

**CAUTERIZING  
SCHRODINGERS CAT**



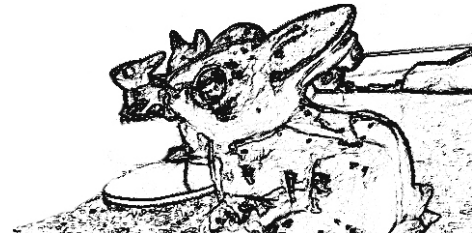


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Curated by Justin Jade Morgan & Katrina Rose

Graphic Design by Selene Simcox

Installation by Antoinette Ratcliffe






## **Cauterizing Schrodingers Cat**

*Joe Citizen on Antoinette Ratcliffe 2012*

There's something slightly seditious about Antoinette Ratcliffe's work – it simmers somewhere between the simulatory and a return to the real. Her creatures are both instantly recognisable and somewhat incongruous: A new range of toys perhaps, inexplicably sent to the wrong place. Having arrived they've managed to colonise in faithful reproduction the minted narratives of the factory like an embodied presence. Except something's not quite right, there was an accident perhaps or the delivery driver was really an alien and they were abducted into another dimension – whatever it was, they've had to travel a long way before they could finally arrive and be New. It's not the shop they were promised, but they recognise cultures of display when they see them and toys know when they're being looked at.

This subversion of the fine art aesthetic is like the *bête noire* of literary aspiration – Antoinette's graphic novel references are unapologetically common, not so much cinematic as possessive of a certain callousness more at home in a 'B' grade sci-fi or horror flick. But this is not just pop culture insinuating its filmic fantasies inside our lives like some soundtrack inside a speeding car. Instead her work creates a liminal space between her chosen genres, to access a sociological critique of what we all think we know – the condition known as Childhood.

Each exhibition is one in a series of installments that explore the social imaginaries of our early years, mediated by sui-generic memories of innocence. Her soft toys and bold glossy colours might evoke the mythologies of fairness and comfort, but like Barbie with her head pulled off erode into the vengeful violence of videogames. Like any good long running series however they're soon



back, with the next generation reanimating their own corpses of what was into what now is. The legendary never-ending struggles and epic adventures belie the reinscribed iconographies of hegemonic narratives – until these too are skinned alive by the disenchanting.

But this is not their final resting place – for the ironies of adulthood delight in revealing the inconsistent ideologies of youth. Knowing this, Antoinette playfully reassembles the idealised perfection of these reoccurring archetypes with the schlocky camp of gore. Each installment then oscillates in a constant dynamic between threat and promise, the comic and macabre, the promise of comfort with its correspondent hallucinatory terrain.

Then, when we're starting to think that all our preconceptions have been turned upside down, Antoinette deftly reminds us not to take it too seriously. The crooked fingers of her Scooby-doo trees wave, or the sight of a blob of impossibly glossy red blood pulls us back into the absurd. There's nothing deep here, nothing to worry about – they're only toys after all.



ALL THE  
GUTTERS  
ARE FILLED  
WITH GOLD







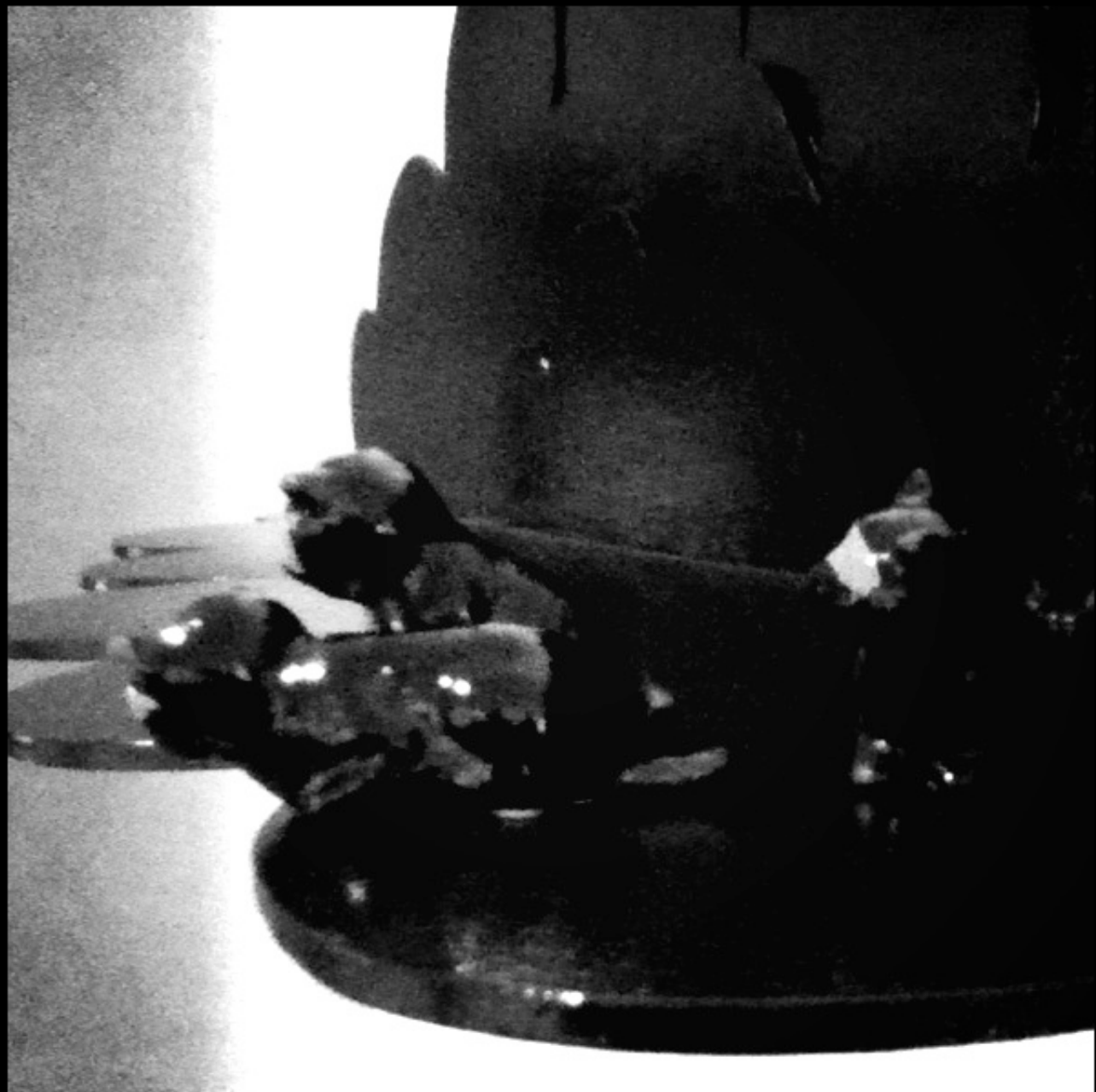




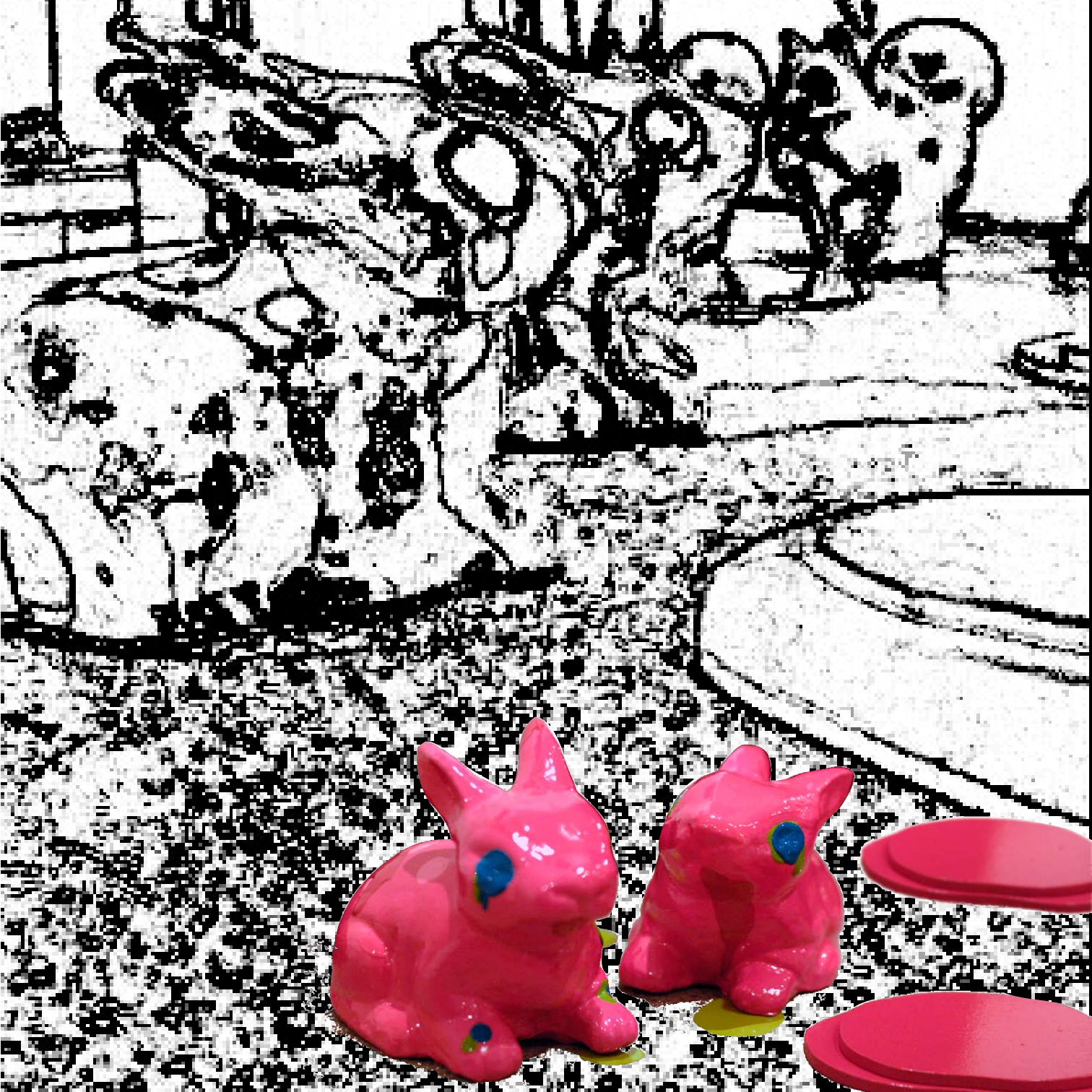






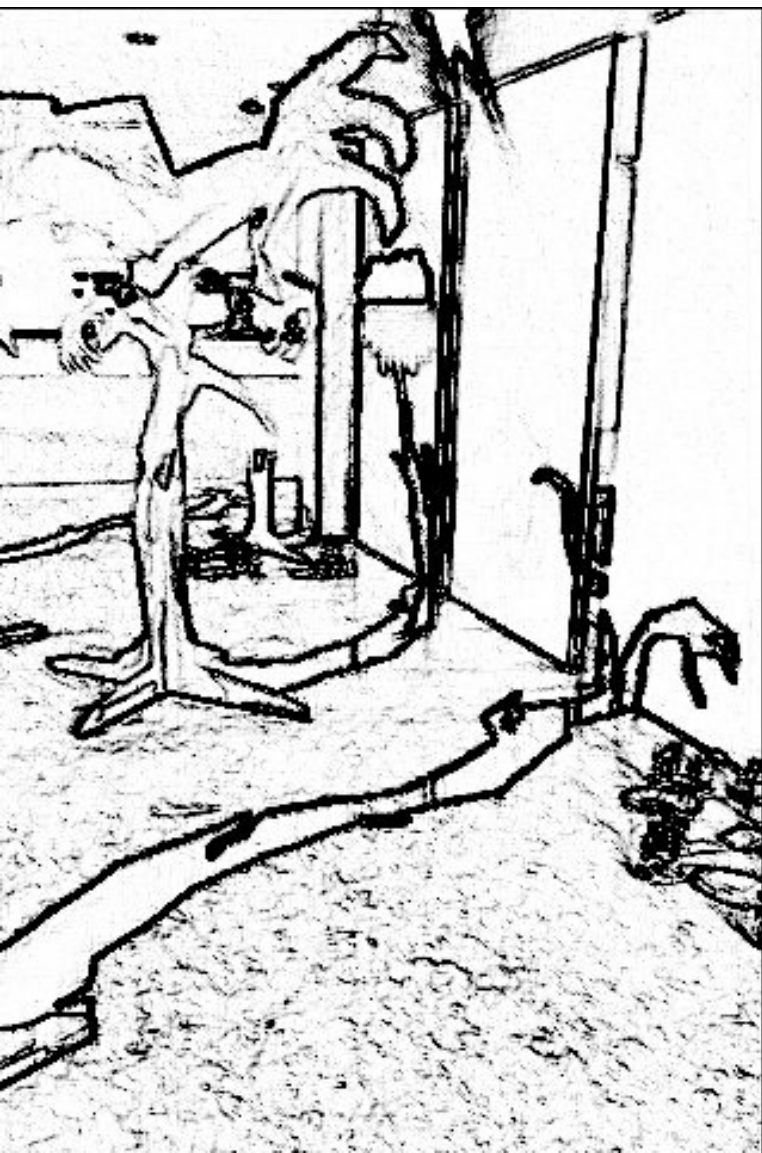






## PART ONE

The woman at the checkout had laughed when she heard that before the film of the book, it had all started well off the track in a dark and stormy night. Klas had laughed too in the op shop that smelled like the cupboard her Nana used to keep her wedding dress in. One had been a bunny once and the other a lamb, now so patched and stitched they looked like they'd been experimented on by someone who really shouldn't have been let loose with a needle and thread.



The car had scraped on the driveway past a cute little woodshed, and around a corner up to a two-roomed house, that the friend of a friend had said they could use when they'd texted around madly to everyone two hours earlier. Someone had left the radio on and as they opened the door they could hear Bryan from Nights on National pronouncing that whilst comics had once been thought the antithesis of literary aspiration, they were now considered to be vital pre-requisites for the intertextually adept. They'd smiled knowingly at each other then, as they caught sight of the kitchen's collection of ballerina pictures hung beside a Good Luck mirror.

Later, after they'd rolled around like children on the lumpy bed and had pulled the faux fur blanket up under their chins, they'd watched the long rheumatoid trees flick their shadows up on the walls by the lights of distant cars. As usual, Klas had managed to fall asleep whilst she was still trying to wrestle back the warmth. How he'd managed to drop off just as that strange suppressed barking had started outside she'll never know now. For it was then that she had become aware that they'd been watching from the bag hung up on the door, with their bugged out eyes glistening from fresh tears and blood leaking from their lips. Funny how she hadn't noticed those details earlier, but just before her sympathy was about to overcome the cold's battle with her bladder, they leapt.

Poor Klas, they'd gone for the hottest meat rather than the ice cream, she thought afterwards. With his ripped out gurgling throat still echoing in her ears, she'd managed to dodge past their furry feeding frenzy and run for her life. Past the ballerinas dancing with velvet trousered princes under silver moons, past the briefly framed sight of herself in the gold painted horseshoe mirror, and out

through the door towards the drive and the front gate where she thought the ordinary world still resided. But as her bare feet slapped too loudly on the wooden porch, she heard their woolen tread turn and the chase was on.

As she hurtled down the hill, her nightie kept getting caught up in the clutching fingers of the trees that had thrown up their shadows earlier. Strange squid-like creatures clung to the branches and chittered to each other in a made-up language. Somehow she managed to shake them off just as she caught sight of the woodshed around the corner. But she had forgotten about the barking.

## PART TWO

She saw the green sheen of his blurred fur before she felt his dachshund breath knock her flat on her back. If had not been for the iron muzzle welded to his head she'd been dead before she hit the ground. Oddly she had managed to catch sight of his registration tag as he leapt – Duke – an improbable name but this was an improbable night. Luckily too that she had not been the target of his affections, for he bowled right into Bunny and Baa-lamb who had been behind her all along. Now lying on the ground and looking up, she saw them spread out and attack him from either side. Soon bloody bits of foam and fur were flying in all directions, interrupted only by green oozing blobs of ectoplasm hurled by the squid. Somehow she managed to crawl forwards towards the relative safety of the woodshed – surely in there she could find something to defend herself with.

There was no axe, but she did find a rusty old spade. Gripping it firmly in both hands she crept out into the now still night. The green muzzled sausage dog was a mess, but in better shape than the battered bunny and baa-lamb. The squid had fled, presumably back to their mother ship. Duke's fur was all over the



place and he made a strange whimpering sound as he tottered over to collapse at her feet. Somewhere, she heard a squeal of brakes and the sound of a deer being run over.

Just as she was starting to relax her grip on the spade, she saw movement. Bunny and Baa-lamb's bits were reanimating before her eyes. Suddenly it all made sense – She and Klas had been attacked by soft-toy zombies. She knew then what she had to do. Placing the spade between their heads and the remainder of their bodies, she put her foot down and slowly decapitated them. Never again would they stalk their innocent victims in lavender scented op shops. Never again would they know the love of ironed on patches or the charity of a child's sewing lesson. Never again would they taste the sweetness of flesh.

These days she and Duke curl up together beside the fire together on dark and stormy nights. It had been hard to remove his muzzle but she'd managed to bludgeon it off with the spade. The only flickering shadows now were the ones made by the flames caressing the mounted heads of Bunny and Baa-lamb looking down at them above the mantelpiece. Let others watch the film and read the book and laugh. They would always know the truth of what had happened when good toys go bad.

*By Joe Citizen 2012*









Antoinette Ratcliffe

# CAUTERIZING SCHRODINGERS CAT

Tuesday the 3rd of July till Saturday the 28th of July, 2012



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