

## IN A WORLD WHICH REALLY IS TOPSY-TURVY, THE TRUE IS A MOMENT OF THE FALSE. - GUY DEBORD FROM SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE - 1967

Inside the exhibition, is an exhibition, is an exhibition, is an exhibition. Matty Jankowski. Jimbo Easter. Julia Gorton. Frederick W. Glasier. R.E. Ashwell. The artists. The circus. Silent films. The curtains. The videos. The performance. The objects. The black binders. The museums. The PMA. The Ringling. The spectators. Me. You. Us. Them. The building. As jail. As art center. The history. Jim Crow Era. Spanish Colonialism. Gentrification. The classroom. The strike. The pedagogy. The students. Teachers. Experience. The humans. The animals. The Gallery as Menagerie. We step inside and wish for surprise. We look around corners and hope for something better. We want to react. We open wider. We modify our bodies. We read words spelled out on the wall. We scratch our faces. We watch in awe. We look at our phones. We write something down. We capture an image. We post it. We are spectators. We are audiences. We are participants. We wish we could make it. We think we can make it. We want to make something. We don't make anything. We want that tattoo. We never get that tattoo. We listen to it. We play it. We see. We remember. We say it. We don't know where it comes from. We appropriate it. We steal for it. We lie for it. We love it. We hate it. We tell the truth for it. We are vulnerable. We are strange bodies. We are different. We are strong. We work hard. We sit on our asses. We are ambitious. We are commerce. We are community. We make our way. We hustle. We hustle hard. We are inside the show now. We are spectating. We are becoming spectacle. We refuse. We are the hustle in our own museums of spectacle.

### WHAT DOES HUSTLE MEAN TO YOU?

"I don't see it as a bad thing, I see it as having a sense of purpose. I'm doing what I want to do. It's hard. But, I'm happy. You've got to work at it." - Matty Jankowski - 2018

### WHERE DOES THE WORD HUSTLE COME FROM?

The origin of "hustle" can be traced to the Dutch *hutselen*, *husseln*, "to shake, to toss." By 1840, in American English, it was used to describe "to get in a quick, illegal manner" and in 1887 defined as "to sell goods aggressively." By 1963 it became associated with "a swindle, illegal business activity." Hustle became the name of a popular dance by 1975. Today, hustle means all of these things and is ubiquitous in range. From post-war generations to millennials, the term is taken up for things like 'side-hustle', or a side job. It connotes that one always has something on the go to survive or make a buck. To hustle in sports or in winning. It is to work hard no matter what place in life you find yourself. To be a *hustler* is a pejorative term as much as it is a compliment. The title of this exhibition is a verb and a noun. As a title, it is both an offering and a direction.

### WHAT IS IT?

*Hustle: Museum of Spectacle* is an exhibition of three headlining artists (Matty Jankowski, Jimbo Easter & Julia Gorton), a featured artist (Frederick W. Glasier), and a cast of side acts. The museum visitor may expect to shake things up and engage the senses while contemplating the histories of American museums and sideshows, subcultures, and non-normative representations of gender, class, and sexuality spanning a timeline from the late 1800s to present. *Hustle* was born from looking at Matty Jankowski's archive, a collection that exemplifies his experiences as a tattooer, writer, bookseller, and artist who lived and worked in Brooklyn, NYC from 1948 until moving to his current home in Panama City, Florida in the early 2000s. His life and work links to early museum, circus, sideshow, and tattoo history from the mid-19th to the 21st century as well as photography, sculpture, installation, performance, and mail art from the 1960s - present. Jankowski has exhibited nationally and internationally, wrote for *Skin & Ink* magazine, and began *New York City Body Archive* in NYC which helped lead the way for body modification in the U.S. These performative and resonating subcultures reverberate from contemporary art practices and artists today, and include the works of Jimbo Easter and Julia Gorton. Detroit native, Jimbo Easter, takes an outsider art and Punk aesthetic that is matched with a mythology of drawings and performances which exhibit a post-modern, primitive revival of uncanny and private culture. Easter was one of the 2016 Kresge Artist Fellowship winners and has performed nationally and internationally. He has been featured at Art Basel Miami Beach, Detroit Institute of Arts Museum, and Third Man Records in Detroit. Julia Gorton is a New York based photographer and collage artist who captured decisive moments from

the likes of Lydia Lunch, David Byrne, Richard Hell, and Patti Smith from New York City's No Wave scene in the late 1970s. Whether laid out inside a messy apartment or performing on stage at CBGB, Gorton reveals the vulnerable, yet empowered, bodies her black and white portrait photography represents. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and has been featured in *No Wave: Post-Punk. Underground. New York. 1976-1980*, by Thurston Moore and Byron Coley and most recently at International Center for Photography and MoMA. Gorton is currently program director at Parsons School of Design in New York City. Also featured in *Hustle is Circus! The Photographs of Frederick W. Glasier*, an exhibition of photographs from the collection of The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida. Massachusetts born, Frederick W. Glasier joined the circus in 1899 and spent nearly thirty years photographing the spectacle of circus and sideshow with his large format camera in tow. *Hustle's* Exhibition Side Acts include: T.T. Wentworth, Jr. Collection, Jimmy Perlman Collection, R.E. Ashwell, Sailor Jerry, Paul Rogers, Cindy Ray, Scott Alvarez Collection, Rommel Martinez, Joseph Herring, Jaime Diffee & Olga Silva, George Méliès, Yellow Beak Press, Eakins Press Foundation, These Days & more!

### WHERE DOES THE EXHIBITION COME FROM?

While installing the exhibition, people asked me how this show came about. They'd say, "it has a lot of moving parts, how do you keep it all straight?" For me, it's Matty Jankowski's life, work, and collection that keeps the story focused. It's because of Matty, we have *Hustle: Museum of Spectacle*. Let me start from the beginning. I met Matty because of Amy (Amy Bowman-McElhone, AVP UWF Historic Trust, PMA Director & Chief Curator). She was living in Panama City, Florida when she came upon Matty's yard sale almost a year ago, several months before her second child was born. She said the inside of his home was covered from wall-to-wall. She knew his collection had the potential for an exhibition. When I was hired in May 2017, she asked me to go meet with him and thought I would work well with his collection, his history, and furthermore, his personality. I drove to Panama City through torrential rain and found a large shed/home structure and three containers in the backyard. Out front were sculptures made from found objects, rusty parts, and hand painted signs. I didn't know who I was about to meet. Matty came out to greet me as I hopped out of a red pickup truck. He had long white hair that was pulled back in a ponytail. His arms and chest were exposed and tattooed. It was hot outside and had just rained. On his chest was an ethereal William Blake illustration. His arm had a heart with Mom and Dad lettered inside. His eyes were bright and he said, "Hello, hello, hello!" He opened the door. The smell of incense released from the doorway, the sound of electronic rhythm filled my ears, my eyes became full, my body was soon engulfed. The room was filled and I thought of images of salon style exhibitions from the grand tours of the 17th and 18th centuries depicted in my art history books. There were two pathways, one to the left and one to the right. I had to choose. From floor to ceiling I could find no space of rest, I had to discover what was next. Dog paintings, metal sculptures, tattooed people, photography, paint by numbers, postcards, screenprints, books, toys, antiques, a jail door, a banister, chairs, rugs, cases, binders, a couch, a refrigerator, a bathroom that was also an office, sideshow banners, erotica, skateboard decks, books, books, and more books! We talked and Matty had a story for each object, arrangement, and artwork. Often I could not tell if it was his art, someone else's art, a collaboration, appropriation, a copy, a cut up, or something else all together. Soon I realized that it wasn't always about this kind of demarcation, that for him it was about the act of collecting and making simultaneously. It was about the journey of combinations, and paying homage to his heroes and heroines like Frida Kahlo, Charles Bukowski, John Baldessari, Ray Johnson, William S. Burroughs, Joseph Beuys, William Blake, Mary Ellen Mark, Salvador Dali, Ed Ruscha, Yoko Ono, Andy Warhol, and so on. Eight hours, and hundreds of photographs later, I drove home. From there, the discussion of American museum history, collections, and subculture became forefront when conveying my experience to my coworkers. I was compelled by the importance of subculture and Amy wanted to emphasize the carnivalesque.

After meeting Matty, I wanted to choose another artist and a few historical objects that would embody the fingers of Matty's artwork and collection. I wanted an artist that had Punk connections and an artist who could

problematicize representations of gender. Instead of one, I found two. Amy suggested Jimbo Easter as one of the prospects. I contacted him through email and he said yes. Later, on the phone, he told me that after looking up Matty, he knew he was supposed to be in the show and that he felt part of that history. Jimbo and I have been working together through email, phone calls, texting, mail art, and collaboration to configure his part in the exhibition. Jimbo's work confronts the body, inherited stereotypes, subverted alterations to what we think primitive is, the uncanny tabulations of knowing, masculinity, as well as the guttural sounds of confusion and gesticulating bodies. His drawings are raw and depict a mythology of both private and public, they capture a metamorphosis of being. His drawings ooze a connective tissue with Punk networks, warehouse spaces, broken drum kits, and wonky bass strings. I can hear them as much as I can see them. I come at it from the perspective of an artist too.

To be honest, I was quite nervous to contact Julia Gorton. I'd read about her in *Garage* magazine and saw a black and white photo of Patti Smith and, as one does, I became a fan. I was struck and began following her incredible instagram page, julia\_gorton\_nowave, looking closer to understand her images on a deeper level. Her black and white photography from the late 1970s archive were something I felt connected to. I realized this show was part of my own history. Gorton has a generous way of capturing people's vulnerability and strength simultaneously. Knowing the eventual fame of each of her figures seemed to matter less. I felt as though I could see them and hear the sounds reverberating from the scene that these figures helped to create. I contacted her and shared with her why I thought she would be an incredible inclusion in the exhibition. Julia said yes. I did a dance and dreamed up just how I saw her photographs at the PMA alongside Matty and Jimbo. Through emails and photography sharing, texting, and phone calls, we selected eighteen photographs. I was happy she liked the idea of painting the wall black and for allowing me to work with her in choosing the photographs. I asked her to create a playlist, and share the music that informed her work. Her photographic and collaged zines are concise and playful, and are for sale as part of the exhibition. Since our initial email, Gorton has shown at ICP and many other places in the US and Europe.

Frederick W. Glasier's work was included after I made a phone call to Deborah Walk, Curator at the Ringling Museum. At first she said it was too late to request objects but, after a very long and fun conversation, she encouraged me to request the Glasier photographs and said that she would discuss it with Heidi Taylor, Registrar at the Ringling. I looked to their digital archive gallery online and there I saw a similar affect represented that I'd also seen in Gorton's figures. Glasier had a connection with his sitters that allowed for their humanity, spirit, and strength to come through. Beyond their incredible bodies of difference, it was their eyes that told the bigger story. At first I'd only requested digital files so that we may project images of early circus history but, to my surprise, they offered the PMA the entire collection of his photographs. How could I say no? I drove down to Sarasota and did a tour of the grand Ringling Museum complex. I was able to see, in context, the many facets of their collection and convergence of museum history, personal collections, circus and sideshow as well as contemporary and historical art which allowed me to come to a deeper understanding that, by exhibiting these artists together at the PMA in this way, I would be asking our audiences to consider the question, what is the future of the museum? Not just the PMA, but the future of all museums, primarily those in the United States.

It all started because Amy walked into Matty's home and connected with him over the experience of being with a person's chosen objects and atmosphere. Matty's home is installation art, a museum, and a home. The first time I met him I stayed for hours listening, looking, smelling, and capturing his space. Because of my own training, I had a name for the many ways to connect Matty to art, museums, circuses, sideshows, subculture, and music. By exhibiting his work as installation art here at the PMA, the spectator may be immersed into a guided experience of senses. Matty was also a bookseller and tattooer. He was often hired to place temporary tattoos on celebrities like Winona Ryder for photo shoots. Check out the cardboard cutout of Lil' Kim and see Matty's work on her torso! His work as a bookseller and writer converged with his experience as a tattooer and we can read his writing in the forward of *Sailor Jerry's Tattoo Stencils* as well as in the text pieces made

during the development of the avant garde artist collective, the Neoist. Matty was a tattooer in NYC during a time when tattooing was illegal from the 50s until 1997. I knew there was a history and convergence with tattooing that needed to be revealed in a more poetic yet factual way. Tattoo history is tied as closely to American museums and circuses as much as the bands, sideshows, and animals. I wanted to reveal this timeline in a palatable way and asked PMA curatorial intern & UWF MA Public History Candidate, Samantha Poirier to put together some research and create much of the timeline you see here.

By chance, Scott Alvarez introduced me to Jimmy Perlman. Both are from Northwest Florida and have been tattooing and involved with music for over twenty years. During that time, I had a chance to visit several tattoo shops and noticed that in every space there was a gallery of oddities, circus and sideshow art, traditional tattoo flash, and comprehensive library spaces. The clean and medical environments were set up with inks, paper towels, mags, the buzzing of tattoo machines, stories, and talented drawers and tattooers. Often times a resident piercer would be part of the crew. These studios are often sanctuaries for a history of shared and private professional practices. Knowledge is traditionally passed down from one tattooer to the next by 1970s of trusted apprenticeships. It is as secret, as it is a very public and tactile world. I stayed connected with Perlman and introduced him to Matty. They found their connection had already been made at a tattoo convention in the late 90s. I listened to them tell stories and point to objects within Matty's collection I'd not noticed in the same regard. Through their eyes, many objects became significant in a more telling way. By connecting the two of them, I'd engaged them in commerce. The act of buying and selling, sharing, and laboring, reading and writing, are wrapped up in the institution, the scene, and the making of museums, circuses, sideshows, tattooing, and music industry. Jimmy purchased items from Matty that I'd originally chosen to be in the exhibition and some I had not. Upon this purchase he agreed to loan the objects to the PMA for exhibition in *Hustle*. When I first met Jimmy he showed us the entire R.E. Ashwell original tattoo flash collection that he now shares with two other collectors. Perlman and his collaborators were working on the book that is now published through Yellow Beak Press and carried in the museum store. Perlman's collection reaches even deeper into tattooing so I asked him if I may show pieces from his collection to round out that history for the exhibition. I placed objects in the upstairs display case along with Scott Alvarez's first tattoo machine purchased from supplier and tattooer Dennis Dwyer the same year Matty's profession became legal in NYC. Inside the case is a Paul Rogers tattoo machine and one from the early 1900s, a Cindy Ray portfolio, and an essay written by Lydia Lunch inside a Rbt. Williams book. I was determined to reveal more women in the industry as much as I could and also make connections between the figures as well as representations of bodies over time. Ray often placed her figures in more starlet style poses in efforts to feminize the field that was largely made up of men. Perlman agreed to lend the PMA five sheets of original 1930s tattoo flash by R.E. Ashwell that are exhibited in the main area of *Hustle* downstairs. Other parts to the exhibition were chosen based upon spectacle and attempted to connect to a local history with circus, traveling, and objects unknown. The elephant bones and miniature circus come from the T.T. Wentworth, Jr. Collection. The silent films are meant as poetic arrows to visual and performance culture as well as cinematic history.

In all of these artists' works, there is tremendous homage paid for those who came before. There is a roughness and empathy about it all. The hustle of surviving and making enough to keep you going, to keep you with it, to hold you up. I believe we can all connect with what it means to hustle. Through bodies of difference and the illumination of subculture, this exhibition may offer an awareness of humanity at its core. If your collection could be in a museum, what artful histories might it unfold?

Felicia E. Gail

Special thanks to all the artists, tattooers, designers, interns, volunteers, curators, registrars, and friends for making this exhibition a reality. Thank you for your time, support, editing, and conversations. Thank you, Matty for being generous and sharing your secrets with a stranger.