

Fong, Billy. "Artist With a Cinematic Scope Takes on Cults, Hall Passes and Pajamas With Fort Worth Showcase Looming," *PaperCity Magazine*, 3 October 2019.

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Preferential Treatment With Robyn O'Neil

BY BILLY FONG // 10.03.19

Imagine a trailer for a movie with the all-too-familiar baritone voice proclaiming: "In a world where..." Something dramatically similar should welcome guests to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth's exhibition "Robyn O'Neil: WE, THE MASSES," which opens on October 18.

O'Neil's work is cinematic in scope and generally depicts a world filled with men who perennially wear black sweatsuits and white Nike sneakers. They resemble members of the Heaven's Gate, a San Diego cult led by charismatic leader Marshall Applewhite, who in 1997 manipulated his members into mass suicide. The exhibition, organized by the Modern's associate curator Alison Hearst, examines the last 20 years of O'Neil's career. It also includes a drawing she created in kindergarten titled *Riding the Nit* (or "night," as misspelled by a 5-year-old.)

Including this work in the exhibition was not just nostalgic, as the boat depicted on the perilous turbulent seas echoes a theme the artist still considers today. Despite her artistic proclivities, O'Neil is not as serious and dark as much of her canon.

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We dared to give her our *PaperCity* Preferential Treatment questionnaire:

Where you are at this moment: In my living room, on a new couch, I designed at La-Z-Boy.

Zip code you call home: 90035.

Style of residence: Studio/apartment.

Pajamas or in the buff: Pajamas all the way! The idea of me being naked any more than necessary is horrifying to me.

Early or late riser: Very late.

Coffee or tea: Coffee.

Morning beauty ritual: Thank god for dry shampoo.

Evening beauty ritual: Bath bombs from Lush.

Go-to daytime ensemble: Black Madewell button-up jeans and basic black tees. Big, colorful earrings.

Ideal evening look: Couch chic — meaning sweatpants and, ideally, never leaving my home.

One thing you keep in mind when dressing: Accessories are everything.

Your happy place: Log cabin in the woods.

The hotel you call your home-away-from-home: The Ludlow in NYC.

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Travel bag: An ancient large Tumi duffel.

Last person you cocktailled with, and name your poison: My boyfriend. A Kombucha/sparkling-water combo.

Dream concert: Either The Fleetwoods early 1960s or Bell Biv Devoe early '90s.

Store where you wish you had an unlimited charge account: Hermès or Joann fabrics.

Currently on your coffee table: A Field Notes blank book, Taschen's *The Ingmar Bergman Archives* and fabric for a curtain I'm about to make.

Last movie you saw: A crazy Lifetime movie called *Killer Single Dad*.

Hall pass for a dalliance: Shannen Doherty.

Who would play you in the movie of your life: Rosanna Arquette.

If you weren't in your current profession, what you would be doing: I would be a librarian.

Secret skill: I can belt out a tune pretty well.

Guilty pleasure: No guilt here. I love tons of dumb stuff and am proud of it.

Your work playlist: I make myself a new playlist every month. It currently includes Anohni, Rihanna, Damien Jurado, The Magnetic Fields, Frank Ocean, Danielle Dax, Margarita Shamrakov, and Laurie Anderson.

Favorite exhibition you've seen in the past five years: "The Scandalous Art of James Ensor" at The Getty Center.

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Top artists you look to for inspiration: Philip Guston, Bill Traylor, Louise Bourgeois, Goya, Mondrian.

"Robyn O'Neil: WE, THE MASSES" at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, October 18, 2019 through February 9, 2020, themodern.org.