

Mara Mckevitt

Selected Projects

☰ DOCUMENT



Above The Fold

Mara Mckevitt's cult of persona

Read time 15 minutes

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Excerpt

BY

MAYA MARTINEZ

A review of *Making Of*, Mara Mckevitt's new book of autofiction chronicling the making of her film *Val*.

Val (2023) has its NY premiere at Metrograph on Saturday, May 25, as part of *The Whitney Review Salon: Women's Work*.

When I witness a magic trick, I know vaguely what is about to happen. A magic trick is not a scam, I believe, because most people who are being scammed don't know they are part of a scam until after something has been taken from them. In a magic trick, it is almost required that the participant knows that an essential part of the process is their already conceived expectation of the process. We know the shell won't be under the cup we choose, we know the magician will always show us our card, we know the coin will be pulled from our ear. The magic comes from the smallest, tiniest want to believe in the impossible, from our own hubris. Magicians and filmmakers have things in common. The layout of the text in this book reads cinematic. Giant white space fills each page directing my eye above or below the horizon line. Whole pages are dedicated to one line; italicized dialogue hangs in the air. Already even in form she is moving my eye, leading my gaze so as I might become captivated and believe in something new. Here is where Mckevitt shines, as a filmmaker and as a magician.

Making Of is a book Mckevitt wrote detailing events and thought processes that transpired during the making of her film *Val*. You could say the book and film are about workplace experiences. The story starts with a job the narrator Mara has working for an artist, which then inspires a long-running performance art piece where she emulated the same dynamic, playing both the artist-boss and the assistant. It's funny to know she was interacting sometimes with the same art world people as both roles, but when she was *Val* she wore a wig. Mckevitt possesses an impulse you could call Kaufmanesque. In addition to the book *Making Of*, she also made a second film illustrating the process of working with the director Emily Allan to make *Val*. *Making Of*, the book, also recounts the experiences the artist endured to secure the funds needed to make her short film *Val*.

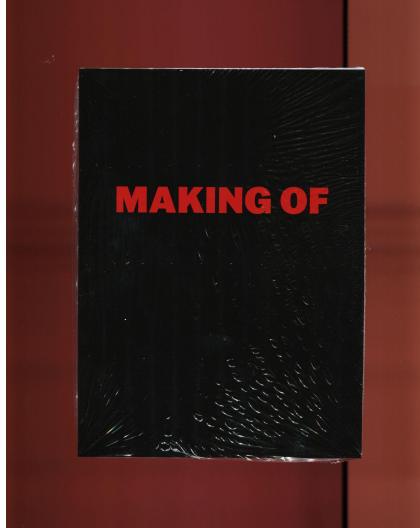
Recent work has been featured in [Document Journal](#), [The Whitney Review](#), [Dazed Magazine](#), [Metrograph Journal](#), [Animal Blood](#), [Novembre Magazine](#), and the [Los Angeles Times](#).

Making Of

Paperback, 64 pages 5.5" x 7.5"

Published by Clementin Seedorf, 2023

Stockists: Printed Matter, Metrograph NYC B Books, Walther König and others



In her writings Mckevitt renders a series of real and fictional events into a filmic story that outline the production of her film *Val*. We are led through a sequence of encounters with friends, bosses, tricks, lovers, strangers and co-conspirators who help her end this performance – the successful consummation through making this film. The scenes oscillate from the clinical to the erotic, describing webs of relationships that complicate the flimsy demarcations between sex, labor, and power through the lens of artistic production. While employing the formal conditions of a legal document, Mckevitt deliberately blends the writing styles of bureaucratic scripts with film scripts, love stories and obituaries, consumer reports and job descriptions. The language of futurity and documentation are spliced together, reminiscent of a found footage video. *Making Of* is the centerpiece of a forthcoming collection of stories as well as the genesis of Mckevitt's next film.

Narrative Abuse: Act I + II

2024

Video Series

[Link](#) (password: mm2024)



Stills from Narrative Abuse I installed on a five part screen at Clementin Seedorf



Still from Narrative Abuse II installed for screening at ArtHub Copenhagen

Mara began official pre-production of *Val* by starting a dialogue with actor and acting coach Emily Allan. Allan agreed to perform the role of Val in *Val* and they promptly started rehearsing. Amidst rehearsals, Mckevitt also hired Allan to train her to act since as herself. They documented all of their sessions which slipped in and out of improv, rehearsal and performing their various roles which in this particular setting meant: employer and employee, director and actor, teacher and student. This inevitably produced overlapping conflicts: Mara's role as director chafed against her coaching, Emily was technically at work performing as boss and teacher where her engagement, opinions, and support were motivated by a payment structure and impression management. Cycling through various forms of intimacy, dialogue and choreography required for the film and *Narrative Abuse* showcases performances that operate as a glossary for "Val".

Val 2023

15min

Val

Password: mm2023



Stills from "Val"

In an arresting performance by Emily Allan, Val catches her assistant, played by Mckevitt herself, in the act of reclaiming her intellectual property. The film is an assistant's revenge fantasy brought brutally to life, a portrait of work dynamics between women in a contemporary workplace, and a camp spectacle of mainstream media's interchangeable vernacular of sex and murder. Set over the course of a single afternoon in a cluttered, claustrophobic office, the film tracks Val's assistant's attempt to extricate herself from the relationship. Which we soon learn is more than one of employee and employer. Their mutually-constructed, mutually-destructive dynamic puts the lie to the performance of "professional" workplace: the scripts of boss and employee, artist and assistant are shot through with domination and submission, roles that trouble the boundaries of the economic with the sexual and vice versa, contaminating unstable categories at the heart of all labor. The convention of shot-reverse-shot is interrupted by surveillance footage of the scene, a bird's eye view that highlights the perversity and power within the viewer's and director's gaze. The film was shot by Sean Price Williams, produced by Brook Sinkinson-Withrow and scored by Lydo Le and Tomàs Urquiza. Val has been screened at Metrograph NYC, Clementin Seedorf Cologne, Deeper into Films London and Now Instant Los Angeles.

Val Breeder

2019-2023

Performance



Performance documentation

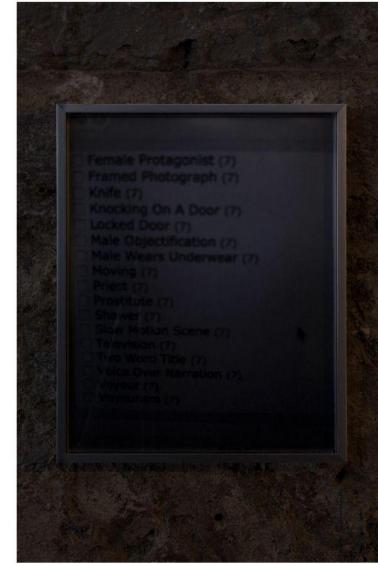
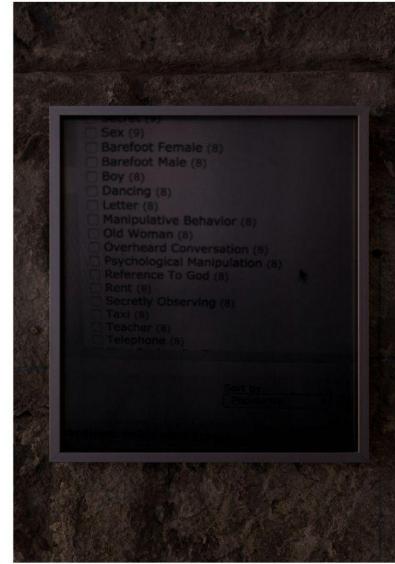
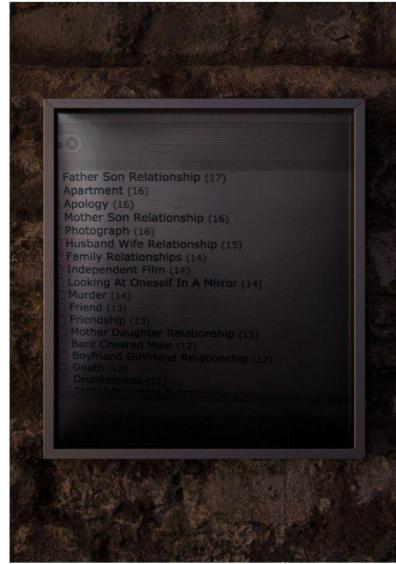
In 2019, Mara developed a character named Val Breeder. She was a dramatized artist. Unstable, shrill, confident — so horny to collaborate she came off as more of a politician. Her work was made from found footage. Keeping her productive and maintaining anonymity without drifting into total obscurity was a strange balance requiring a lot of work. Mara realized quickly that she was already bad at this new job. In her nascent stages of production, Mara thought Val would be working for her but as Val's character, work and image came into focus, it was obvious that Val was Mara's boss. Mara designed her, managed her, propped her up, made her art work and supported her. Mara performed both as Val and Val's assistant for several years. Mara began introducing herself as Val's assistant and put this new job on her resume. Val went to openings, dinners, had friends and romantic flings, showed at several galleries and screened her work at an art house theater. She was in many ways kind of real. Mara dutifully helped her with installation logistics, managed her appearances and absences. When Mara didn't feel like dressing up and doing the little show, she would show up as "Mara", apologizing for Val's absence, and was, appropriately, treated like an assistant. Through this long term dramaturgical exercise of workplace conflict, Mara made plans to murder Val through narrativizing it in a short film.

For Users Not Experts

2023

36 x 30.5cm

3 inkjet prints on silver paper



Installed at Clementin Seedorf

“For Users Not Experts” pulls its title from the catchphrase employed by IMDB. This series looks at tagging systems the database uses to organize media by way of signs, gestures, symbols, sins, motifs, crimes, relationship modalities and cultural phenomena.

SC 00-24

Archival pigment print, museum board

Framed: 47x62cm



SC 00-24 positions the popular image of Sofia Coppola's office taken by Bruce Weber in 2000 next to a photo of Sofia Coppola's office in 2024 taken by Mara Mckevitt. The Weber image has long been disputed for the uncanny or hot-set feeling of a work space that felt both "just right" and functionally improbable. The image on the right taken by Mckevitt shows an almost inverted version of the one on the left.

The Lover

2023

Performance with Lorenzo Bueno



Documentation of sets from the performances.

The Lover is a play written by Harold Pinter in 1962. In summer of 2023, several performances were staged in an apartment in Brooklyn. Produced by Lorenzo Bueno and Directed by Mara Mckevitt, the two artists imported their roles as director and producer into Pinter's characters: husband and wife who rely heavily on a series of elaborate roleplays to keep their marriage intact.

Boss Gives Employee Facial

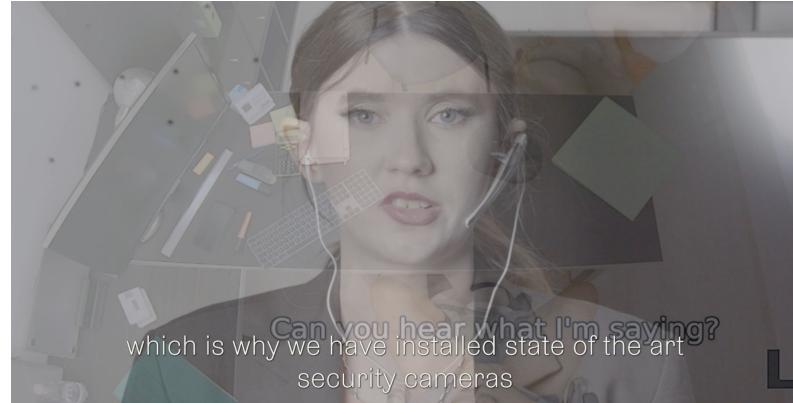
2022

Screenplay, Installation, Video, Sculpture, Photography

[Link](#)



Installation at Cafe Forgot, NYC



Still from Proof of Concept Video

Speculative artifacts for a speculative fiction: Through installation, sculpture, photo and video, Mckevitt continues to build the world based on a screenplay she wrote in 2019 until financing allows her to fund for the full length feature film. "Boss Gives Employee Facial" is an erotic thriller about the beta test of a device allowing people to trade and sell orgasms situated within a near future 'girls only' apartment complex where work, pleasure and life are cross wired.

Liv's Contract

2021

Video Installation (loop)

[Link](#)



Installation at Chateau Shatto



Still from Liv's Contract



Installation at Chateau Shatto

As part of the proof of concept project for "Boss Gives Employee Facial", Mckevitt worked to create videos out of scenes from the script. This video shows a HR representative of the company in the film reading the independent contractor agreement to a new hire. Exhibited at Chateau Shatto in "sub/dominiums" curated by Soil Thornton.

Performance Review

2020

5min

[Link](#)



Still from the video



Exhibition Documentation

Exhibited in "Comedy of Errors" Exhibition Curated by Fiona Duncan at STARS.

Privacy Productions
2020
12min
[Link](#)



Still from "Privacy Productions"

Choreography for a Tired Virus

2019

7min

[Link](#)



Stills from "Choreography of a Tired Virus".

*Exhibited in "Comedy of Erros" Exhibition Curated by Fiona Duncan at STARS.
Screened at Now Instant Image Hall, Los Angeles.*

Chateau Marmont DVD Library

2018

43min

[Link](#)



Stills from Chateau Marmont DVD Library.

Exhibited in group exhibition "Last Call" Curated by Christopher Schwartz at STARS.

Bio

Mara Mckevitt (b.1991, Los Angeles, CA.) is an artist, writer and filmmaker who has made work under several different names. She is focused on authorship, labor and copyright and their power to both reify and pervert already unstable criteria that attempts to separate film, content, PR, documentation, propaganda and pornography. Her art practice develops in lockstep with her jobs, allowing a closer look at conflicts and synchronicities that reveal well-rehearsed stories, stock phrases, and involuntary choreography we operate with in overlapping realms of both romance and finance. Her work has been exhibited at Clementin Seedorf (Cologne, DE), Café Forgot (New York), Chateau Shatto (Los Angeles) and STARS (Los Angeles). Her films have been shown at Now Instant (Los Angeles), Metrograph (New York), Poetry Project (New York) and Deeper into Movies (London). She studied Writing and Photography at Marlboro College in Vermont and Visual and Critical Studies at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Her work has been featured in Dazed Magazine, Document Journal, The Whitney Review, Los Angeles Review of Books, Animal Blood, Novembre Magazine, and the Los Angeles Times.

Forthcoming

Solo Exhibition at Conditions, Toronto (2025)

"Paradise Container" performance with Monica Mirabile, Pioneer Works, NYC (2026)

"SM LLC" feature film in Pre-Production (2026)

The Lover (Book) with Lorenzo Bueno (2025)

"Media Stars" New collection of short stories (2026)

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