

A Better Yesterday

JooYoung Choi
Jack Early
Lily van der Stokker

May 20–
September 3, 2017

A Better Yesterday brings together unique presentations of solo work by three contemporary artists, each working within the theme of how to transform their personal histories for consideration in the present. The exhibition includes work by JooYoung Choi, Jack Early, and Lily van der Stokker. Each artist uses a distinctive approach to mining his or her intimate experiences from the past as an adaptable substance in the creation of their art.

JooYoung Choi creates work across a variety of mediums including painting, installation, video, animation, and even puppetry bringing to life an increasingly elaborate and sophisticated imaginary world invented by the artist as a child. Called the “Cosmic Womb,” Choi’s immersive fantasy world and ever-changing narrative blends epic mythology and science fiction, frequently weaving elements of her personal history into the backstory of her characters and even playing some of them herself. Choi’s presentation at CAMH will include paintings as well as a large sculptural installation. The folklore and inhabitants of the “Cosmic Womb” will undoubtedly fascinate and inspire the imaginations of both children and adult visitors to the exhibition. The artwork created by Choi is appropriate for all ages.

Jack Early frequently draws on pop culture and nostalgic iconography in his work exploring identity, sexuality, and masculinity. Central to his presentation at CAMH is

a bright yellow Victrola and custom pressed vinyl record playing the artist’s narration of an abbreviated version of his entire life story over an original ragtime style composition. Early’s life story in song does make reference to genitalia, early childhood sexual experiences, as well as the recognition of suicide. The song does not play automatically, visitors to the exhibition can ask a gallery attendant to activate the artwork.

Early’s paintings depict sensualized and partially nude male torsos and pelvic areas. While the paintings are not overtly or sexually graphic, parents and teachers may wish to view this portion of the exhibition in advance.

Lily van der Stokker makes visually direct but emotionally complex artwork reflecting on her relationships and life experiences. Often starting as small drawings in pen and color pencil, her works later take the form of large wall paintings and site-specific installations that might include furniture, fabric, or carpets designed by the artist. Van der Stokker’s stylistically childlike doodles and heavily-patterned drawings combine bright or pastel colors and vague hand-written texts that question or contradict the seriousness and melancholy of the artworks’ subject matter. While the textual content of the show may be seen as abstract, the work is largely open to interpretation by the audience and appropriate for all ages.