

CHRIS MINOR: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING
TO A YOUNG AMERICAN

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clough-hanson gallery
rhodes college
memphis, tennessee





Feel The Romance, 2013

Notes taken while watching as many of Christopher Miner's videos as possible in one sitting

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I wonder, immediately, about the difference between *personal* and *autobiographical*.

The porn is scrambled, but it's not even the good stuff. Scrambled soft core is Proust's porny madeleine. Evocative, transporting, a flush of shame and excitement, hovering always on this side of disappointment, but just. Do people younger than me know what I'm talking about? Does anyone watch TV like that anymore? Is this a period piece?

People disparage one-liners, but there's something elegant about them. Efficiency is satisfying. Christopher's work is very efficient. Is Christopher elegant?

He performs for the camera the act of looking at pictures of people who are performing happiness for a different camera at a different time. What role does reality play in these videos? I mean, how much do I believe and how important is belief (not very, I think). Maybe *actuality* is a better word to use when we talk about images. *Reality* is tainted by housewives, cockroach eaters, and seven strangers picked to live in a house. Clearly these videos are highly constructed. They're cleaner, brighter, and more symmetrical than reality, or even "reality." But I feel actuality poking through. But I also cried through the Taylor storyline on the *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*, so -

Is that dog actually having a seizure? If so, why isn't the cameraperson (Christopher?) helping it?

The dog isn't performing. Can dogs perform?

Actually, I hope that dog is performing.

I'm not sure elegant is a good word for Christopher.

The camera is always so conspicuously set—so symmetrical, serious and cinematic. And then there's the visual equivalent of, like, a fart joke. This is dizzying. Off-kilter as a state of grace.

I might be having a more intense reaction to watching Christopher pluck his nose hairs than I did to the dog seizure.

Indifference or aggression toward animals is one of his things, I guess? The camera lingers on the smeared, bloody carcass of a mosquito, some kind of creature in a body of water gets shot at close range, Chris inspects a gasping fish and then throws it over a fence, and then there's the camera passively watching that dog writhe on the floor during a seizure (I think that's what was happening, but I hope I'm wrong). Also, I'm pretty sure there's something coming up about snakes but I don't care to watch it. Is this about power? It's not grandiose. It seems smaller, more personal that humanity v. nature, almost like some kind of vendetta. Boyish, in fact.

There are so many crying babies in these videos. Does he ever sleep?

Still thinking about that dog.

I'm not quite sure how to touch his enduring fascination with rap culture. He pulls off the appropriation with all the grace of a twerking, gape-mouthed Miley Cyrus. All the grace but more self-reflection. And that's the point, right? Telegraphing difference with a wink? I mean, I know that he knows that he shouldn't use the language that he's using. The taboo becomes a tonic for the heavy normalness that a middle class, straight, white dad must feel when he's rocking his kid to sleep. Like, *but really - I'm a cool dad*. Wink.

Watching a woman explain to an older man (Christopher's mother and grandfather?) how to arrange the flowers on the fresh grave that they're looking at, I become increasingly uncomfortable, aware of my presence in an intimate moment, aware of Christopher's presence, aware of his insistence on showing me this moment, coercing me to intrude. His family must hate that fucking camera. As Christopher casually enters the frame, picks something up, and leaves again, I'm mad at myself for thinking that another person's grief could be so banal.

The blunt end of a joke.

I'm pretty sure that these videos are not autobiographical. They're expansive and generous in ways that autobiography can't be. They are personal, sometimes frighteningly so. The hard kernel that sits at the center of the self cracks open and offers us a glimpse—at turns hilarious, touching, uncomfortable, highly affected, raw. There's something behind the smirking scrim. It might be ugly. It might be gorgeous. It might be a mirror.

A man tells a story about an African American woman, an employee of his family, who narrowly avoided being raped. He hopes this story will elicit a chuckle from the viewer. A woman recounts almost wrecking her car after seeing another woman, who is of a nationality that is unspecified but definitely *different*, carrying her laundry on her head. People think they're just telling stories, but they're really telling us about themselves.

Christopher's Sandi Patti drag is actually not bad.

Joel Parsons
Director, Clough-Hanson Gallery



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Too Small To Remember, 2013



The Only Black Guy In the Room, 2013



The Anointed, 2013



Easter for the Birds, 2013



Family Matters, 2013



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All images are stills from a digital video, courtesy of the artist