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Rachel Rose, "Everything and More (still)," 2015. HD video. Courtesy Pilar Corrias, London.

Rachel Rose: Art Star

The artist goes interstellar with her new Whitney exhibition.

November 3, 2015 6:25 PM | by [Fan Zhong](#)

On a recent Thursday, as the Whitney Museum revved into gear for the opening of its [Frank Stella](#) retrospective, the artist Rachel Rose flopped onto the carpet in front of the video installation she'd been tinkering with all week.

"Everything and More," her exhibition in a corner gallery just off the Stella extravaganza, would have its own fizzy celebration the next night, but for now the 28-year old artist, ponytailed and tennis shoed, laid on her stomach and cupped her chin in her hands as if she were about to re-watch *Clueless* in her friend's parents' basement. She appeared blissfully innocent to the burdensome knighting that accompanied a breathless recent *New York Times*

profile: “The art world is always looking for the Next Big Thing, and right now, the video installations of Rachel Rose look set to be It.” (That was just the first sentence.)

Rose and Christopher Y. Lew, the Whitney’s associate curator who gave the young artist her first New York solo show, walked in at the end of her 10-minute video and chattered over until the film looped back to the beginning: “When I first came back to Earth after 128 days in space,” the astronaut David Wolf intoned while pools of opalescent fluid shifted onscreen as if agitating a new cosmos. “I thought I had ruined my life ... because gravity felt so heavy.”

Built around Wolf’s recollections of spacewalking above Earth on the Mir Space Station in the ‘90s, the video is a sensorial coup: Rose’s fluid, amphibious camera swoons weightlessly and with curiosity; the bravura editing and collaging cuts frothy footage from an EDM festival with Aretha Franklin’s voice, which Rose manipulates so that it achieves another register of spectral.

And then there’s the inspired use of a semi-transparent scrim to project the movie on the Whitney’s floor-to-ceiling windows—it both refracts the sun raking in and articulates the outline of one of Stella’s exploding star sculptures on the terrace outside and the open-book shape of *The Standard* beyond that. Together, all the elements deliver an out-of-body thrill – it’s *Gravity*, on a budget.

“There’s some amazing moments where it’s unclear whether you see something in the video or through the window,” said Lew.

“The first hour after I walked out of *Gravity*,” Rose recalled, “I felt this aftershock—this displacement and loosening from reality. I wanted to do something in that zone, but from a personal perspective. That became the crux of the work: to try to access this infinite state through the everyday.”

Rose started working on the film a year ago, after tracking down Wolf, whom she heard being interviewed on NPR. “I totally stalked him,” she said. Their subsequent phone interview became the narration that informs the film, but it’s not the type of voiceover that corresponds to the action neatly. It’s a poetic imperfect—less Scorsese, more Malick. “There’s a disjunction,” explains Lew—and this can be said about most of Rose’s work, which often deals with the gap between reality and how we perceive it.

She achieves this effect with a DIY ethos. Even if she had to go to the University of Maryland to shoot

at a weightlessness-inducing neutral buoyancy pool (the only one around other than at NASA), much of the other effects were created in her studio at home in New York. Inspired by the ingenious practicality of Douglas Trumbull, Stanley Kubrick's special effects supervisor on *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Rose made the miasmic moving color fields in "Everything and More" out of milk, ink, baby oil, and dyed water. In the end, they look like nightmarish new Milky Ways.

There are enough other cinematic influences in the video—including the theories of Francis Ford Coppola's famed editor, Walter Murch, whom Rose interviewed at London's Serpentine Gallery during her solo show there earlier this year—that later on, in the fray of the Stella opening, I turned to her and asked, "So when are you going to make your feature film?"

She'd maybe had a few drinks by then. She looked a little caught off guard, but after a moment her smile grew wider.

"Rachel Rose: Everything and More" is on view through February 7, 2016, at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, 99 Gansevoort Street.

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