

FAMILY BOOKLET

Tropicana

**THE EXHIBITION TROPICANA
IS A GENUINE FORAY INTO THE
WORLD OF OBJECTS, EXAMINING
THE WAY WE CONSUME TODAY,
THE BETTER TO UNDERSTAND
ITS FUTURE IMPACTS.**

Youth exhibition produced and circulated by
VOX, centre de l'image contemporaine

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Costa Rica, Juan Ortiz-Apuy has lived in Montreal since 2003. Working in his favoured techniques of collage and assemblage, he makes art driven by thinking around **consumer goods**.

He uses humour to explore the **advertising and media strategies** associated with those goods. His works, which he presents in the form of multimedia installations, draw inspiration from design, art history and pop culture.



Juan Ortiz-Apuy. View of the artist's studio. Photos: Julia Roberge Van Der Donckt.

WHAT IS AN INSTALLATION?

In contemporary art, installation means arranging various objects and media (e.g., sculptures, videos, images, sounds) in a space, either indoors or outdoors.

The artist creates an environment that the spectators can enter and walk around in; sometimes they can even interact with certain components, as is the case with *Tropicana*.



Juan Ortiz-Apuy has designed an environment that brings together elements that engage different senses, like sight, hearing and touch. **What things make us feel like we've been transported into another world when we enter *Tropicana*?**



Answer: The soundscape, the inflatable sculpture, the very colourful video and images, etc.

Exhibition view, VOX, 2021. Photo: Michel Brunelle.

ANIMAL ATTRACTION

Tropicana immerses us in a colourful world populated by animals, each more surprising than the last.

Juan Ortiz-Apuy has included many exotic species in his video, a very popular strategy in the advertising world. This is significant: animals have a very strong power of attraction among young and old alike. It's hard for us to resist these unique, fascinating creatures!

The artist has played up correspondences of shapes and colours between the animals and objects: for example, the chameleon with its crest is juxtaposed with a funnel and a scrub brush. The living things are presented the same way as the inanimate objects, as if they were goods ready to be consumed.



Can you name four animals that are seen in the video?



Answer: Frog, bird, chameleon, lizard, etc.

Juan Ortiz-Apuy, still image from *Tropicana*, 2020.

ODDBALL HYBRIDS

There are also some strange creatures shown in the exhibition. Their shapes borrow as much from the world of objects as from the animal and plant kingdoms, as if products had been transformed into living things.

It's up to you to spot them! Look carefully around you.



**What animal and what object does the inflatable sculpture remind you of?
What do you see in the large illuminated images?**



Answer: A giraffe and a spray bottle.
Answer: Mutant mermaids with spray bottles, etc.

Juan Ortiz-Apuy, *Midnight Shower*, *Midnight Poison* and *Midnight Sun*, 2020.

ON YOUR MARK, GET SET . . . POSE!

This short animated video shows a comic scene in which we see a very special photo session.

A bunch of bottles of varied shapes and textures are arranged on a display module. They move, twist, wriggle and squirt water. It's like they're coming to life before our eyes!



Juan Ortiz-Apuy, still images from *Midnight Poison* (details), 2020.

“ASMR, YOU SAY?”

Juan Ortiz-Apuy is interested in the properties of objects: their colours, shapes, textures and even the sounds they can make. For the video *Tropicana*, he was inspired by ASMR videos, which are very popular online.

ASMR: An abbreviation for the scientific phenomenon known as “Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response.”

ASMR refers to the “feel-good” or relaxing sensations we can experience listening to certain sounds, like whispers, rustling packaging materials or sounds made by handling things like play dough and toys.



Juan Ortiz-Apuy, still images from *Tropicana* (details), 2020.

LISTENING TO WHAT OBJECTS HAVE TO SAY

Even the most ordinary objects can produce some surprising sounds! In the video, items manipulated by the artist produce rhythmic sounds that gradually become a melody typical of cumbia, a traditional style in Latin American music.



In your opinion, which objects were used to imitate the sounds of water in the video?

Answer: The plastic bottle with a pipette makes wave sounds, and the roll of plastic bags, the garbage bag packaging and the pink beads evoke the sounds of rainfall.

UNBOXING: ENTERTAINMENT OR “STEALTH” ADVERTISING?

The artist is also fascinated by the phenomenon of “unboxing.”

In this type of video popularized on YouTube, people unpack new products of all kinds, ranging from toys to tech gadgets and accessories, and even food.

This content is often produced by **influencers**—sometimes children!—who are paid by companies to promote their goods. The goal: capture our attention, pique our interest . . . and induce us to purchase (to excess, in many cases)!



Juan Ortiz-Apuy, still image from Tropicana (detail), 2020.

ARE HUMANS HOOKED ON PLASTIC?

There are such massive quantities of plastic produced and thrown away on the planet every year that our civilization just might go down in history as the Plastic Age!



Did you know that this unnatural material can take hundreds of years to degrade in the environment?



Juan Ortiz-Apuy, still image from *Tropicana* (detail), 2020.

WHAT OBJECTS WILL FUTURE EXPLORERS FIND?

The plastic objects we consume today may end up being the vestiges of our civilization for future inhabitants of the Earth, and be exhibited in museums. What perceptions will those future dwellers have of us when they find them?



**Look at the objects on the light table.
Can you tell what they are used for?**



**Would you like to get your brain
working and have fun at the same time?
Try the *Tropicana* matching game!**

Exhibition view, *VOX*, 2021. Photo: Michel Brunelle.

YOUR TURN TO PLAY!

Now it's time to let Juan Ortiz-Apuy's works inspire you to create your own playing cards!
Choose any object designed by people that looks like something you would find in nature (an animal, a plant, etc.).

E.g.: Some coiled headphones and a snake.



1

Draw each of the elements in the middle of the blank card.

2

Colour them in and choose a background colour that sets off each of your drawings nicely.

3

Then cut out your cards along the lines.



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