Both perversely pleasurable and pleurally perverse, Jordan Strafer’s (b. 1990, Miami) videos are absurd, fantastical, humorous, and, at times, violent meditations on power and the uniquely human capacity to inflict violence, be it physical, psychological, or both. Her narrative films draw from both personal memory and a range of cultural sources such as public testimonies, psychoanalytic theory, film history, and literature to create what the artist refers to as “Mad Libs-like” collages of visual and textual references. Often employing dolls or mannequins as well as human actors adorned in masks or prosthetics, Strafer is interested in the ways that dolls, masking, and other types of stand-ins can serve equally as archetypes of identity, objects of projection, and surrogates or doubles for real people.

Jordan Strafer: Trilogy brings together three recent videos in which a blonde protagonist named “Jordan Strafer” or “Jordan” is subject to any number of abasements—from being sent to a behavioral boot camp, crawling naked in a snowy wood in search of her gurney-bound dad, to sitting trapped aboard an air ambulance carrying her ailing father as they make a transatlantic journey. Made in the wake of Strafer’s father’s death, the three videos emerge as a series of familial psychodramas turned horror films in which no one survives unscathed. While the works mine the artist’s own biography, they also humorously address the insidious and violent nature of whiteness, privilege, and patriarchy, serving less as a judgment on violence and cruelty than as a testament to their very existence.

Jordan Strafer: Trilogy is organized by Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and curated by Rebecca Matalon, Senior Curator, with Olivia Ek, 2022–2023 University of Houston Curatorial Fellow.
The first video in the trilogy, *PEP (Process Entanglement Procedure)* (2019), weaves together two timelines: the “present,” in which a blonde doll who identifies herself as “Jordan Strafer,” appears in a courtroom to publicly testify to years forcibly spent at a behavioral boot camp in the woods, and a “past,” in which we bear witness to flashbacks of events described in the hearing as well as equally terrifying and tender scenes in which her villainous fathers (who appear in rubber masks) hover over the camera with a knife and kiss.

To construct *PEP*’s script, Strafer pulled from an array of sources including Christine Blasey Ford’s testimony of assault against Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh in 2018, Anita Hill’s 1991 testimony of sexual harassment against then-nominee to the Supreme Court Clarence Thomas, Gwyneth Paltrow’s 1999 Academy Award acceptance speech, Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* (1925), psychological case studies by Sigmeund Freud, psychotherapy training tapes from 1965 known as the “Gloria Films,” as well as her own biography.

Presented on a loop, the video features three different endings, all of which conclude with our main character’s demise. In addition to the main channel, *PEP* features a second, silent rear-projection of a spinning cake made to resemble a mountain, though arguably looking just as much like a pile of feces. Throughout the video, Strafer explores the ways in which certain modes of public address function as sites wherein women are asked to perform a mix of grief, trauma, and gratitude for public consumption, revealing the ways in which patriarchy and misogyny play out on both civic and intimate scales.

Written, Directed, and Edited: Jordan Strafer
Assistant Director: Zacry Spears
Director of Photography: Carl Knight
Additional Camera Operators: Zacry Spears, and Marit Stafstrom
Score: Sharon Smith
Sound Mixer: Aron Sanchez
Actors: Chris Greco, Carl Knight, Zacry Spears, and Jordan Strafer
Voice Actors: Jennifer Keister, and CL Neal
Props: Chloe Cerabona

Please do not remove from gallery
SOS, 2021
HD video: color and sound, 11:08 minutes
Courtesy the artist

SOS (2021) is the second video in the series and similarly explores themes of humiliation and abasement. Using handmade dolls, miniatures, and CGI animation, the video depicts a girl lost in the woods or stranded on a snowy beach, and unable to reach her father as he is loaded onto a stretcher by two EMTs. Periodically, gloved hands (both surgical and prosthetic) enter the frame to caress or contort the film’s doll protagonists. Like much of Strafer’s work, the video is animated by seemingly contradictory and dissonant words and images, evoking both care and debasement.

Strafer describes the work as an homage to Judy Garland, whom she grew up watching with her father. Indeed, references to Garland and Dorothy Gale—Garland’s character from The Wizard of Oz—run through SOS, from the ruby red slippers and blue and white dress worn by the blonde doll, to the warbled, half-speed version of Garland crooning “The Man That Got Away,” that brackets both the beginning and end of the video. The use of Garland’s vocals as bookends to the work has the effect of catching the viewer, as well as our blonde heroine, in a never-ending loop in which she is forced to endlessly play out scenes of abasement, surrender, and suicide play out on both civic and intimate scales.

Video shoot co-direction: Jordan Strafer with Carl Knight, and Zacry Spears
Animation: Jessica Wilson
Art Direction: Chloe Cerabona
Camera and various on-set roles: Larry Bovik
Original music: Lazar Bozic
Voice: Phoebe Osborne, Carlyn C., and Katie O.
Color: Alex Zandi
Sound mixing: Aron Sanchez

Please do not remove from gallery
The third and final video in Strafer’s trilogy, *PEAK HEAVEN LOVE FOREVER* (2022), takes on the more taboo subject of female violence and was inspired by events from the artist’s own life. Set aboard a private air ambulance, the video tells the story of a woman, her ailing father, and his husband as they make the transatlantic journey from London, England to Miami, Florida. The film is a claustrophobic and disquieting fever dream about family dynamics and containment. Strafer makes little distinction between what is real and what is imagined, presenting the viewer with a series of scenes that include a musical interlude as well as a murder-suicide in which no one aboard the plane is spared—not her father, his husband, the EMTs, the stewardess (modeled on Strafer’s mother), nor herself. Filmed in the style of a first-person shooter video game, the daughter’s violent awakening alludes to two key tenets of the artist’s work: the belief that all humans contain evil impulses and our capacity to be both perpetrators and victims of violence.

Written and Directed: Jordan Strafer  
Cast: Cammisa Buerhaus, Jim Fletcher, Alexandro Segade, and Marti Wilkerson  
Producers: Jordan Strafer, Lizz Astor, and Emir West  
Assistant to the Director: Emir West  
Director of Photography: Carl Knight  
Assistant Camera: Godfred Sedano  
B camera & Sound Recording: Larry Bovik  
Gaffer: Collin Leitch  
Set Electric: Jonah Peterschild  
Lead Props and Costumes: Vita Kurland  
Props: Anne Cousineau, Chloe Cerabona, Dante Hussein, and Mariana Sanchez  
Lead Makeup: Caroline Mills  
Makeup: Aine Vonnegut  
Makeup Assistant: Dante Hussein  
Production Assistant: Carlos Negron  
Original Soundtrack: Wibke Tiarks  

Please do not remove from gallery
The selection of works from Strafer’s Pink Drawing series provides a glimpse into the artist’s vast collection of computer screenshots and the various lines of influence and inquiry that animate her larger practice. The rough-hewn tracings feature imagery drawn from classic films such as Michelangelo Antonioni’s L’Avventura (1960) and Roman Polanski’s iconic 1968 horror film, Rosemary’s Baby, cartoons, seemingly esoteric diagrams and graphs, as well as more intimate items such as inventories of personal possessions and an image of the artist’s father, a well-regarded criminal defense attorney. Made while Strafer was grieving his death, the artist has noted the ways the act of tracing allowed her to continue to produce work at a moment in which other forms of artistic labor eluded her. The inherent fragility and translucency of the onionskin paper, which was once popularly used in legal documents or notes of employment dismissal called “pink slips,” provides a foil to the more brutal imagery encountered in Strafer’s videos. All works graphite on onionskin paper and courtesy the artist.
Pink Drawing 3 (Tension Graph), 2017

Pink Drawing 4, 2017

Dear Doctor __________,

This patient __________ seems to be exhibiting ____________

I cannot tell you the prognosis
I cannot diagnose her
I am only here to help her

technical language into flowers, petals, which language helps ease clear injectables

5189236000
Pink Drawing 5 (L'Avventura), 2017

Pink Drawing 11 (Dad), 2017
Pink Drawing 18 (Tangibles), 2017

tangibles
88 Syracuse Gift Decorated Greek Key Ornamental Partial Dinner Service $75
89 Nine Waterford Crystal Champagne Flutes $180
98 A Sterling Silver Partial Gorham Chantilly Flatware Service for 8 $700
- selected books $1 book
- glassware that is in the bar - purple and metal stemmed glasses, midcentury classes and pitcher in bar $50

Pink Drawing 19, 2017

February 10, 2018, 17:06
9 bankers boxes of photos
1 black box of photos
2 bankers boxes of camera equipment
2 small boxes jordan personal items
4 bankers boxes jordan childhood and family
misc personal items
1 black canvas portfolio
Photos and various memorabilia
5 of holly's hanging jackets
3 art pieces
Pink Drawing 31 (Horror Film/Paranoid Film), 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Horror Film</th>
<th>The Paranoid Film</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense periods of emotion</td>
<td>Persistent sense of unease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat is clearly delineated</td>
<td>Threat is elusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitive manifestation of evil</td>
<td>Temporary manifestation of evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero takes definitive action</td>
<td>Action is impossible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monster is destroyed</td>
<td>Monster cannot be destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative closure</td>
<td>Open-ended narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pink Drawing 36, 2017

I was a pampered bimbo, then to pamper raised.
Now I am cut down and ready to be food for worms...
Pink Drawing 38 *(Sorry)*, 2017

Pink Drawing 44 *(Shirley Temple)*, 2017
**Pink Drawing 45**, 2017

**Pink Drawing 48 (Rosemary’s Baby)**, 2017
Pink Drawing 52, 20

Pink Drawing 66 (Betty Boop), 2017
Pink Drawing 71 (Ellen Cantor), 2017