EPIC FAIL

Emily Goodden
Divya Mehra
Jon Sasaki

Curated by Collin Zipp
We all have experienced failure of some sort – it is a stranger to no one. It appears in our lives in many forms and to varying degrees. However, failure is difficult to define as its measure is situational and differs from person to person and profession to profession. Failure for one is sometimes success for another. How do artists integrate failure into their practice? Do they avoid it? Do they celebrate it? Artists can also use failure as a tool — they can speak to mistakes society is making at social, cultural and political levels. Is making art unique in the way it embraces and uses mistakes, chance and error? When does failure stop being a part of the process and start being an end to something? The artists in EPIC FAIL — Emily Goodden, Divya Mehra, and Jon Sasaki — all use notions of failure to explore faults and second chances in order to address social and cultural concerns.

Victoria BC-based artist Emily Goodden uses failure as a starting point and inspiration for her 2017 photographic series titled Outside Chance. These photographs originate from found photos hidden within a found camera. 14 years ago the artist discovered a dropped camera in a parking lot adjacent to the coast in Victoria. Goodden finished off the few remaining images on the film and had it developed. Upon receiving the photos back from the lab she saw that the original owner of the camera had taken a series of unremarkable photographs documenting a whale watching expedition. The images featured unsuccessful attempts to photograph whales as they emerged from the water. Instead of the elusive whale, the amateur photographer captured images of the boat’s railings, still images of the ocean, random sprays and splashes of water, and the back of another tourist. The whale was nowhere to be seen.

After many years and moves, these original photographs have been misplaced. Eager to revisit this found work Goodden set out to recreate the failed photos based on her memory of them. The artist signed up for a whale watching tour next to where the camera was found years ago with a sight on recreating the original images based on memory. The artist pays special attention to avoid documenting the whale itself as capturing an image of this animal would mean an unsuccessful photograph. Goodden instead focuses on the splashes of the ocean, the tourist in front of her, the railing of the boat, and on the moment when the whale re-enters the water. The series Outside Chance successfully reconstructs the elements of failure the original photos contained. In this case, failure acts as the catalyst for the creation of new work.

Jon Sasaki’s art practice explores Sisyphean tasks where failure upon failure repeats and success seems unattainable. In his 2010 video work Jack Pine, 8’ Camera Crane, Sasaki attempts to create a modern take on Tom Thomson’s 1916 painting The Jack Pine. Instead of using the traditional oil paints and canvas, Sasaki uses a contemporary art making tool — a video camera. Using a crane, the artist attempts to raise the camera high into the trees and create a panoramic video of the landscape, similar to Thomson’s painting. We watch as Sasaki
struggles to control the device as the camera repeatedly crashes through the foliage and branches until finally falling to the ground.

_Jack Pine, 8’ Camera Crane_ combines elements of tragedy and humour where expectation and outcome never quite align. The artist creates an affectionate critique of the long-represented subject of the Canadian landscape, and perhaps too on the status of the renowned Canadian Group of Seven. The Group of Seven are largely considered the pioneers of creating the Canadian art identity and, nearly 100 years after their formation, still have exhibitions in contemporary galleries and art museums. Does this group of men truly and accurately represent the Canadian visual art identity? Sasaki’s video attempts to demystify the legend of these Canadian art stars.

Divya Mehra’s video _Game On_ explores and challenges the gender stereotypes that remain problematic in our world. In this 2007 work we see a woman wearing a long flowing skirt standing in the distant. She repeatedly attempts to catch a football as it thrown to her by another individual off camera. The ball is consistently dropped and the woman falls into mud puddles and at one point gets hit in the face and falls to the ground appearing to be injured. Not the most successful game of catch.

Mehra exposes and speaks to the long-standing belief that men are better at sports than women. _Game On_ exaggerates this outdated belief and opens an opportunity for discourse. Is there a failure in the way we perceive representation? Would Mehra’s work have the same effect if it was a male attempting to catch the football instead? The artist has created many videos of this vein — where a simple action is performed repeatedly, but never performed well — where every action results in a failure. In _Game On_ Mehra elaborates on the theme of failure by also exposing the failure of our society to recognize and perceive equal gender rights.

Reactions to failure are dependent on situation and personal experience — we resist, accept or attempt to resolve. These moments deemed unsuccessful create space to reevaluate the possibility to try again or to produce something different, something one wouldn’t expect — perhaps even something better. _EPIC FAIL_ sees the theme of failure approached and investigated through photography and video works that activate ideas of failure as a strategy for artistic creation.

Collin Zipp, 2017
Emily Goodden | Emily Goodden is a multidisciplinary artist and musician based in Victoria BC. She was formerly Director of Minister of Casual Living, and has sat on the Board of Director's at Open Space Artist Run Centre. Goodden describes her artistic practice as an amalgamation of noise art, instinctive collecting and archiving.

Divya Mehra | Divya Mehra's research-fuelled practice explores diasporic identities, racialization, otherness, and the construct of diversity. Her work has been included in a number of exhibitions and screenings, notably with Creative Time, MoMA PS1, MTV, and The Queens Museum of Art (New York), MASS MoCA (North Adams), Artspeak (Vancouver), The Images Festival (Toronto), The Beijing 798 Biennale (Beijing), Bielefelder Kunstverein (Bielefeld), and Latitude 28 (Delhi). In 2014, Mehra was long-listed for the Sobey Art Award and received the Manitoba Arts Council Major Arts Grant, a Canada Council for the Arts Project Grant, and the Manitoba Arts Council New York Residency at the International Studio and Curatorial Program in Brooklyn. Mehra holds an MFA from Columbia University and is represented in Toronto by Georgia Scherman Projects. She currently divides her time between Winnipeg, Delhi, and New York.

Jon Sasaki | Toronto-based interdisciplinary artist Jon Sasaki's work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions at galleries including the Ottawa Art Gallery, (Ottawa, ON); the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, (Lethbridge, AB); and the Art Gallery of Ontario, as well as a recent performance project at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit. In fall of 2014 he completed an outdoor public installation at Sheridan College, (Oakville, ON) as part of their Temporary Contemporary commissioning program. Selected group exhibitions include Platform Art Spaces (Melbourne Australia); Nihonbashi Institute of Contemporary Art, (Tokyo, Japan); and the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (Toronto, ON). He is the recipient of the 2015 Canadian Glenfiddich Artists in Residence Prize (Dufftown, Scotland.) Sasaki holds a BFA from Mount Allison University (Sackville, NB) and is represented by Clint Roenisch Gallery in Toronto.

EXHIBITION
07 April - 20 May 2017

OPENING RECEPTION
Friday 07 April | 7 PM

EXHIBITION TOUR
Saturday 08 April | 2 PM

PLATFORM
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IMAGE | Emily Goodden, Outside Chance, 2017

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