

Boinkman the art handler is a satirical depiction of museum culture, that follows the exploits of Boinkman the art handler, who works in the fictional Cleveland Art Museum and parodies museum culture, society, hierarchy and the human condition.

Drawing Books

As part of an exhibit detailing the inevitable end of the artist Shawn Kerns from employment to the Cleveland Museum of Art, the installation *The Art Handler* shows first hand experience as an art handler in the large art institution.

Books reveal thoughts, ideas, show processes, and develop narratives. The books by Shawn Kerns caused hostile environments became simulacrum for museum culture and reflect the good, bad, and ugly of museums. The drawing books pair up in the installation with videos and sounds that the artist recorded on a tablet and phone at the museum as an art handler. Art passed through hands, was studied, copied, recreated and recorded in books and videos and now presented in the installation, *The Art Handler*.

The drawing books created by Shawn Kerns while an employee at the Cleveland Museum of Art exist in unison with videos, animations, dolls, documents, and drawings to be shown together in the installation *The Art Handler*, conceptualized after the artist was hastily fired from the Cleveland Museum of Art for showing the installation *Boinkman the Art Handler* in September 2019 at Cleveland Ingenuity. Cleveland Ingenuity was the third showing of the piece in 2019. The first was at the Transformer Station in March, sponsored by the Cleveland Museum of Art and the second showing was at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland in August during the Art Handler Olympics, which Shawn Kerns won. At the Cleveland Ingenuity show the artist published a book about art handling. The Cleveland Museum of Art accused this book, by the artist, of creating a hostile work environment at the museum.

The artist worked at the museum for 5 years as an art handler, was a model employee, started a ping-pong league and talked of work conditions and unionizing. The drawing books briefly reflect upon on themes of poor working conditions, mismanagement and abuse by developing comically drawn characters to enlighten upon situations created in the galleries. The animations reflect on installations and interactions between employees where bullying is an expected theme among the hierarchy in the museum that is encouraged by staff interactions, but the show is mainly about the joy of working in a museum and the pleasures it rewards to artists. *The Art Handler* has become the fight over a fictional character and the right to decide what this book represents. The artist verses the institution.

Examining museum hierarchy culture and its treatment to artists has brought Shawn Kerns enlisted the United States Government National Labor Relations Board to bring charges to the Cleveland Museum of Art for violation of unfair labor practices. Documents from legal action serve as drawings to supply context with video and books.

The installation *The Art Handler* is the relationship between an artist and institution. The drawing books created by Shawn Kerns while an employee at the Cleveland Museum of Art are intended for enjoyment and should be appreciated as information into a time period and place in Cleveland, Ohio 2014 – 2019.