective" (52). Wittel's essay makes it clear that this ethos of network sociality reigns true for the evolution of the economy, and perhaps these means of communication have affected everyday life.

Performing Within a Non-Place

I think of my physical body in a visceral way - the ubiquity of non-places reminds me that my physical body is a performative agent within these spaces. For me, non-places are masculine spaces, and to be feminine within these spaces makes me feel vulnerable. I am compelled to hide myself, become small, and disappear to feel safe. Within a masculine space, masculinity becomes a disguise for survival.

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* psychologist Erving Goffman theorises that we are performing our sense of self throughout our daily lives, and these performances are how we conceptualise our sense of self and project it for the people around us (Goffman 1959). For Goffman, the term performance can refer to "all the activities of an individual which occur … before a particular set of observers" (22). Goffman proposes that a crucial part of what informs the performance is the setting "involving furniture, décor, physical layout, and other background items that supply the scenery" (22). By this account, a non-place is not an informative setting to the performance.

I think a useful example for explaining what he means would be to think about walking down a side street in the city where you live in comparison to travelling in a car down a long stretch of an eight-lane expressway. Walking down the sidewalk provides a tactile and sensory experience. You might walk past buildings that you have been into before and know the people who occupy them, and if you do not, then you are performing the role of a stranger exploring and discovering something new. The buildings you see, and the plants growing around them might signal some geographic specificity that informs the way you relate to and feel about your surroundings. There is also an immediacy to everything you pass on your way as nothing separates you from the closeness of the world around you. On the freeway, however, you are confronted with an endless stretch of concrete that is indistinguishable from any other freeway on the planet.

I become very aware of my body and its relationship to non-places. Because my body begins to feel vulnerable, I feel more compelled to disguise it, equip it with layers of decoration, exaggerate its features to obscure its identity. I desire to create a vessel to occupy that reflects the soft sentiments, and personal connection I long to have with the world around me. If my sense of belonging in a non-place does not extend past my own skin, then I must fortify the barrier between the miniature vessel I inhabit and the gigantic vacuum I move through to create a sense of belonging that travels with me in non-places.

Sweet Kitsch

I am using the concept of “sweet kitsch” as a means of creating a sense of belonging for myself within non-places and supermodernity. In the essay, “On Kitsch and Sentimentality”, Robert C. Solomon defines the concept of “sweet kitsch” as “art (or, to hedge our bets, intended art) that appeals unsubtly and unapologetically to the softer, "sweeter sentiments” (1). Through my work, I convey the idea of sweeter sentiments as meaningful feelings of longing, tenderness, and nostalgia. Solomon gives

examples of art objects which fall under the description of sweet kitsch, as for example, “road side ceramics of wide-eyed puppies”, “saccharine religious art”, and “Muzak and Rod McLuen-type poetry” (1).

For Solomon, sweet kitsch is art that is made in an earnest attempt to appeal to sentimental interests, but which causes the piece to look like it lacks intellectual profundity, ultimately deeming it to be in bad taste. By nature, kitsch and sweet kitsch are similar, but sweet kitsch is the active acknowledgment of the value in the sentimental “kitschy” objects instead of the mere passive enjoyment of them. Sweet kitsch is an essential element of my studio work, which is an active acknowledgement of gaudiness, clashing colours, softness, and an appeal to childhood through an active acknowledgment of the figure of Pierrot as evocative of sentimentality and nostalgia. Solomon writes how “some kitsch may be highly professional and keenly aware of the artistic and cultural traditions in which it gains its appeal” (1).

Solomon explains that the term “kitsch” “comes from the nineteenth century (4) and its etymology traces “the German word for ‘smear’ or ‘playing with mud” (4). The mud alludes to emotion and the act of smearing it ultimately “makes a person ‘dirty’”. (4). This idea relates back the figure of Pierrot whose makeup runs and smears down his face as he cries out in unabashed emotion. However, in experiencing his emotions, Pierrot is not sullying himself, but perhaps giving himself permission to feel and reckon with things he wishes to avoid. Solomon continues, saying “the standard opinion seems to be that kitsch and immorality go together and that sentimentality is what is wrong with both of them” (4). However, the expression of emotion such as crying out in pain, sorrow, or joy is not an immoral act. It is an act of release, self soothing, and acquainting oneself with their inner child who may still be struggling with pain from the past.

Colour

In the book *Chromophobia*, David Batchelor discusses how the exclusion of colour from design, or 'chromophobia' "manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture" (22). Batchelor describes how, within western culture, colour is seen as both a foreign body "usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological" (22) and as embodying "the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic" (23). Above all, he explains, that "colour is routinely excluded from the higher concerns of the mind. It is other to the higher values of Western culture. Or perhaps culture is other to the higher values of colour. Or colour is the corruption of culture" (23), making it clear that excessive colour is not welcomed. While I am not sure I agree with all of Batchelor's claims about colour and society, colour is a fundamental tool of visual art. I can see how in other aspects colours can be linked to certain meanings, for example how we have gendered certain colours, such a pink and blue.

Batchelor's text is in part a response to the nineteenth-century art critic and colour theorist Charles Blanc and his book, *The Grammar of Painting and Engraving.* In his book, Blanc "identifie[s] colour with the 'feminine' in art", and "assert[s] the need to subordinate colour to the 'masculine' discipline of design or drawing" (23). For Blanc, if a painter had only ideas to express rather than emotions, "he would perhaps need only drawing and the monochrome of chiaro'scuro (*sic*), for with them he can represent the only figure that thinks, — the human figure, which is the chef d'oeuvre of a designer rather than the work of a colorist" (144). In Blanc's formulation colour is only necessary when depicting "the expression of a young girl, that shade of trouble or sadness so well expressed by the pallor of the brow, or the emotion of modesty that makes her blush" (144). He concludes that the role of colour is to "to tell us what agitates the heart, while drawing shows us what passes in the mind" (145) and that is "proof of what we affirmed at the beginning of this work, that drawing is the masculine side of art, color the feminine" (145). Blanc is perhaps exposing a historical bias toward the dualities of mind

over emotion, masculine over feminine, but it is a bias that is clearly still evident today. The great divide here is between the masculine and the feminine, mind and emotion.

Typically Pierrot wears a simple black and white frock. However, the Pierrot costumes I designed incorporate a colourful palette. My Pierrot characters wear soft, traditionally feminine colours such as pastel pink, lilac, daffodil yellow and mint green. These are colours that I am inclined to use for my costumes because I receive the most homophobic remarks when I wear them myself and subsequently feel the most exposed in public. For this reason, colour is political for me. Pierrots do not care about the rules people have in place so their colourful costumes are a reclamation of male femininity. From my own lived experience, being willing to feel emotion, express femininity, and be sentimental about things I care about has only enriched my life. Wearing soft pastel colours is an essential part of that. These are the aspects of human experience that motivate me to create art. Emotion, sentimentality and, therefore, colour are integral to both my Pierrot and to the concept of sweet kitsch as I use it. Through the act of dress up and disguise, the emotional aspects of oneself can be claimed and communicated through colour.

The ethos behind sweet kitsch and sentimentality becomes significant when paired with Augé's writing about non-places, Batchelor's writing on chromophobia, and Wittel's notion of network sociality, all hallmarks of supermodernity. Sweet kitsch is antithetical to supermodernity and helps to reveal both sides of this supermodern coin. If supermodernity is concerned with efficiency and uniformity, and rejects expression and personal connectivity, then sweet kitsch is the remedy to the isolation and disconnect it creates. We are surrounded by non-places and supermodernity in North America. Utilitarianism and efficiency make up the infrastructure of our contemporary world here and are seemingly inescapable. For some, sweet kitsch can be seen as a way to find a sense of belonging while traversing the supermodern landscape. For me, the feelings of anonymity and isolation which occur

because of these landscapes cause me to miss, and to long for, the things in my life which enrich it. I think of kitschy things like creating costumes and dressing up.

Longing

In her book *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart discusses what the feeling of nostalgia might really mean, explaining that nostalgia "is sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in the lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience" (23). Stewart describes how nostalgia is "always ideological" and how "the past it seeks has never existed" (23). When we look back on a past experience, we are not truly reliving it, but retelling it as a narrative which "threatens to reproduce itself" (23) in an "impossibly pure context" (23).

For Stewart, thoughts of nostalgia can form little microcosms of idealised, retold past events in the form of the "miniature", which becomes a metaphor for nostalgia. She discusses souvenirs as evocative objects of nostalgia because we use them as a tool to "evoke a voluntary memory" (145) that is "manufactured from [the] material survival" (145) of the souvenir. Stewart's writing aligns with Solomon's ideas on sweet kitsch and sentimentality; the functional quality of a souvenir is by nature kitschy and thus can be looked at under the lens of sweet kitsch. Souvenirs are concerned with one's sentimentality for their own personal history. A souvenir in its traditional sense, for example, a snow globe from a museum gift shop, exists as an item that serves no practical function. However, it remains a memento of a moment of experience in our personal history.

When I think of objects that I have imbued with a personal narrative I think of rocks and crystals. There was an instance when I was younger where I was trying to smash rocks in my backyard. Most of the rocks broke apart into small shards, but one rock broke open to reveal a geode of quartz crystals. In that moment it felt as if a supernatural, or otherworldly presence was letting me know that it could see

me, and that it and I were sharing that fleeting moment together. I am comforted when I see a crystal in a gift shop, on someone's shelf or on the ground because I revisit the memory of finding the geode of quartz.

I see a clown as the physical embodiment and response to memory, emotion, and silliness. The aesthetics of a clown, their association with children's media, and their emotional expressiveness give them an association with both kitsch and sentimentality and make them into evocative beings of longing. If deeming someone as a "sentimentalist in ethics is to dismiss both the person and his or her views from serious consideration" (3) and accuse them of "terminal silliness" (3), as Solomon notes in his text, then what are clowns but terminally silly? What is silly is not rational, practical, masculine, or scientific. Thus, when silliness is posed as a response to supermodernity, it is a silliness that is intentional and self-aware bringing with it its own value. I view utilizing the kitschy aesthetics of a clown as a way of dismissing bad faith criticisms of sentimentality, and ultimately, the feminine aspect of myself.

Play

In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* Carl Jung describes in the chapter titled, "Confrontations with the Unconscious", how he experienced a time in his life where he was "voluntarily submitting [himself] to emotions of which [he] could not approve" (218). He was entering "a period of inner uncertainty" (209) in his life and described it as a "state of disorientation" (209) that made him feel as if he was "totally suspended in mid-air" (209). These emotions caused him to have fantasies constantly running through his head which "often struck [him] as nonsense" (218).

This experience that Jung describes mirrors my own experience beginning a new chapter in my life in the middle of the first provincial lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. I had just moved out on my own and into a large and unfamiliar urban centre at a time when it seemed like nothing would ever be familiar or certain again in the world as I recognized it. I felt completely isolated and

alone. As a result of pandemic protocols, every place then seemed to be a “non-place” in that they became functional and stripped of social connection. Places to linger or connect with people or my surroundings were limited. This, of course, was for the health and safety of the community, but it engendered in me feelings of desolation, loneliness, and disorientation.

Jung’s approach to remedying his feeling of similar disorientation was like my own attempt at reconciling my feelings of isolation. He notes that the “first thing that came to the surface was a childhood memory” (212) of “playing passionately with building blocks” (213). He recounts how the memory of building structures with blocks, and then more inventive materials like stones and mud, momentarily filled him with positive emotions. Jung revisits his love for building blocks as an adult saying, “there is still life in these things. The small boy is still” (213), and by engaging in this activity as an adult, he is bridging the “distance from the present back to [his] eleventh year” (213). I think what Jung is trying to convey here is that a return to form, especially from childhood, can be an effective way of grounding oneself in times of distress. This is not to say to regress back to behaving like a child and refusing to participate in adult life, but to rediscover how childhood activities like dress up and play can elicit enjoyment and optimism in our adult selves. We discover how productive it is to be silly when it helps us to achieve a sense of belonging.

The thing most relevant for me in Jung’s account was that he was compelled towards a tactile activity. To me, tactile activities have always been an effective way to bridge the gap between my mind and my body. I did not know how to sew when I was younger, nor had I ever attempted to do so before this project, but I did spend most of my childhood problem solving through creating art. At the time I do not think I had a concise reason for why I spent all my time making art, but retrospectively it was a way of working with my wonderment for the world through a form that was meaningful to me.

Chapter 3: Artist Review

Juno Birch

Juno Birch is a performer and sculptor from the United Kingdom who describes herself as an "absolutely stunning alien drag performer" in her Instagram bio. Birch's style of dress is rooted in a mid-century modern aesthetic and was the focus of Vogue Magazine's third episode of their web series "Extreme Beauty" where her opening line states that she is "a glamorous alien woman, who crash landed on Earth in 1962. Ever since I've been trying to tragically, dress like a lady but kind of doing it a bit clumsily" (Vogue 2019) (Figure 2).

Much of Birch's work consists of producing online content and live stage performances with a comedic tone typically parodying modern western culture. Birch showcases her character's extra-terrestrial backstory by painting her skin pastel shades of blue, purple, and green, and wearing clothing and hairstyles that strikingly cause her to stand out and contrast with her surroundings. She recounts that as a child, she would draw pictures of women as an act of 'escapism' to "[cope] with being trapped in the wrong body" (Birch 2019). Much of Birch's work consists of producing online content and live stage performances with a comedic tone typically parodying modern western culture.

Towards the end of her interview with *Vogue*, Birch is documented going to the grocery store in costume and remarks that "[s]he likes to go to the supermarket and buy lots of vegetables, banana, some milk, two big melons, maybe some Ariel washing powder. Who knows" (Birch 2019). Her intention is to buy "household things that'll make her look like she's kind of blending in" (Birch 2019). Her costume is in visual contrast to, not only the supermarket setting, but the other customers and employees within the space. She walks through the aisles in a nonchalant manner while the people around her stare. Her performance suggests that while she wishes to blend in, she does not understand the rules and social pleasantries that make society function the way it does.

Birch's performance is satirical. Birch's attempts are hopeless, but her engagement is persistent and confident, as opposed to the people around her who are taking part in a functional trip to the supermarket. Birch understands that she is performing "woman at the grocery store" to be understood as a person. Through her drag performances she asks the audience to consider what it means to be a woman, what it means to be a person, and what are the aspects of these constructed concepts that we feel are important.

This theme of belonging is very evident in Birch's work. In Birch's YouTube series documenting her playing the 2004 game *The Sims 2* she further disrupts modern western culture through her gameplay. *The Sims* is modeled to emulate an idealized version of American suburban life. Birch's alien character completely misinterprets what is seen as normal to humans while she incorporates other aliens, supernatural occurrences, and dysfunctional versions of mundane locations like grocery stores into her gameplay (Figure 3). Through the absurdity of these scenarios the viewer is viscerally aware of how constricting the construction of normativity is. *The Sims 2* presents Birch with a simulation of a world in which she does not belong. However, the autonomy which the game provides her over the lives of the characters she creates allows her to construct a life where she can belong. What Birch is trying to say through her art is that there is no universal rational way to experience life, and the act of trying to perform daily the role of modern human person is as absurd an act as performing an alien trying to helplessly blend into the human world. Birch confirms this point herself in a 2020 interview with *Metal Magazine* where she states that "I think I've spent so many years in the past trying to fit into society – when I was a teenager, especially. But then I learnt from my gender dysphoria that I just can be whatever the fuck I want and not give a shit anymore and have fun. I just have fun! I don't take life too seriously" (2020). She brings 'silly' to her art and life within an alienating world.

David Bowie – Ashes to Ashes

"Ashes to Ashes" is a 1980 single on David Bowie's fourteenth studio album *Scary Monster (and Super Creeps*). This single, and its accompanying music video are notable for Bowie's use of Pierrot aesthetics in the costumery (Figure 4). Throughout his career, Bowie created numerous personas which are developed and characterised through costume, song lyrics and music, and album visuals. Before the release of "Ashes to Ashes", Bowie introduced personas Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, and also Major Tom who appears in Bowie's 1969 song "Space Oddity" for which "Ashes to Ashes" is a sequel.

The persona used in both the music video for "Ashes to Ashes" and the *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)* album cover is known as Pierrot, who both establishes and reflects the melancholy and nostalgic tone of the song with the rhetorical question: "Do you remember a guy that's been/In such an early song?" (Bowie 1980). The narrative of the song and music video feature another of Bowie's personas, the fictional astronaut Major Tom, as he writes to ground control informing them: "I'm happy, hope you're happy too/ I've loved all I've needed, love/ sordid details following" (Bowie 1980). Both the Pierrot figure and the scenes cutting back and forth between Major Tom, in first a padded room, and, then a hospital room perhaps awaiting electric shock, evoke regret, illness and vulnerability. As the narrator, Pierrot refers to Major Tom as the Action Man, which perhaps makes Pierrot the "valuable friend" (Bowie 1980) – the colourful, surreal counterpart who reveals the truth about the man of action: "Ashes to ashes, funk to funky/ We know Major Tom's a junkie/ Strung out in heaven's high/Hitting an all-time low" (Bowie 1980). Pierrot can be seen to represent Major Tom's drug addiction and by extension Bowie's own struggles with addiction and his artistic process.

Pierrot separates Major Tom from the junkie and the artist from the person. The song addresses the dissonance between what it is to be an artist versus a person, and for some people, clearly Bowie himself as the song lyrics suggest, a lot of successful creative art comes out of emotionally and

psychologically challenging times like addiction and issues of identity. While Major Tom in the padded room seems alone and emotionally catatonic, Pierrot walks around freely and shows a wider range of emotions through facial expression and gesture. In the September 1980 issue of *New Music Express* titled "the Future Isn't What it Used to Be", Bowie states how "[i]t really is an ode to childhood, if you like, a popular nursery rhyme. It's about space men becoming junkies" (Bowie 1980). Through nursery rhyme storytelling and the aesthetics of Pierrot, Bowie is being self-reflexive in the song and singing vulnerably about times in his life where he was a "junkie" as he puts it. He is singing about the vulnerable moments while being disguised in makeup and a billowy flamboyant costume. The Pierrot acts to point out the truth.

The costume gives Bowie's body a new shape that makes him appear more androgynous which creates a separation of the performing body from the performer. Watching the persona of Pierrot sing about the more vulnerable part of Bowie's career creates more allure and compassion for Bowie as a person. Through the perspective of different personas, Bowie creates a layered multiplicity of characters grappling with human issues.

Kent Monkman - Miss Chief

Kent Monkman creates a disruption in our modern western idea of history and gender through his performance of his trickster persona Miss Chief Eagle Testickle. Monkman explains how he "wanted an artistic persona that could travel through time to reverse the gaze and look back at European settlers" (Monkman 2019). Miss Chief is meant to highlight Cree values which have their "own ideas of gender and sexuality that didn't fit the male-female binary." (Monkman 2019). Miss Chief is an over-the-top persona who Monkman describes as embodying "a sense of humour, a playfulness, a relationship to mythologies and history" (Monkman 2019). A large portion of Monkman's performance of Miss Chief is disrupting the western cannon of history by having her appear in historical paintings and retell events

from an indigenous perspective. Monkman does not use persona as a disguise to critique culture, but rather uses persona to embody the concepts he stands for.

The performance I am focusing on is the 2017 performance titled *Another Feather in Her Bonnet* (Figure 5). In the performance, Miss Chief marries French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier inside a tepee made of glass beads in the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts. Miss Chief wears a long white tulle skirt resembling a wedding dress and a white feather headdress made by Gaultier for a past collection of bridal fashion. The performance symbolizes Gaultier's apology for cultural appropriation and Miss Chief's reclamation of history in a union that ultimately champions sexual liberation. The cultural appropriation aspect of the piece is part of the bigger picture Monkman is addressing in this piece; themes of indigeneity and appropriation exist in every single one of Monkman's work. The other part of the performance beyond the apology for the appropriation is that Kent Monkman and Jean Paul Gauthier are getting married and challenging what is considered to be a traditional marriage, how one dresses for their marriage, and who gets to wear what and when. As the CocoCineFilms video of the performance states, only Miss Chief, the "beautiful trickster warrior" (Monkman 2017) may wear the headdress (CocoFilms 2018). Kent Monkman, the artist, partners with Jean-Paul Gauthier, the fashion designer, to disrupt culture and history. He dresses as a female in a head dress typically reserved for male leaders of the Plains Native American Tribes and plays with conceptions of gender and gender roles and also cultural appropriation, highlighting when the time and place is to critique these things. Both Gaultier and Miss Chief use the feather bonnet to offer subversion to the western conception of gender roles and the body's relationship to clothing.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Studio Work

Methodology

My returning to form manifested as dressing up and collecting and rescuing, little clown dolls and clown themed items from charity shops. During my first year at OCAD I designed and sewed six different Pierrot costumes and I spent the late summer personifying and characterizing them through photos and videos. This process brought me into communication with my childhood self, the one who liked to play with little porcelain clown dolls.

I began watching clowns on television, then drawing and painting them, then constructing life-size sculptures of them, and finally creating clown clothing and embodying the archetype through my own artistic expression. Through the process Pierrot emerged as exaggerated vulnerability, fascination, and wonderment. I embrace belonging through the performance of Pierrot. I achieve belonging through dress up and performance which gives me permission to empower myself in a supermodern and alienating environment.

The 'slow', ritualistic process of designing and constructing the costumes was meaningful to me. The processes involved in creating a garment, like choosing fabric and cutting each piece, pinning it together and sewing it, decorating, and modelling it are ways to generate intimacy with myself and the thing I am creating. I enjoy each part of this process and did not need to rely on anyone else to be there to partake in it. I enjoy time spent with myself. I think the sentimental relationship that develops throughout the making process makes the final product comforting to wear. The process of conceptualizing a costume and constructing it requires me to know the dimensions of my body well in order to exaggerate and abstract its features. Through this process of decoration and exaggeration, I can add a sense of fantasy to the way my body exists and the stories the costume is able to communicate about a personal mythology through associations absent in structures of supermodernity. Because non-

places create feelings of isolation, I find myself reflecting on which parts of my life, no matter how small, make it feel meaningful. The process of meaning making and storytelling that comes out of that process is enriching, and a sense of joy permeates through the feelings of isolation which is the hallmark of a non-place. I feel closer with myself, so the lack in and alienation of my surroundings does not affect me as much. Thus, my surroundings, or the "scenic parts of expressive equipment" (23) as Goffman puts it, are no longer as crucial to understanding one's existence as a performative agent.

Considering the concept of a slow and intimately personal process I chose to employ quilting techniques while constructing the costume. Quilting is a process which involves saving and collecting fabrics, reusing materials such as old clothing and sheets, carefully stitching pieces together to create something new and useful from something old and castoff. When the quilted item is complete it contains pieces of one's past and elicits both memory and warm feelings.

I wanted the shape of the costume to be androgynous and ornate. The costume has a four-pronged jester headpiece decorated with dangling tassels that is meant to symbolize an eruption of clownery from the character. Clowns have been a meaningful beacon of escapism for me throughout my life. Growing up I saw them as figures that did not necessarily have to be male or female, and the sexual orientation of a clown was seldom called into question by either myself or the reasoning adults who peopled my young world. They were merely clowns. As a child, who did not pass as heterosexual, my sexuality from the time I first went to school was constantly coming into question. It was a tale of humility to have to defend myself against leading questions and speculations every day. These are questions I would not get if I were a clown and it would make me think how liberating it would be to exist that way.

For me clowns are a means of underpinning one's emotional experience while simultaneously creating distance from the physical body. As a child I did not have the language to identify clowns as

representing the themes of sweet kitsch, but I think clowns were still a way of enveloping myself with kitsch and sentimentality in a material way whether I was aware of it or not. I have always loved little porcelain clown dolls for their delicate nature, and I enjoyed making my own clown dolls out of scrap fabric and polymer clay. The natural progression to this process, and my ultimate response to supermodernity, is to create clown costumes to inhabit.

While considering the non-places in which this clown character could exist, I thought about online platforms, especially since the internet has been my primary means of communication as a student as well as professionally and socially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Places like YouTube, Instagram, and the idea that websites in general can be "non-places" in the sense that they prioritise systematic transience between content, and interactions based on social currency. Online spaces do not exist in any tangible, physical way, making them literally not a place. I decided to work within the space of TikTok.

I took the six Pierrot characters I had, and the photo and video work I had made with them and began posting them on the app TikTok (Figure 1). I wanted to be able to gauge reaction to these Pierrot characters because they were deliberately meant to be sweet and demure. The performances were short, simple and whimsical and are a brief vignette into the clowns' world. People wanted to enter the world of these Pierrot and spend time with them. Within the span of one week, my TikTok account titled "@clownsincyberspace" gained over 20,000 followers and much of the feedback from users said the clown characters were cute and comforting to them. Users left comments like, "I come watch your videos whenever I'm feeling overwhelmed, they make me happy" and "I have to let you know that you are my comfort account". Typically, I respond with a sequence of emojis with an ambiguous meaning, or a simple thank you. I find responses that lean into a personal exchange of nurturing could foster an irresponsible para-social relationship (meaning the one-sided affection toward the performer by the

viewer). I want my characters to act as tricksters within the online space and create a disruption from other content all the while remaining anonymous.

In the *Journal of the Folklore Institute* article "A Tolerated Margin of Mess": The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered"*,* Barbara Babcock-Abrahams explains that the trickster derives his power from "his ability to live interstitially, to confuse and to escape the structures of society and the order of cultural things" (148). A comment which I found particularly interesting in relation to Babcock-Abraham's observation about the trickster came from someone who responded to a TikTok of one of the Pierrot walking down the street in public: "I was surprised they felt safe/comfortable as many Americans would respond rudely. Then I saw they are in Canada. They seem so much nicer there." I found this comment interesting because it showed how this individual allows potential rudeness to discourage them from doing something similar. To me the hostility they are imagining coming from someone is a reaction to seeing the costume as a disturbance to the landscape. It is a disturbance that no longer allows you to be anonymous in the sense of meaningless transience. Your identity is anonymous, but your presence within the space is very much known and felt. You become a beacon of visual contrast. The Pierrot as trickster also acts as a disruptor to the continuity and anonymity of public spaces and non-places. The character's colourful presence says, "see me" and breaks the trance of the usual mindless walk through everyday life. The disconnect and alienation is broken, and connection and relationship are elicited even if only for a moment.

In her essay Babcock-Abrahams also discusses the ambiguous nature of the clowns' antics, their equally ambiguous existence, and their ability to generate more questions than answers. She suggests that trickster characters exist in the "between" realm of "what is natural and what is cultural" (148). Babcock-Abrahams uses the term "marginal" throughout her paper to discuss the existence of the trickster character, but she does not use it to imply tricksters as being a part of groups which are marginalized by society (although they can be), but rather she uses the word to reference their liminal

existence between the margins of socially constructed dualities, like male and female for instance, and how they have “no guarantee of the resolution of their ambiguous state” (Babcock-Abrahams 151). It is not a discussion of dualities, but rather a discussion of what exists outside of what we understand. She writes how “[m]arginal figures also tend to be associated with marketplaces, crossroads, and other open spaces” which are

> betwixt and between clearly defined social statuses and spaces or in which normal structures or patterns of relating break down - with places of transition, movement, and license. Temporally and spatially, he tends to confound the distinction between illusion and reality, if not deny it altogether. In fact, he casts doubt on all preconceived and expected systems of distinction between behaviors and the representation thereof (155).

In the conclusion to her paper, Babcock-Abrahams’ question about the role the trickster plays in society remains unanswered. The different lenses through which one can analyze the trickster, such as literary criticism, psychology, anthropology, and religion offer their own compelling answers. But Babcock-Abrahams finds that “not one of them is a sufficient and complete an answer to the question of the social role of narrative in general, or of trickster tales in particular” (182). The trickster creates more questions than answers. It represents the unanswerable because it exists “in between”. She states that “the very essence of structure, [implies] and of necessity [involves] negation” (186). She continues to say that “[t]rickster, ‘the foolish one’ - the negation offering possibility - stands in immediate relation to the center in all its ambiguity. Owing to the ambiguity and autonomy of the unknown” (186) and “for this we not only tolerate this ‘margin of mess’, this ‘enemy of boundaries’, “we create and re-create him” (186). The trickster is a creature which inhabits margins, or “places of transition, movement, and license” (186). This inhabiting of margins has been my intention in dressing up as the Pierrot while in a non-place. In this way, the trickster is a negation of continuity in place, meaning that it does not owe the viewer any explanations or justifications of its existence. The Pierrot in my performance, wandering

through non-places, is out of place and contrasts with their surroundings, and exists outside of what is expected in that space.

Studio Work

“Tiptoe of The Patchwork Pierrot” is a performance video featuring Pastiche, the Pierrot character (Figure 6). In the performance we see Pastiche leave their home and demurely traverse through transient spaces, using their delicate movements and with an expression of curiosity on their mask. Disguise creates a freedom through anonymity for the performer. The performance’s locations are intentionally minimalist, industrial, or de-ornamental design (Figure 7). In contrast the Pierrot character is very visually complex. The garment they wear is constructed of various fabrics with different graphic prints and jacquard patterns woven together to make a patchwork garment decorated with appliques and beads. The Pierrot’s clothing is kitschy, and its demur facial expression creates the sense of vulnerability. For me, it is important to highlight the transience of these spaces in time. The journey the character goes on emphasizes the perpetual liminality of supermodernity. Pierrot’s movements and behaviour in that space and time characterize their actions.

The Pierrot characters I have created symbolize different fragments of myself and represent different archetypal roles. The conceptualization of these characters always begins with writing. By stringing together words and phrases I find particularly evocative of certain emotions, sensations, or memories, I am able to flesh out the personality of a character and visualize how they exist in the world. This process of stringing together words does not have to result in a piece of writing that is coherent, or that makes sense to anyone other than myself, but I view it as the foundation for character creation. The particular Pierrot featured in this performance embodies the feelings of longing and nostalgia, so I found it important for the next step in the creation process to seek out and rescue discarded scraps of fabric from both my own collection and from the scrap bins of fabric stores just as I rescue little clown

dolls and objects I found in charity shops. This process resulted in a collection of fabrics with different textures, weight, weave, colour, and pattern that were only unified through the act of rescuing them. The same can be said for the tassels, beads, and appliques with which the costume is decorated. The beads I used were a collection of plastic stars and spheres, glass pearls, crystals, and stones which outline appliques made of cheap satin and brocades (figure 8). The actual process of stitching the costume together like a quilt, then embroidering and beading the details, was very intentionally slow. This slow process allowed me to generate intimacy with the materials and acquaint myself with the character I was constructing.

Through the aesthetics of clowning, I am exploring the utilization of cuteness as a means of survival. Cute elicits strong physical reactions in people. Cuteness compels people to want to cuddle and hug something. My aesthetic choices for the costume, and Pierrot character in general, are deliberately meant to be cute. Cuteness here is not to be mistaken for kitschy. As Sianne Ngai explains in the article "The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde", "cute objects can of course be kitschy but not all kitschy objects are cute" (813). She states how "the formal properties associated with cuteness — smallness, compactness, softness, simplicity, and pliancy — call forth specific affects: helplessness, pitifulness, and even despondency" (816). My goal for this character is for them to be underestimated by the audience or to evoke no more than a simple moment of pitiable endearment, which is not meant to undermine the academic nature of this work, but to imbue it with the hidden power of cuteness. Ngai explains how things thought to be cute are typically excluded from serious critical analysis. For example, in poetry, Nagai points to frilly language, emotional subject matter and the writing of female authors. They are dismissed as being cute, and subsequently, not considered avant-garde. She states, "while the avant-garde is conventionally imagined as sharp and pointy, as hard- or cutting-edge, cute objects have no edge to speak of, usually being soft, round, and deeply associated with the infantile and the feminine"

(814). The characters I am creating are exactly that - soft, round, childlike and feminine. These qualities are ones that make them best fit to inhabit spaces that are sharp and pointy.

When I dress up as this Pierrot character, my body transforms into something else. The boundary of what constitutes my physical body expands and my body becomes fluid and fills a different form. I cannot speak when wearing the mask, so it feels like I no longer need to engage with the world verbally or to interact with others through language. I am wearing a clown costume which gives me permission to express in ways which are like the pretty colours of an emerald or sapphire. When I stand in non-places dressed head to toe in eruptions of kitschy, cute, clownery with crowds of strangers stopping to observe me, I feel as if I have delivered a long overdue love letter to the child who did not give themself permission to be a clown.

When I am performing as Pastiche, I feel like a version of myself which is excessively melancholy, curious, delicate, bashful, but also excessively aware of the performance of those emotions arises. The emotions and feelings are real, but they exist in a different relationship to myself than they do when I am not dressed as a Pierrot. When I dress up as a clown I feel as though I am both myself and not myself at the same time. I am embodying a liminal figure of my psyche which both elevates the performing body, and disguises it, makes me feel more myself, yet allows who I am to completely dissolve away into a character. It is not a phenomenon that I can so easily put into words, and perhaps that is why it has been so meaningful to me.

Conclusion

I designed, sewed, and embodied a series of Pierrot clown characters, culminating in the development of the Pierrot character, Pastiche. Through Pastiche, I explored feelings of longing, sentimentality, and the aesthetic of sweet kitsch, as components of the performance of self within an impersonal and alienating non-place environment. In the non-place of the online world/cyberspace, I

created a place for myself to perform these Pierrots and they were met with welcome, connection and recognition by viewers who expressed longing for sentimentality and who desire and appreciate sweet kitsch.

In my video work *Tiptoe of The Patchwork Pierrot,* Pastiche maneuvers around non-places within a large urban setting, exploring hallways and stairwells. This highly ornamentalized and demur character created dramatic contrast to their environment. In this sense, my character Pastiche is a trickster, who embraces the soft sentiments devoid from a supermodern context and who stands in opposition to the impersonal, denuded and functional non-place. In a society driven by a supermodern aesthetic, sentimentality, kitschy aesthetics, and things associated with femininity are dismissed as superfluous. My goal for this project was to explore ways of authoring one's own sense of belonging in spaces that isolate and to ask what it means to perform self within a non-place. As Pastiche, I felt like a welcomed visitor from another realm, or an extra-terrestrial who was as strange to their surroundings as their surroundings were to them.

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Figures

Figure 1: Pierrot Characters. 2021. Photo: Emily Culbert

Figure 2: Juno Birch at grocery store. Vogue “Juno Birch Breaks Down Her Alien Queen beauty Routine”. September 5, 2019. Photo: Diana Olifirova.

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Figure 3: Juno Birch playing The Sims 2. September 7, 2021. Photo: Juno Birch.

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Figure 4: Ashes to Ashes music video featuring David Bowie Dressed as Pierrot. Directed by David Mallet, Costume designed by Natasha Korniloff**,** August 1, 1980.

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Figure 5: Jean Paul Gaultier and Miss Chief Eagle Testickle (Kent Monkman), Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, September 8, 2017. Photo: Frédéric Faddoul.

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Figure 6: Pastiche, February 5, 2022. Photo: Bobby Markov.

Figure 7: Tiptoe of The Patchwork Pierrot production shot. February 5, 2022. Photo: Sarah Gervais.

Figure 8: Pastiche Costume Details. 2022.