

LOWELL RYAN PROJECTS

JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture



Rated R for Violence: Robert Lazzarini @ Lowell Ryan Projects

Lowell Ryan Projects // June 26, 2021 - August 14, 2021

August 11, 2021 | in Painting



Lowell Ryan Projects is currently presenting an exhibition of Robert Lazzarini's most recent paintings titled *Rated R for Violence*. Curated by Emma Frank the presentation is based on the ubiquitous red title cards seen prior to movie previews, "appropriate for mature audiences only," with the paintings and the installation as a whole emphasizes the presence of violence in entertainment.

Using his signature mathematical distortions to skew, melt, twist, and deform the original reference image, Lazzarini created a simple way to accentuate the intensity of the warnings which became part of our popular culture. Seemingly oblivious to them at this point, the

LOWELL RYAN PROJECTS

descriptor texts on the red title card were first introduced in 1990, reducing the movie's mature content to a few object descriptive lines. It is the content of these lines that the artist and the curator are interested in. While appearing as the same text over and over again they actually describe different shapes and/or severity of violence that the viewer is about to witness. And this direct connection between the warning text and the violent act seems to become a key to the normalization of most morally or socially unacceptable behaviors.

Painted in two aspect ratios, 1.85:1 known as Flat or Theatrical Widescreen, and 2.39:1 known as Scope or Cinemascope, both the texts and the formats of large red paintings tether to the corresponding films. The film title is also included in the title of the work alongside the full text which is another way of accentuating and making the warning become more real than we usually experience it. In addition to the red movie warnings, the exhibition includes a series of smaller paintings depicting video game ratings which are highlighting the disturbing and violent nature of the games.

"The fact that Americans are increasingly obsessed with heightened levels of violence in our entertainment says as much about the commodification of violence as it does about the ever-increasing blur between violence in reality and fictional violence. The prevalence of violence across all media adds to this confusion. *Rated R for Violence* focuses on America's dark fascination and language as a signifier for the pain and suffering of others," states the press release for this thought-provoking show. —*Sasha Bogojev*

