

“Idle Chatter”

**A one night video installation and performance at Galeria Wschodnia
Thursday Sept 27th, 19:00-21:00**

“Idle Chatter” is a mixed media installation that uses drawing, painting, video, and performance to explore experimental narrative and autobiography. In this installation, US based artist Michael Siporin Levine combines his everyday experiences living and working in Łódź with a range of influences he’s researched and discovered while in residence at Galeria Wschodnia. Through this installation he explores his connection to Poland and the city of Łódź by loosely referencing personal interpretations of early 20th century Yiddish Poetry, Polish/Yiddish avant-garde performance, and early Polish experimental animation and puppetry.

In Levine’s current installation at Galeria Wschodnia he references the history and broad themes present within an influential 1917 Moishe Broderzon poem titled *Sikhes Kholin* (Yiddish transliteration meaning ‘idle chatter, mundane conversations, or small talk’). In this poem Broderzon tells an epic and fantastical tale of a pious and poor religious man who reflects upon a year long journey of adventure, love, and debauchery. The narrative of the poem is dream-like and it is unclear if the hero of this story takes an actual journey, or if the adventure is a figment of his imagination. This poem was influential at the time due its erotic/subversive content, its illustrations by artist El Lissitzky, as well as its unique/experimental book format (it was printed as a scroll and boxed like a mezuzah).

Imagery in “Idle Chatter” continues Levine’s ongoing studio practice of exploring his everyday experiences to invent personal narratives. For this particular installation he uses elements and objects occurring within a ping pong match as metaphor for the ‘back and forth’ that occur during a conversation. He feels that the ping pong rally is symbolic for the dialogue created through the artistic process. By referencing Yiddish artists and poets including his own great grandmother Genya Dressler Siporin (a native of Łódź who left pre- World War 1), the Themersons, and Moishe Broderzon, Levine creates a dialogue between the past and present. Props and objects created for the installation are handmade, awkward, and playful, alluding to the inventive and expressive costumes and performances of Yiddish theatre and early hand-drawn animations.

Michael is thankful and grateful for the time spent as an artist in resident at Galeria Wschodnia, which serves as initial research for a yearlong project/grant he hopes to complete in Łódź in 2019/2020. During this grant he will further research experimental approaches to the visual narrative through printmaking, video/animation, and mixed media installation. Using the narrative structure present in his great-grandmother’s self-taught paintings as an overall departure point for research, he will create prints, drawings, videos, and animations that use metaphor and symbolism to explore autobiographical content. As he develops personal imagery, he will create invented narratives by connecting his own experiences to themes present in early 20th century polish-Yiddish avant-garde poetry, theatre, and folk-tales, as well as early experimental Polish animation/film.

Special thanks to Hershl Hartman and The Getty Research Institute for providing Michael with the English translation of the Broderzon poem.

Artist Bio:

Michael Siporin Levine is a visual artist, working in drawing, printmaking, video and installation. Blending autobiography, history and invention, Michael uses a mixture of observation and process to create imagery with open-ended narratives. Through technique and process, he allows an initial idea to change, abstract, and evolve. Using drawing as a foundation he lets process inform decision-making while working in various printmaking techniques, collage, as well as video, animation, and installation. Working with and against a technique encourages his experimentation with the medium, allowing a greater opportunity for chance and discovery to play a role in the process.

Michael graduated with a BFA in studio art from the University of Connecticut (2011), and an MFA in printmaking from The Lamar Dodd School of Art at The University of Georgia (2014). He has taught printmaking and foundations courses at The University of Connecticut, Knox College, Georgia College

State University, and The University of Georgia. From September to December of 2016 Michael was an Artist in Residence at Knox College where he taught Experimental Printmaking course, and produced work for solo exhibition. In August of 2017 he was an artist in residence at the Vermont Studio Center. His work has been shown in museums and galleries throughout the United States, including Aggregate Space (Oakland, CA), Site:Brooklyn Gallery (Brooklyn, NY), Grizzly Grizzly (Philadelphia, PA) The Georgia Museum of Art (Athens, GA), The Asheville Art Museum (Asheville, NC), Athens Institute for Contemporary Art (Athens, GA), and The Joseloff Gallery at The Hartford Art School (Hartford, CT).

He currently lives and works in NYC.