

## **Wait. What.**

The name starts with a doubling of vowels--AA--as if one start (a single alpha) wasn't enough. (But this, of course, is a false start, and so the name starts in the middle). What follows gets tethered together by a resolute hyphen: two surnames united, a lineage delineated. But that is reduced to a more efficient form--GM--a simple sequence of constant consonants. Aaron Garber-Maikovska is as much constructed by language and vernacular as his artwork is composed of diverse materials. His is an improvised language, a kind of communication that simultaneously distills the agility of words, the volume of objects, the syntax of bodies and the poetics of behavior. It is idiosyncratic storytelling. It is misinterpreted semaphore. It is movement; balancing and unbalancing.

aaron GM uses language as a raw material; by riffing on the rhythms and textures of words, he is able to slacken their meanings, test their parameters and unhinge them from our more concrete systems of exchange. This is only one of many starting points in the artist's fluid and unpredictable process, a process in which discrete elements (from objects and colors to utterances, movements, and references) are abstracted, deconstructed, filleted, and recast as deceptively formal expressions. Through his embrace of various tangible and non-object based media (video and sound, somatic movement among them), the artist can filter his complex ideas and fragmented narratives into simpler images and actions. In this respect, GM deftly plays with the conventional structures of language and conveyance by placing them in a malleable framework of his own making, one he calls a "conceptual snow globe."

GM's "conceptual snow globe" is a theoretical and functional way to frame his collection of signifiers. And just as a snow globe is shaken, GM's practice is also a

performative shake-up that causes ideas, gestures, sounds, objects, and qualities to collide and commingle into new permutations: a nearly closed fist strokes the rungs of a ladder; a look back; the initials A.Q.E.D. are spelled out in masking tape; a sniff and a toe tap; a tune is hummed a capella a la Bobby McFerrin; the tonal similarities between the words “Aaron” and “McFerrin” are noted. Using distinct material elements, GM keeps these ephemeral and objective ingredients in reserve (as if littered on the snow globe’s floor) to be eventually activated, conjoined and protracted into new arrangements: flour may be dusted over the ladder; the McFerrin tune might accompany the motion of a darting glance. While each material element contains a seemingly boundless potential, GM remains faithful to the limits he constructs for his work, such as a pre-defined lexicon, a minimal palette of royal blue and white, and the clearly delineated parameters of a field.

Take, for example, the field or space of this book, the Directory of Materials Enumerated (*DOME*); physically shaped like a dome, the book is a reference guide to the visual vocabulary and purposeful logic of the *capezio* project, which in itself is a thorough re-kneading (through video, installation, sound and text) of an earlier GM performative work, *Parcheezi’s Bakery* (2003). *DOME* contains the whole vocabulary of phrases, gestures, acronyms and “authentic movements” while prompting significant combinations. In the system of *capezio*, randomness is rooted and everything has form.

A similar delineation of space can be located in GM’s single-channel videos; as with the earliest examples of video art from the late 1960s and early 1970s, GM’s videos depict the simple, performative actions of an artist experimenting alone in his studio. Like the messy, corporeal exercises of Paul McCarthy’s *Black and White Tapes* (1970-75), the intimate self-reflection of Eleanor Antin’s *Representational Painting* (1971) and

the deadpan anecdotes of William Wegman's *Spit Sandwich* (1970), aaron GM stages a series of short, single-takes that revolve around common everyday objects as a way to explore the raw process of making art. In the closed system of the studio, GM performs only for the camera. Each take becomes a process of trial and error: furniture is rearranged, shots are restaged (sometimes with the assistance of GM's father), phrases are repeated, alliterated, and recited with syncopated intonation or a twang.

Just as the making of these videos stems from the making of his performance art, *capezio*, as a sculptural installation, developed out of the many sounds and actions that surfaced in GM's video work. In fact, some of these videos are recast as soundtracks alone becoming a new aesthetic element, free from a synchronized image. aaron GM's distillation of video into a sound piece and application of blue tape directly onto gallery walls demonstrate his reductive approach and repurposing of discrete elements. The "undulating porous arc," for example, is an energetic painterly streak of blue tape that spans the entire length of one gallery wall. Beneath it, separate arrangements of taped-out marks create a non-figurative tableau: a tall web-like grid of tape-lines hovers over the initials "J.D." (at one moment signifying "J-Date," the online Jewish dating service, and an entirely different concept or expression in the next). Nearby, a ladder covered in blue tape leans against a wall marked with a ladder-like composition of blue tape; in between these figures, a video monitor stacked on top of another (also masked with blue tape, a potentially serviceable machine that remains unused) displays the documentation of GM interacting with the same ladder. In this tableau, an odd tripling occurs in two and three dimensionality. The bold blue marks on the stark white fields (in real and video space) cast silhouette-like shapes composed of positive and negative grounds.

aaron GM's playful rendering of space extends to his handling of time. GM's tableaux reflect intersections/interventions/interchanges with time, space, performance and language. These tableaux simultaneously serve as documentation of past actions, autonomous representation of the present and "placeholders" (prop-like and prompt-like set dressings) for possible future performative action. These "placeholders" are static stand-ins for potential plays, thoughts, conversations and movements.

aaron GM choreographs expressions (language and movements) as if they were extensions of his (and the viewer's) persona. His projection of a persona into physical space activates a field of experience, prompting and propositioning viewers on a kinetic level. The viewer may choose to participate in the completing (or at least prolonging) of these unfolding tableaux, producing new possibilities for the constantly evolving shake-up of ideas and movements. While the tableaux rely on performative activation, they revolve on the most malleable of GM's materials for their completion: the material of language. Through language, the artist's signs spin delightfully improbable narratives; each place-holder moment punctuates a perpetual inventing of events; each expression crafts a symbiotic or autonomous meaning; and through GM's disbanding and retooling of language, we can begin to understand the "authenticity" of his movements.

Catherine Taft  
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