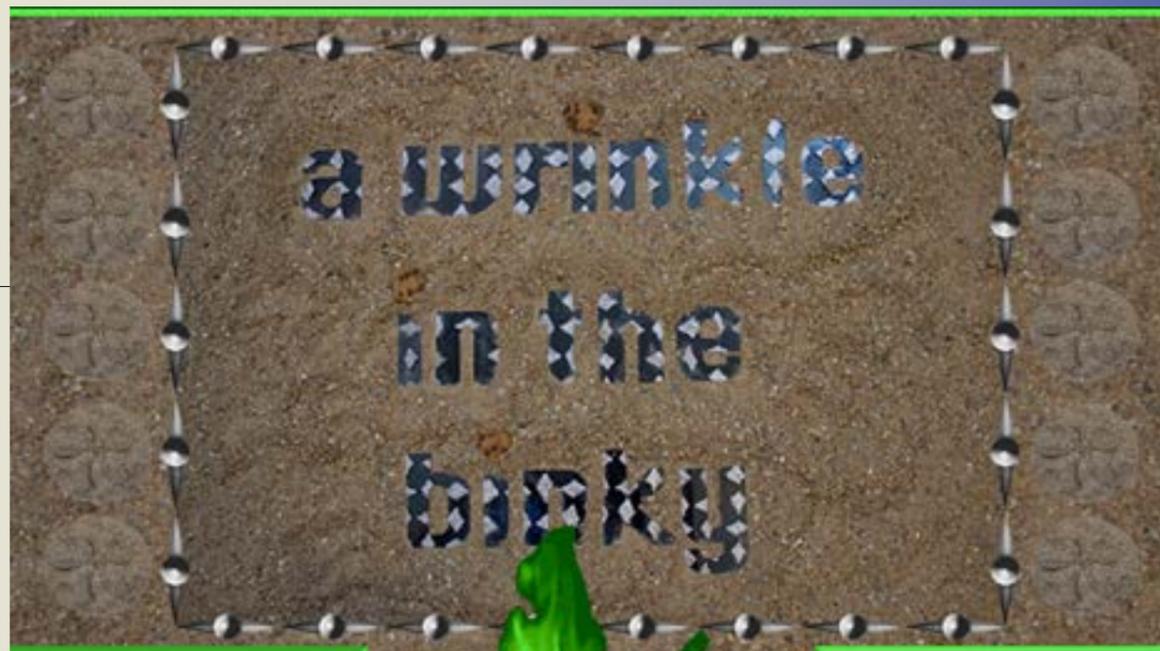


**EVERY WORM  
DESERVES A  
MANSION /**

**Nicole Brunel**

Beside a wall of sand, a Mountain Dew-patched character of confusing age tells bad jokes to no one. An audience of sculptures stands silently; a giant worm, an effigy to stink bombs, and a diagnosis from the 80th dimension. These statues are bodily in form, idolized jokes constructed from the infrastructural detritus of a city buried by a desert. The metal is reused, concrete is rotten, and sand is hot and mutant. String encrusted by this sand tries to stand and lift. Bows mark points of interdimensional intersections. Cookie marks the spot. Mom is missed.





In the distance, a visible suspension of carbon can be seen coming from a camp. Its fire is still glowing but no one's sure how long it's been here. There are traces of human and baby energy left to be decoded; a green screened turtle-neck, a 4:3 mushroom cloud, and keyframed soft marble car seats. Touching the sand here, it's ticklish and trying its best not to tell a secret. The fire betrays this intention, emitting a digital language translated through smoke. Fuzzy and looping narrators act as guides through puzzles in the plume.

# EVERY WORM DESERVES A MANSION

is a prediction and a recounting  
of a sugar-fueled ascent  
to the nth dimension.





(Sighs)

1) In her essay regarding Edgar Arceneaux's *The Alchemy of Comedy...Stupid* (2006), Lorelei Stewart argues, "We cannot deny our legacy, our inheritances, but we can determine how they get retold. Turn them into malapropisms or punchlines." 15-some-odd years later, in a cultural, social, political, and ecological landscape that is fraught with turmoil and destruction (to say the least), a combo of malaprops and punchlines may be too flimsy a strategy to correct the deeply systemic ills that face us in 2020.

The humor of *Every Worm Deserves a Mansion* may follow a similar train of thought to Arceneaux's, but it seeks to delink and complicate its relationship to linearity. Where the comedic and artistic strategies of the mid-aughts were still attempting to make peace with some notion of stability or convention, Brunel interrogates the basis of continuity itself – destabilizing the viewer's relationship to order or sense. The humor is in the rhythm of convention's breakdown, finding its niche in the space where language becomes nebulous.

Brunel's work mucks around in the residue of the in-between, challenging the conventions of sense and non-sense – asking what happens if they touch. What if a joke becomes a sculpture and then tries to become a joke again? Is it still funny? What's funny? What's so funny!?! Hehe haha hoho huh?

Material acts as an anchor to make the nonlinear linguistic and conceptual textures all the weirder. Where isn't the sand? Where isn't sand? Why isn't there sand where there isn't sand? Where is sand supposed to be anyhow?

The work remains in a constant state of transition – in between talking and singing, in between anxiety and humor, in between laughing and crying, in between together and alone, in between action and cut. Brunel challenges us to not only sit in the tension of that space, but to examine the hierarchical modes inherent to its uncomfortability. A yearning to make sense – to make order.

2) The pedagogy of counting; I tell our 4-year-old: "I'm going to count to 3 and if you don't turn the TV off a toy is going on timeout."

They look up at me – a delay.

"oneeeeeee...twooooo...twoandahalffff"

They jump off the bed – frantically trying to find the on/off button on the remote.

"andddd...threeeeee"

A 3-count method for kid control seems as old as the hills. An incredibly simple, direct, and efficient system for refocusing/reshaping a child's behavior. A parent or guardian locates the potential punishment at a point within a counting sequence – if the child understands the direction the numbers are moving in, they understand that the punishment is located in time. They can change their behavior but not the existence/nonexistence of the punishment. This simple count proves to be a critical stage in the child's initiation into personhood, where the fluidity of their lived experience is traded in for the strictures of obedience.

You! You believe that if something exists, it exists on the Internet. You operate day-to-day under the pretense that Spotify is an archive of all recorded music, that YouTube is the repository for all film/video footage, that if a book has been published, you will be able to find it on Amazon. And maybe you're right, but not yet.

1 begets 2 begets 3 begets \_\_\_\_\_. Is there even a question here? You were able to answer that.

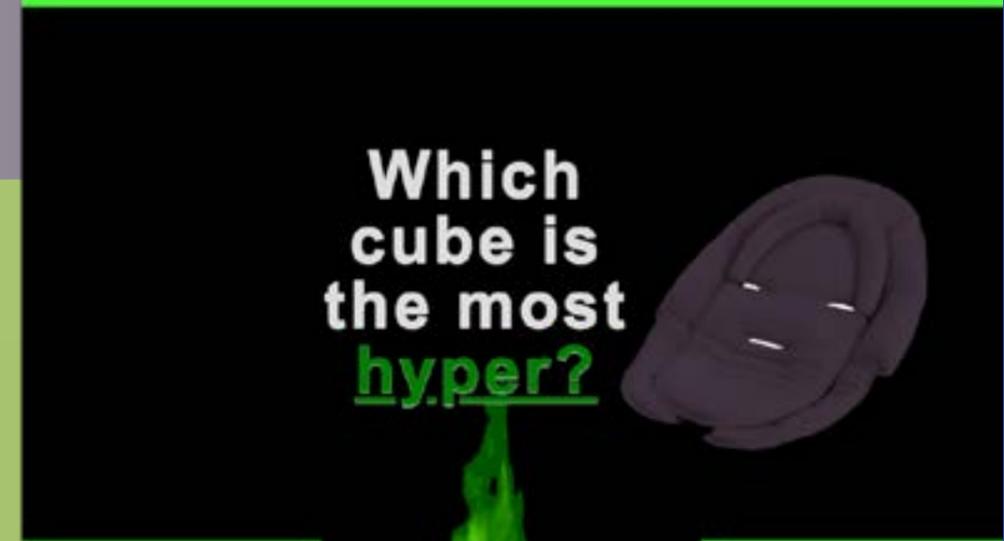
It even seems silly to imply that there was any time in between the question and the answer – it answered itself and you were the conduit.

Before long, our 4-year-old will be a conduit too – no time, no thinking – just doing. But for the time being, they resist. They resist by subverting the count.

3) *Every Worm Deserves a Mansion* won't sit still – won't stop shifting. The movement fidgets between impatience, excitement, frustration, and delight. In *Hole Theory* (2001-2002), William Pope.L proclaims, "...aesthetic expression makes visible contradiction- being opposed, being against- lacking belonging, lacking home or a being 'at home' from which overcoming or transcendence might be accomplished." Brunel builds on Pope.L's proclamation, offering us coping strategies couched in tonal oppositions. A punchline becomes radical as it offers an alternative to the 1-2-3 of it all. "I've got a 9-inch dick if you count the asshole," Brunel remarks to camera. A deceptively simple one-liner is, in fact, a challenging and sophisticated comment on the intersection of gender, the quantification of body, and heteronormative predilections. Brunel's work is chock-full-o'-nuggets like these; extended and repeated viewings are highly suggested.

CHRISTOPHER  
ROBERT  
JONES







Every worm deserves a mansion!

# BIOGRAPHIES /

**Nicole Brunel** uses sculpture, music, video, and coding to create spaces of alternate reality. These spaces are defined by mutability; of identity, of humour, and of dimension. Their stories speak of similarities between non-binary gender, wave-particle duality, and carabiners.

**Christopher Robert Jones** is an interdisciplinary artist and writer based in Illinois. Their research is centered around the 'failure' or 'malfunctioning' of the body and how those experiences are situated at points of intersection between queer and crip discourses. Using sculpture, installation, textual, and performance strategies, their work aims to create ruptures in the layers of cultural/political/historical sediment through which compulsory normativity and compulsory ablebodiedness are disseminated. Christopher received B.A.s in Art Studio & Technocultural studies from UC Davis and is currently a M.F.A. candidate at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.

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