

WHITNEY BIENNIAL



2000

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|
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| Mark Amerika | Arthur Jafa |
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| Ben Benjamin | Les LeVeque |
| Sadie Benning | Sharon Lockhart |
| Robin Bernat | Anne Makepeace |
| Linda Besemer | Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle |
| Dawoud Bey | Joseph Marioni |
| Chakaia Booker | Josiah McElheny |
| M.W. Burns | Franco Mondini-Ruiz |
| Cai Guo-Qiang | Errol Morris |
| Ingrid Calame | Mandy Morrison |
| Luis Camnitzer | Vik Muniz |
| Jem Cohen with Fugazi | Shirin Neshat |
| John Coplans | Nic Nicosia |
| Petah Coyne | Paul Pfeiffer |
| John Currin | Carl Pope with Karen Pope |
| E.V. Day | Walid Ra'ad |
| William De Lottie | Marcos Ramirez ERRE |
| Roman de Salvo | Jennifer Reeder |
| Thornton Dial | Laurie Reid |
| Kim Dingle | Kay Rosen |
| Anthony Disenza | Michal Rovner |
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| James Drake | John F. Simon, Jr. |
| Theresa Duncan | Al Souza |
| and Jeremy Blake | Darcey Steinke |
| Leandro Erlich | Elisabeth Subrin |
| Fakeshop | Chris Sullivan |
| Vernon Fisher | Sarah Sze |
| Suzan Frecon | Tran, T. Kim-Trang |
| Brian Fridge | Richard Tuttle |
| Dara Friedman | Ayanna U'Dongo |
| Joe Gibbons | Chris Verene |
| Robert Gober | Annette Weintraub |
| Jill Godmilow | Yvonne Welbon |
| Ken Goldberg | Krzysztof Wodiczko |
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| Joseph Grigely | Lisa Yuskavage |
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MANDY MORRISON

166 In *Desperado*, video artist Mandy Morrison, garbed in cowboy boots and hat and wearing a gun belt, a John Wayne mask, and a gender-bending prosthesis that is both penile and clitoral, rides a mechanical bull and prowls, stalks, and dances in a highly artificial Western landscape. *Desperado* simultaneously engages and resists its objects of investigation: gender, pop culture, consumerism, and the uniquely American ideology of Manifest Destiny. The audiovisual vocabulary is that of the Western movie and country music—arguably two of the most iconically American cultural signifiers. The sometimes defiantly low-tech aesthetic—noticeable, occasionally even awkward superimpositions, the clearly fake film set, the editing together of several country songs with audible cuts—takes the elements out of their familiar contexts to reveal their ideological content. Furthermore, the polygendered protagonist, whose face is obscured but whose indeterminate sex is declaratively confrontational, cannot embody the heroism and masculinity of the cowboy code. The implicit critique is not about insufficiency but about excess—Morrison's gender desperado is too much, rather than not enough.

As with the installation pieces *Padded Room* (1999, addressing the ideological value of John Wayne's iconicity) and *Os* (1996, using *The Wizard of Oz* and Mickey Mouse as intertexts), Morrison is concerned here with the way America defines itself in terms of conquest—as she puts it, “a ceaseless quest of territory,” both geographical and cultural.

Desperado is dedicated to Marion Morrison, John Wayne's original name. Morrison was drawn to the figure of Wayne not only because they share a surname, but even more because Wayne's macho image depended in part on the disavowal of his ambiguously gendered first name.



Still from *Desperado*, 1997.
Video, color, sound; 4 minutes