

Jillian Mayer: Fast Artist

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"We're so inundated with awesome and loud things," Jillian Mayer says. "If you're going to take someone's time away from them, give them a show."

Growing up in Coconut Grove and North Miami, she was always entertaining but never thought of herself as an entertainer. Two decades later, she was honored at New York's Guggenheim Museum before she had put on her first solo show.

On a whim, she submitted her video "Scenic Jogging" to the museum's 2009 video biennale, YouTube Play. This past October, the 26-year-old was chosen as one of the top 25 artists from more than 20,000 who submitted work. In the video, she sprints down a deserted Wynwood street, chasing after projected images of landscapes that are really just screen savers.

The frenetic video is a perfect introduction to Mayer's world. Under the alter ego Yoma, she was a competitive break dancer for five years. Now she channels her extra energy into aerial silk performances in which she climbs, flips, and balances using a single strip of hanging fabric. As Mayer explains in her video bio for the Guggenheim: "If I didn't have some superintense hobby that drained my energy, my work might be more chaotic."

"Scenic Jogging" expresses the idea that pastoral screen savers can't pacify the urge to flee an office. It also expresses a theme that interests her — the real versus the artificial. Last year, Mayer performed her avant-garde musical *Mrs. Ms* as part of the Arsht Center's Here and Now Festival. The story involves the artist marrying her pet teacup Chihuahua, Shivers. The performance was such a success she hopes to turn it into a film.

Shivers and other furry friends are a mainstay in Mayer's work. She met the filmmakers who shot "Scenic Jogging" after submitting a proposal for a cable-access animal talk show. The filmmakers wanted to meet her to make sure she wasn't a crazy cat lady. Mayer says she is drawn to the world of make-believe and even hopes to develop a children's show in which a cat that does aerobics tries to organize a variety show.

But she's also a serious artist armed with a BFA who aspires to the conceptual work of Yoko Ono and Miranda July. Her influences include Lisa Frank and that artist's unicorn stickers; *Pee-wee's Playhouse*, with all of its giddiness; and *Jem and the Holograms*, a TV series in which pastel-haired punk-rock girls touch their earrings to morph into glammed-up superegos. This winter, she'll have her

first solo show at David Castillo Gallery in Wynwood and will also curate a contemporary video-art survey called "Romanticals."

Of course, Mayer (who now resides in downtown Miami) doesn't live off her art yet. She scores extra income by modeling clothes, including lingerie.