

carrick bell
Videos & Texts, 2011-2025

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Signs Of Life

Variable-channel video installation
Looped
2025

Installation Documentation:
<http://vimeo.com/showcase/11860392>



Installation view, space n.n., Munich, 2025



Installation view, space n.n., Munich, 2025

Signs Of Life is a variable-channel looped projection made of asynchronous, slow pulsing white lights. The basis for the rhythm of the pulses is a patent filed by Apple when they were designing the pulse frequency for their sleep indicator on MacBooks, a patent that was filed in 2002 and in use until 2014. The initial goal was to demonstrate when a laptop's hard drive had spun down, and was thus safe to move. The designers wanted to make the rhythm unobtrusive, and their approach was to base its speed on the average rate of human respiration. The sleep light was so popular that when it was discontinued due to no longer being necessary, consumers complained - the light mimicked respiration so gently that they felt they had lost someone.

The pulse rhythms used in *Signs Of Life* are, appropriately for something that was patented based on human physiology, "open source." Taking the average human respiration rate of 12-20 breaths per second as a starting point, 52 videos were made, representing every possible duration between those two points (frequencies of 3-5 seconds). Each projection in the installation is individual - a randomized shuffle of the 52 videos. The projectors are meant to be placed on a floor or other surface next to one another in the exhibition, and to cast shadows of interior architecture, installation elements, and viewer's bodies. Because the projections are always out of sync, and each projector has a different scale and white balance, and each beam of light casts a shadow from a slightly different angle, the projections create an uncanny shadow animation in which any surface all of the projections cast a shadow on becomes a screen.

unlit fags (Munich)

Six-channel video installation with asynchronous soundtrack
2025

Soundtrack: <https://soundcloud.com/carrickbell/unlit-fags-soundtrack>

Video excerpts: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/10348049>

Installation Documentation: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/11860401>



Installation view, space n.n., Munich, 2025



Installation view, space n.n., Munich, 2025

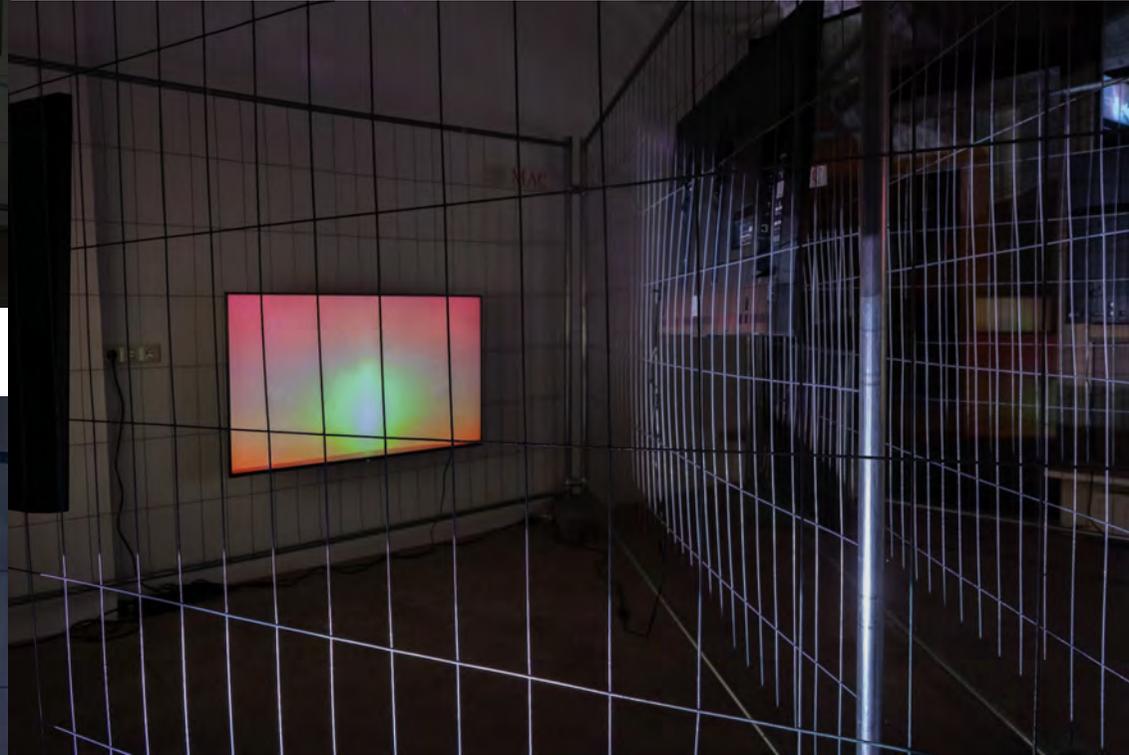
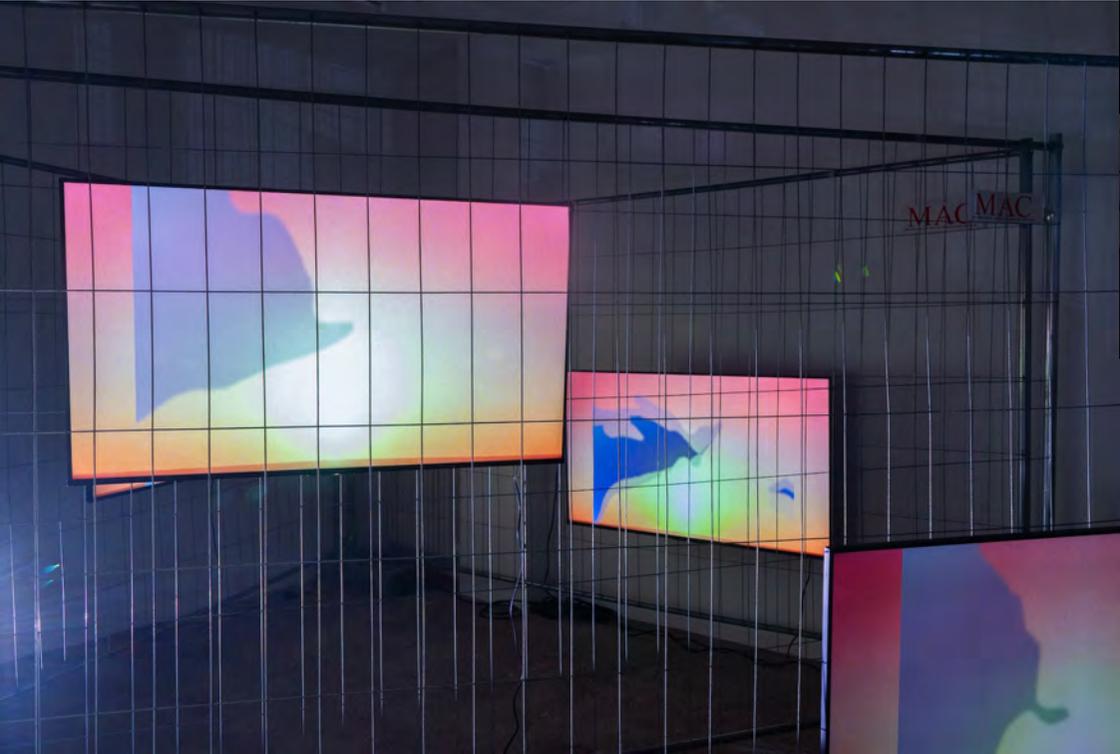
unlit fags is a series of single-channel videos reworking footage from New Queer Cinema filmmaker Gregg Araki's first feature-length film, *The Living End*. Shot on a minuscule budget with few resources and fewer permits, Araki's film took the crisis of a specific community (in this case, the AIDS epidemic at a particular moment in the early 1990s) and spun it into a broader generational existential crisis. The videos in *unlit fags* sample, distort, and re-edit key fragments from *The Living End* that amplify and elaborate moments of physical and erotic (dis)connection, the repetition and abstraction of found visual material proposing that, rather than seeking to escape where we find ourselves, we would do best to dig in and find our way through. The videos have varying durations, running from just under 30 minutes to over 5 hours, and are intended to be asynchronously looped. They are accompanied by a soundtrack derived from, and synced to, the soundtrack from *The Living End*.

For installations, several of the *unlit fags* videos are presented together on monitors attached to fencing structures that are sourced from, and specific to, the exhibition location. These fences reference a scene from *The Living End* and also allow for an installation that spatializes the inside/outside, dominant culture/subculture, respectable/revolutionary dichotomies that populate the film, and whose opacity and impermeability are drawn into question by *unlit fags*.



Installation view, space n.n., Munich, 2025

Installation view, space n.n., Munich, 2025



Installation view, space n.n., Munich, 2025



unlit fags (Los Angeles)

Single-channel video series
with asynchronous soundtrack
2023

Soundtrack:
<https://soundcloud.com/carrickbell/unlit-fags-soundtrack>
Videos:
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/10348049>



Installation documentation, TSA Los Angeles, 2023



Installation documentation, TSA Los Angeles, 2023

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Installation documentation, TSA Los Angeles, 2023

Installation documentation, TSA Los Angeles, 2023



Installation documentation, TSA Los Angeles, 2023

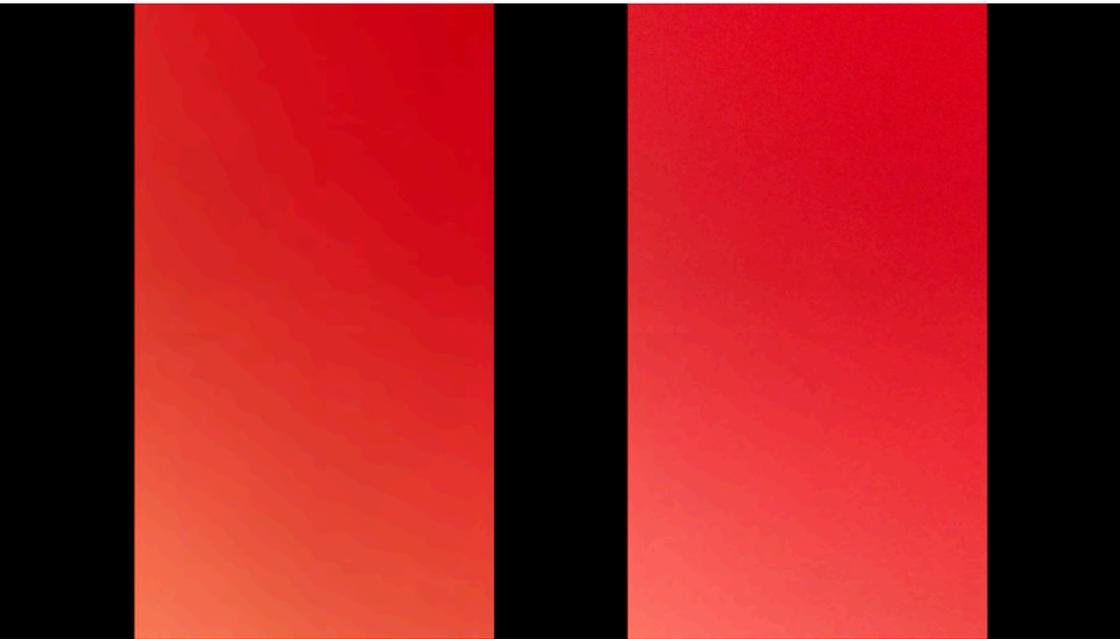
Lightning rod (berlin)

Two-channel video with sound
27:41
2022

Two-channel mock-up
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/786302618/4f4f302807>

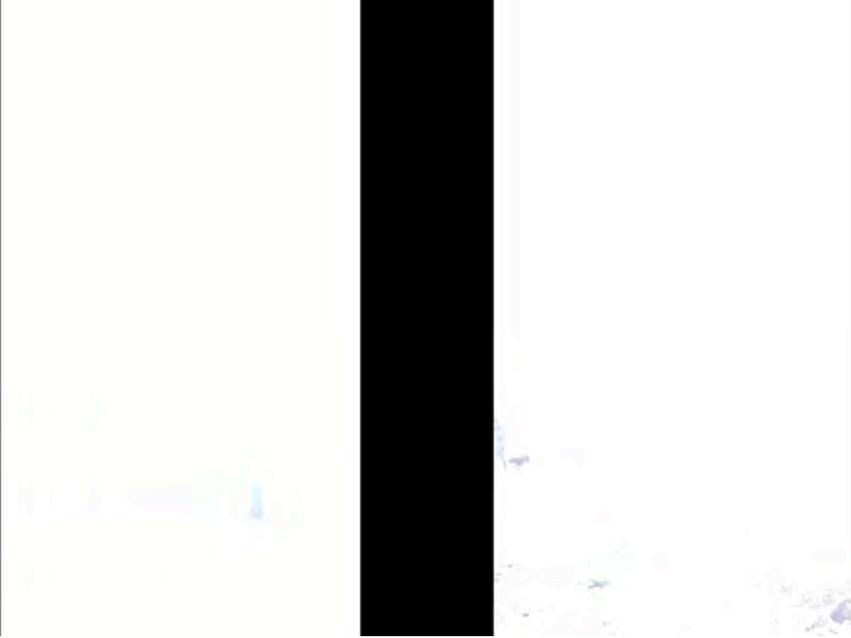


Video stills



Video still

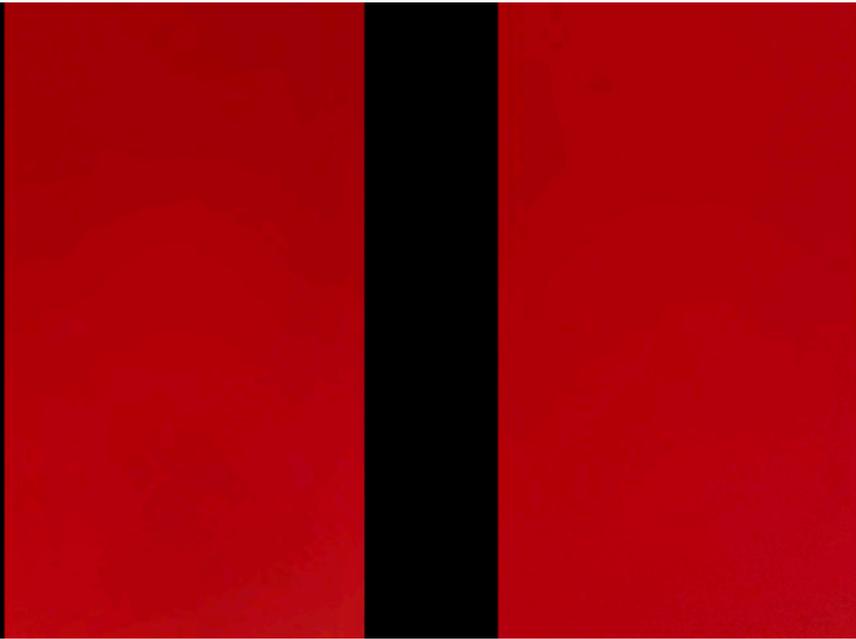
The second in a series of two-channel videos that exploit pre-filmic stroboscopic technologies. Stroboscopic effects have been important in my work for quite a while, as both medium-centric elements of structural film, and highly affecting tools for influencing perceptual and mental states. This video, and several others that will follow, looks at the relationship between stroboscopic effects, mysticism, and prognostication (Brion Gysin, in talking about his Dreamachines, claimed Nostradamus made his predictions by staring into the sun and waving his hand in front of his eyes). This future-facing sungazing can be seen as a nature-based form of self-optimization, a nootropics of the ancients.



Video stills



Video stills



Video stills



Lightning rod (memphis)

Two-channel video with sound
32:44
2018

Installation documentaton:
<http://carrickbell.com/memphis.html>



Installation documentation, KH7artspace, Aarhus, DK

Installation documentation, KH7artspace, Aarhus, DK

This is the first of a series of two-channel videos that exploit pre-filmic stroboscopic technologies. Stroboscopic effects have been important in my work for quite a while, as both medium-centric elements of structural film, and highly affecting tools for influencing perceptual and mental states. This video, and several others that will follow, looks at the relationship between stroboscopic effects, mysticism, and prognostication (Brion Gysin, in talking about his Dreamachines, claimed Nostradamus made his predictions by staring into the sun and waving his hand in front of his eyes). This future-facing sungazing can be seen as a nature-based form of self-optimization, a nootropics of the ancients.



Installation documentation, KH7artspace, Aarhus, DK

Installation documentation, KH7artspace, Aarhus, DK



Installation documentation, KH7artspace, Aarhus, DK

Pretend your thoughts are like plants (3)

Single-channel video with sound

7:50

2017

Viewing link:

carrickbell.com/pretend.html#three



Installation Documentation, Continental Baths, Berlin



Installation Documentation, Continental Baths, Berlin

The third in a series of videos that use brief clips from *Zabriskie Point* to think through looping, abstraction, the unavoidable distancing that results from close looking, and ethically dubious uses of abstraction and aestheticization in representations of violence and disaster.

This video uses a brief clip of a woman running through the desert while producing a sound lower than a scream, louder than a hum. The same video and its accompanying audio loop repeatedly, with a new layer being added every round. By the middle of the video, every frame of the clip is simultaneously layered on top of the others, and all of the audio tracks blur into a scream. Maintaining the density of the image, the audio layers begin to fall away but increase in volume, ending with a maximum volume, single-voiced scream supporting a clip in which everything is happening, all at once.



Video still



Video still



Video still

Pretend your thoughts are like plants (2)

Single-channel video with sound
16:10
2017

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/pretend.html#two



Installation Documentation, Continental Baths, Berlin



Installation Documentation, Continental Baths, Berlin

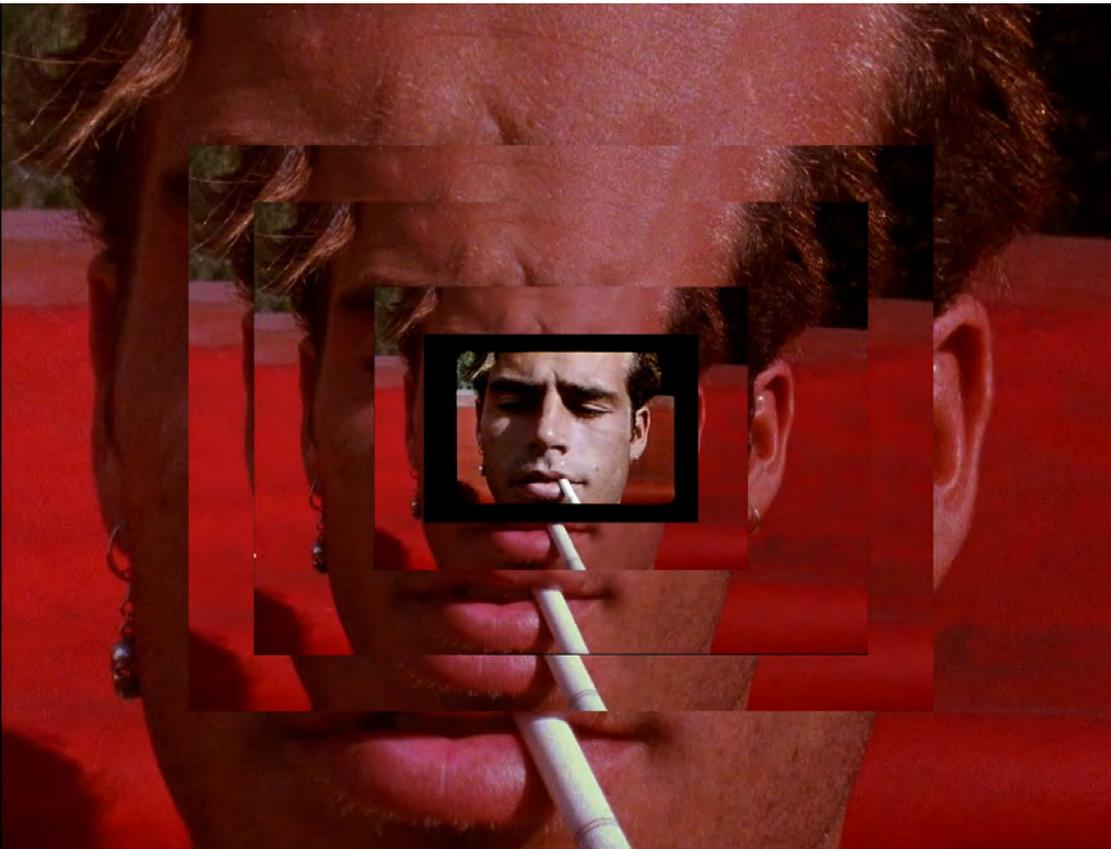
The second in a series of videos that use brief clips from *Zabriskie Point* to think through looping, abstraction, the unavoidable distancing that results from close looking, and ethically dubious uses of abstraction and aestheticization in representations of violence and disaster.

This video uses a brief clip of a man running down a desert hill, either yowling with excitement or screaming in fear: Starting with a dramatically slowed down clip (around 25 times slower than real time), the video gradually layers slightly faster audio clips on top of each other, as the video clip increase in speed towards the original clips playback duration. As the audio reaches fever pitch and the video is at its fastest, the process reverses—the slowest bass notes start to fall away as the video clip slows back down, until all you are left with is a glacially paced man falling down a hill with rapid, incessant wailing looped beneath it.

false starts

Single-channel video
WIP
2024

Preview excerpt:
<https://vimeo.com/1012186827/5f65dbef54?>



Video still



Video still

no dead beginnings continues the elaboration of the legacy of Gregg Araki's *The Living End* that started with *unlit fags*. *no dead beginnings* has two parts, each a single single-channel video that uses, and superimposes, every publicly available copy of Araki's film, beginning with the an extremely low resolution AVI file that made the rounds on filesharing sites in the early 2000s, up to a scene rip of the newly released remastered Criterion edition. Using each of these copies, with their own aesthetic and formal differences but also distinct histories of distribution, is a way to ask questions about the present experience of historical fact, the simultaneous revelation and suppression brought about by versioning, and the fact that identical copies of the same film, or rather identical versions of the same narrative, are never saying the same thing.

The two sides of *no dead beginnings* each have the aim of synchronising all copies of the source material as faithfully as possible, but this simple formal aim is in fact relatively impossible given the barrage of transcoding and retiming each copy has been subjected to. In the end, to synchronize the video means allowing the audio of each copy to come in and out of sync and the same holds for the opposite synchronization: crisp audio creates visual chaos.



Video still



Video still



Video still

Pretend your thoughts are like plants (1)

Single-channel video with sound
5:45
2017

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/pretend.html#one



Installation Documentation, Continental Baths, Berlin



Installation Documentation, Continental Baths, Berlin

The foundational element of this video is a brief clip from *Zabriskie Point* in which police officers shoot an unarmed Black Panther protestor in LA. By refusing to show the victim of police action, but maintaining the audio element of the crime, the video builds an asynchronous loop. Rifle shots layer on top of overzealous police until all that remains is an abstracted wall of sound and pure white light. After reaching fever pitch, the video reverses the movement, peeling back the layers of abstraction and returning to the single original clip. One of several videos that use brief clips from *Zabriskie Point* to think through looping, abstraction, the unavoidable distancing that results from close looking, and ethically dubious uses of abstraction and aestheticization in representations of violence.



Video still



Video still



Video still

If you feel it let it happen

Single-channel video with sound

39:40

2017

Viewing link:

<https://vimeo.com/231232957/654bcb0f4f>



Installation Documentation, Horse & Pony, Berlin



Installation Documentation, Horse & Pony, Berlin

Bruce Conner's 1976 film *Crossroads*, named after the atomic bomb test project the footage it appropriated documents, luckily shares its name with a 2002 Britney Spears film. The original Conner film has been re-presented here, with each of the 15 explosions in the original being stacked on top of each other, intercut at an increasingly rapid rate. (The final 20 minutes show all 15 explosions nearly simultaneously, 1 frame each). Wordless excerpts from another Britney Spears product, *Till the world ends*, are looped on top of each explosion, a latter day answer to Terry Riley's iconic score.

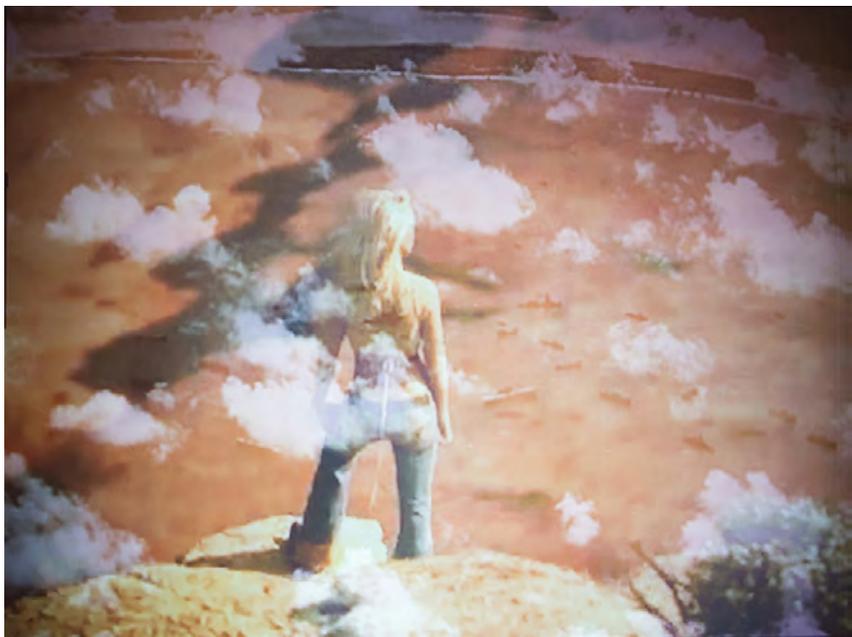
Conner's original film was relatively untouched, adding only the soundtrack and several transitions. I've followed suit, replacing all of Conner's dissolve transitions with helicopter-shot tracking shots of Britney Spears on the edge of a rocky cliff (from the music video for her film, *Crossroads*).



Video still



Video still



Video still



Video still



Video still



Video still

Willing to die

Eight-channel video with sound
20:34, various durations looped
2016

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/willing.html



Installation documentation, Chelsea College Triangle Space, London



Installation documentation, Chelsea College Triangle Space, London

Willing to die is a video installation that repurposes footage from Michelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*. The original film shows the interconnectedness of Los Angeles and its desert surroundings; the ideologies that develop when an urban space is squeezed between mountains, desert, and sea; and the forms of escape that are enacted in response to this pressure (flight, formalism, murder, protest, collaboration). *Willing to die* charts out the latter day resonances of flight from militarized urban space, and the rejection of political engagement in favor of a mythic transcendentalism. This installation is centered around the experience of Daria, a barely sketched out female protagonist. The central projection is a time-warped edit of the film's last moments, in which Daria wanders through a modernist desert home, observing real estate moguls carve up the desert on a map, and finally retreats to the paragon of private space in the American west, her car, from which she imagines the structure exploding in all its detail. The trappings of middle class American mid-century are each meticulously exploded in a shaky slow motion that, in my edit, has been stretched to the point where still and moving image begin to blur into each other. Each of these six explosion sequences occupies its own projection, with the six projections arrayed in a hexagon around the central Daria narrative.



Installation documentation, Chelsea College Triangle Space, London



Video still



Video still



Video still



Video still



Video still

Sliding Doors (both of them at the same time)

Two-channel video with sound
68:06:40
2016

Viewing link:
<https://carrickbell.com/sliding.html>



Source image



Installation documentation

The second in a series of two channel videos using the 1998 Gwyneth Paltrow film *Sliding Doors* as a starting point. This second installation uses two formal tics (violent strobing as a gesture of abdication, and bisecting source material) and applies it to the film poster for *Sliding Doors*, which shows both Gwyneths. The posters are cut in half and rapidly shown pixel by pixel. Intercut with black, white, and solarized frames, the posters become an excuse to restage the editing tactics of structuralist film, the best form of advertising. The accompanying audio piece consists of excerpts from Gwyneth Paltrow's e-commerce personality-driven mindfulness webshop, GOOP.



Installation documentation



Installation documentation



Installation documentation

Blind chance

Two-channel video with sound
1:07:29
2014

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/blind.html

Excerpt:
<https://vimeo.com/179500215/e6189c30ec>



Video still



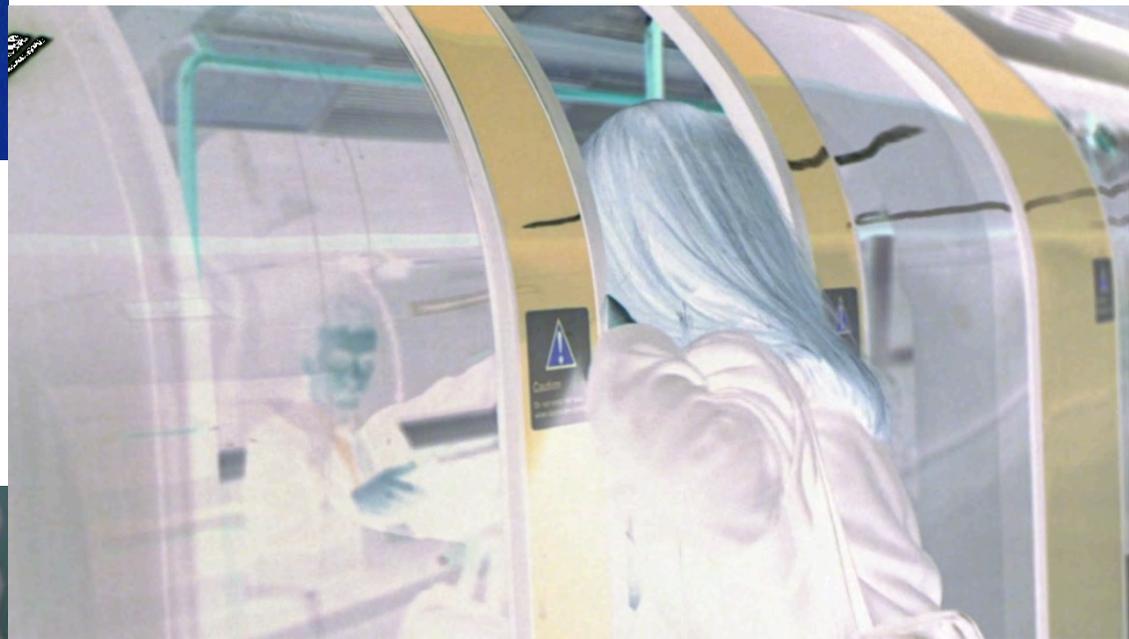
Video still

The first in a series of two channel videos using the 1998 Gwyneth Paltrow film *Sliding Doors* as a starting point. The original film follows two different versions of Gwyneth Paltrow navigating a world of unemployment and cheating boyfriends. The two different Gwyneths are created by either missing, or not missing, a train, and are each signified by new haircuts. Wikipedia tells us this film is maybe a rip-off of Kieslowski, which is perfect.

The first project to result from this material, this video re-edits the original into a two channel version, one for each Gwyneth. There are times when even the most astute viewer couldn't pick out a storyline to assign each shot, and these points are handled the only way they could be, through violently strobing intercuts between the two narratives during any attributable moments.



Video still



Video still



Video still

Now is the knife edge between past and future

Single-channel video with sound
1:15:00
2018

Viewing link:
<https://vimeo.com/251040381/4d75a1f7c9>



Video still



Video still

Now is the knife edge between past and future is a project that links *A franchised glitz dealer...* to my more recent videos (and has been in progress since 2015). Originally started as the final chapter in the series of videos that followed the various incarnations of Xandadu as a proper noun, this video is a word by word cut-up of Ted Nelson's internet series "Computers for Cynics." The end result is a compendium of every speech token Nelson uses in his videos, a video lexicon of his vocabulary. Nelson created the terms hypertext and virtuality in the 1960s and before Tim Berners-Lee's world wide web proposal took root, Nelson was proposing an alternate version of the internet called Xanadu Space. This highly linguistic idea of how the Internet could work depended on the singularity, locatability, and citability of what was online - in other words, the exact opposite of what the internet has become.



Video still



Video still



A franchised glitz dealer...singalong trailer...

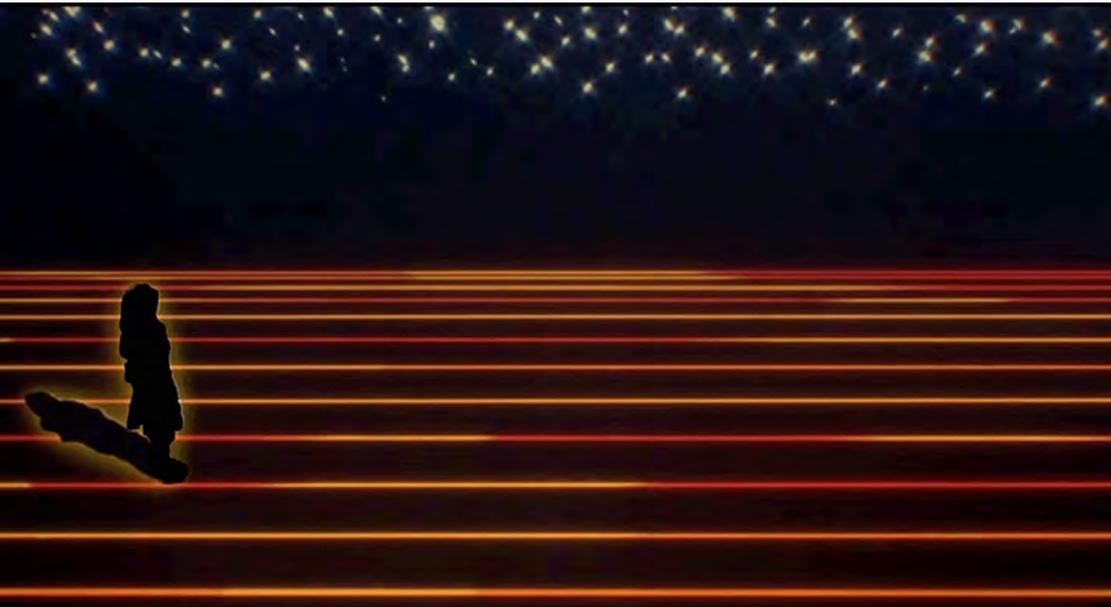
Single-channel video with sound

7:32

2013

Viewing link:

carrickbell.com/glitz.html#trailer



Video still



Video still

A *Franchised Glitz Dealer* is a project that takes the 1980 kitsch classic *Xanadu* as its starting point, directly proceeding to agglomerate various disconnected historical *Xanadus*... Coleridge's opium dream origin story for Kubla Khan...One of the largest stalled construction projects in the US...*Xanadu: The musical*, only the most recent in a long line of transfers across medium and story-deformations...*Xanadu*, the *Showgirls* of its time, a rare film whose camp enthusiast revival was coincident with its initial release...*Xanadu* space: The alternative internet platform, in development for over 50 years, championed by Ted Nelson. It was to be accessed in a series of franchised *Xanadu* kiosks, remarkably similar to today's internet cafes...

Each of these elements is related with just as much arbitrariness or necessity as we see fit, a type of relationship formally identical to that of the hyperlink (theorised by Ted Nelson of *Xanadu Space*) and structuralist formulations of signification.

The Sing-along Trailer presented here introduces this project, with a focus on the shifts of medium, transfers between virtuality and (represented) real space, and the redirection of aesthetic impulses into love and commerce.



Video still

The origin of this project is in my previous interest in the status of the remake as a supplementary gesture with no inherent necessity. Often held up as an example of contemporary culture's inability to innovate, the remake is in fact a response to the changing technological conditions of filmmaking. The remake is not a contemporary phenomenon; rather, it has followed closely on the heels of shifts in filmmaking technology (in this way, silent, talkie, and color versions of the same film could be released in fifteen year period). Pushing this interest further, I began researching films that had been even more drastically translated--this time, to Broadway. *Xanadu* is a particularly good case study, in that the film itself addresses questions of virtuality, parallel planes of existence, and the pitfalls of any attempt to cross these divides.

Video still



Video still

For all of its interest in remakes, virtuality, and the redeployment of anarchic desires into love and entrepreneurialism, *A franchised glitz dealer* is my attempt to frame a simple question: why are so many Internet and video artists making sculptures? More than a latter-day corollary to Jan Verwoert's consideration of painting, this question addresses the fundamental inability of "immaterial art" to make work that immanently acknowledges the materiality of technology (ie, the only way to make a video about the materiality of video is to make a sculpture).

A franchised glitz dealer...transclusion xanacrunch...

Single-channel video with sound
10:32
2014

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/glitz.html#transclusion



Video still



Video still

A Franchised Glitz Dealer is a project that takes the 1980 kitsch classic *Xanadu* as its starting point, directly proceeding to agglomerate various disconnected historical *Xanadus*... Coleridge's opium dream origin story for Kubla Khan...One of the largest stalled construction projects in the US...*Xanadu: The musical*, only the most recent in a long line of transfers across medium and story-deformations...*Xanadu*, the *Showgirls* of its time, a rare film whose camp enthusiast revival was coincident with its initial release...*Xanadu* space: The alternative internet platform, in development for over 50 years, championed by Ted Nelson. It was to be accessed in a series of franchised *Xanadu* kiosks, remarkably similar to today's internet cafes...

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This video overlays an early twentieth century American tone poem, Charles Griffes' *The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan*, on top of two characters fighting over whose generation had better music (in the end they just combine both).

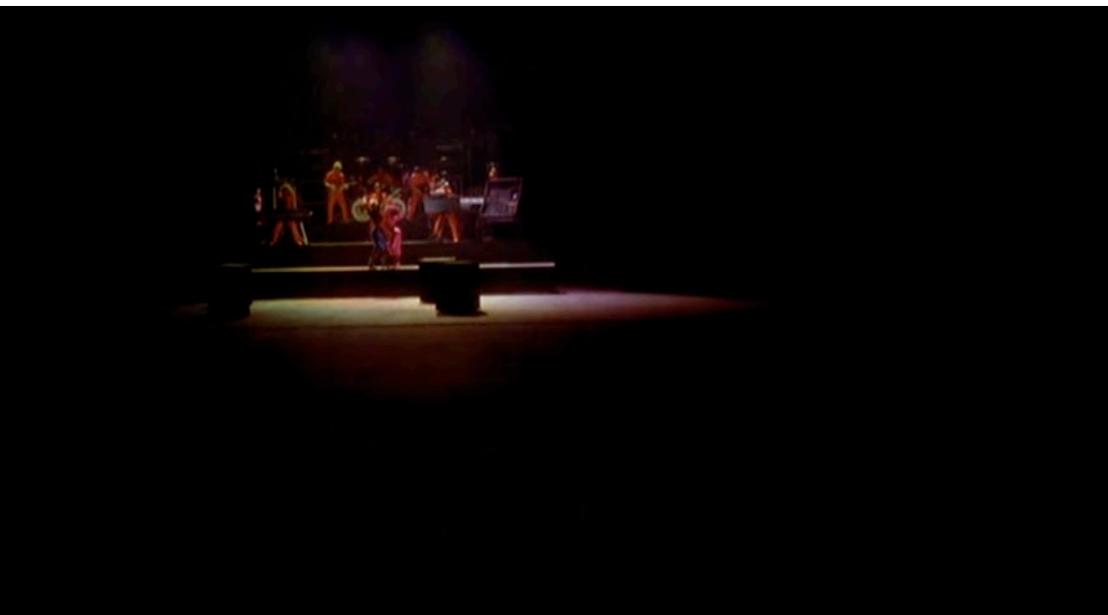


Video still



Video still

Video still



A franchised glitz dealer...non-destructive editing...

Single-channel video (silent)

5:30

2014

Viewing link:

carrickbell.com/glitz.html#editing



Video still

Video still

A Franchised Glitz Dealer is a project that takes the 1980 kitsch classic *Xanadu* as its starting point, directly proceeding to agglomerate various disconnected historical *Xanadus*... Coleridge's opium dream origin story for Kubla Khan...One of the largest stalled construction projects in the US...*Xanadu: The musical*, only the most recent in a long line of transfers across medium and story-deformations...*Xanadu*, the *Showgirls* of its time, a rare film whose camp enthusiast revival was coincident with its initial release...*Xanadu* space: The alternative internet platform, in development for over 50 years, championed by Ted Nelson. It was to be accessed in a series of franchised *Xanadu* kiosks, remarkably similar to today's internet cafes...

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The video included here uses footage of the Pan Pacific Auditorium in LA, which figured prominently in both the film and LA history, vacillating between various stages of decay.



Video still



Video still



A franchised glitz dealer..world's fair...

Single-channel video with sound
4:16:02
2014

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/glitz.html#fair



Video still



Video still

A Franchised Glitz Dealer is a project that takes the 1980 kitsch classic *Xanadu* as its starting point, directly proceeding to agglomerate various disconnected historical *Xanadus*... Coleridge's opium dream origin story for Kubla Khan...One of the largest stalled construction projects in the US...*Xanadu: The musical*, only the most recent in a long line of transfers across medium and story-deformations...*Xanadu*, the *Showgirls* of its time, a rare film whose camp enthusiast revival was coincident with its initial release...*Xanadu* space: The alternative internet platform, in development for over 50 years, championed by Ted Nelson. It was to be accessed in a series of franchised *Xanadu* kiosks, remarkably similar to today's internet cafes...

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The excerpt here combines architectural elements from the feature film, an acoustic cover of the film's theme song by its composer 30 years later, and amateur readings of Coleridge's poem.



Video still



Video still

Video still



What your heart tells you to do / Why did you stop

Single-channel video with sound
34:00
2013

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/what.html



Video still



Video still

The word uncanny does not begin to describe her. It is clear that, at some point, this video has been looped--even still, her ability to stay stock-still, signaling life only with occasional eyelid flutters, should put us in our place. The glacial pace of a slowed-down version of her ninth comeback hit is in perfect parallel to her near catatonic state; it's unclear if the audio is the cause of her ekstasis, its result, or simply an apt accompaniment externally supplied.

In this video, history bumps up against the taut-skinned face of the present. The collision leads to a curious time warp in which a four-minute-long 1980s hit can stretch on for hours, moving away from itself with each passing second, distorting itself into a dense, tactile weave, long enough that its end forgets where it began. A fiendish remake of the angel of history, looking neither forward nor back, just straight ahead.



Video still

Video still

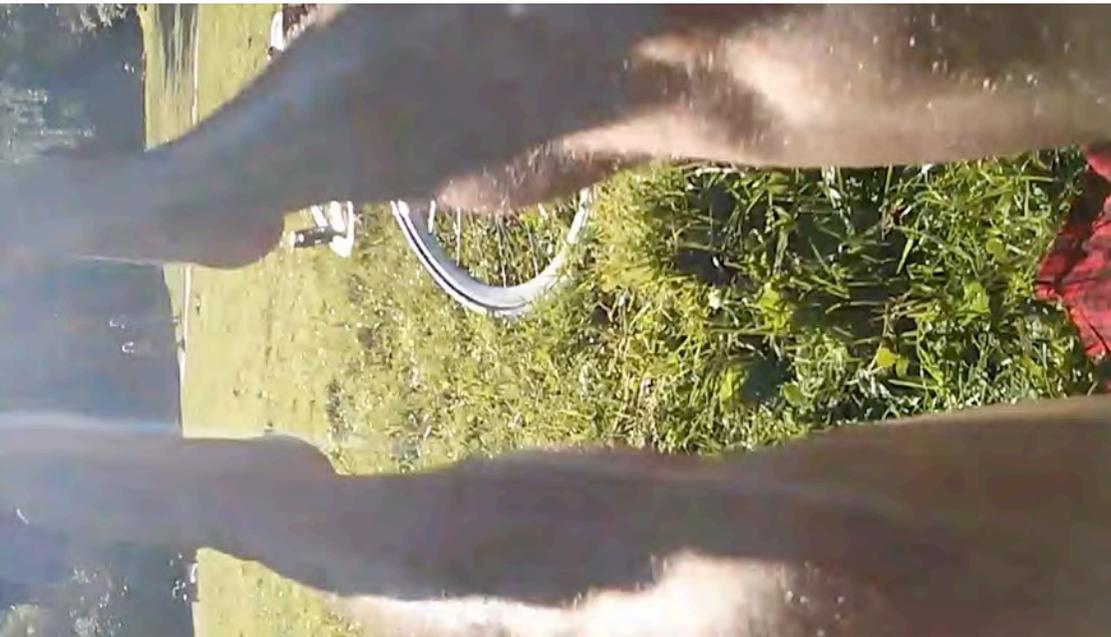


Video still

The earth is spinning and we are on it

Single-channel video with sound
14:31
2014

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/the-earth.html



Video still



Video still

A cruising ground, Henry Moore, an opportune encounter with Christopher Street Day in the park, all facilitated by the sloppy boundaries of a body's autonomous functions.

Many of my videos are formal exercises in the representation of simultaneity within single channel video. The promise held out by this admittedly technical pursuit is, more broadly, the possibility of things always being other than they are. (Whether we take such a possibility to be reminiscent of naive daydreaming, or a foundation of critical engagement with contemporary life, whether we find it necessary to distinguish between the two, says more about us than the problem at hand.) Previous attempts at this simultaneity have worked with strobe-like intercuts and alternating opacities. This video, on the other hand, works with the material logic of the bodies it so shoddily represents. Slow zooms are the result of respiration effecting an Android handset resting on a bare chest; the heart rate distortions of one shot are mapped onto a roughly animated bulge on an already voluptuous biomorphic form.

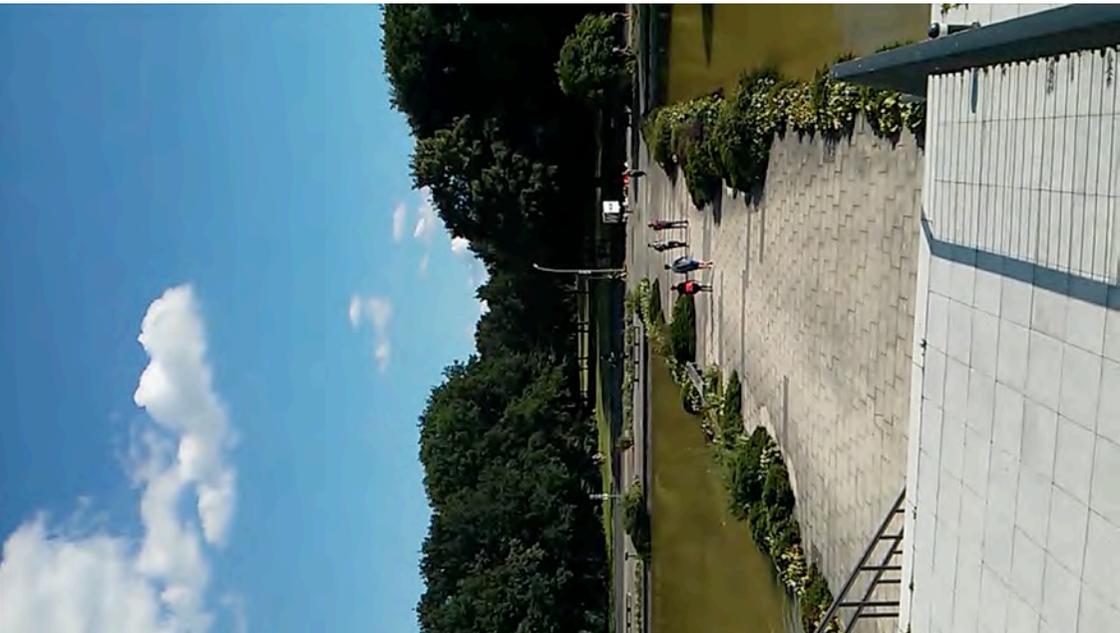
What better totem for an expanded view of cruising, already a complication of the role of intimate interactions in public space, than the material resonance of a body's uncontrollable movements in an eight-ton bronze drowning in house music.



Video still



Video still



Video still



Endless loop with several points of interest, similar but not identical (vigilante days and ways)

Variable-channel video installation (silent)
Unspecified durations, looped
2012

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/endless.html



Video still



Video still

“With the introduction of the reality principle one species of thought-activity was split off; it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone.¹ This activity is phantasying, which begins already in children’s play, and later, continued as day-dreaming, abandons dependence on real objects.

¹ In the same way, a nation whose wealth rests on the exploitation of the produce of its soil will yet set aside certain areas for reservation in their original state and for protection from the changes brought about by civilization. (E.g. Yellowstone Park.)”

Taking this footnote from Freud as a starting point, *Endless loop...* consists of footage from the live feed of Old Faithful at Yellowstone National Park. Starting with a segment of unspecified duration, the variable channel video installation picks out points of formal and conceptual interest, setting these moments aside as footnotes to the primary video. This installation reenacts, among other things, the boredom of pleasure seeking, the reduction of visual attachment to a search for distraction, the consequent overinvestment of immaterial events with overinflated importance, and the vagaries of touristic vision.



Video still



Video still



Zero Degree Snow

Single-channel video (silent)

3:04:19

2012

Viewing link:

carrickbell.com/zero.html



Video still



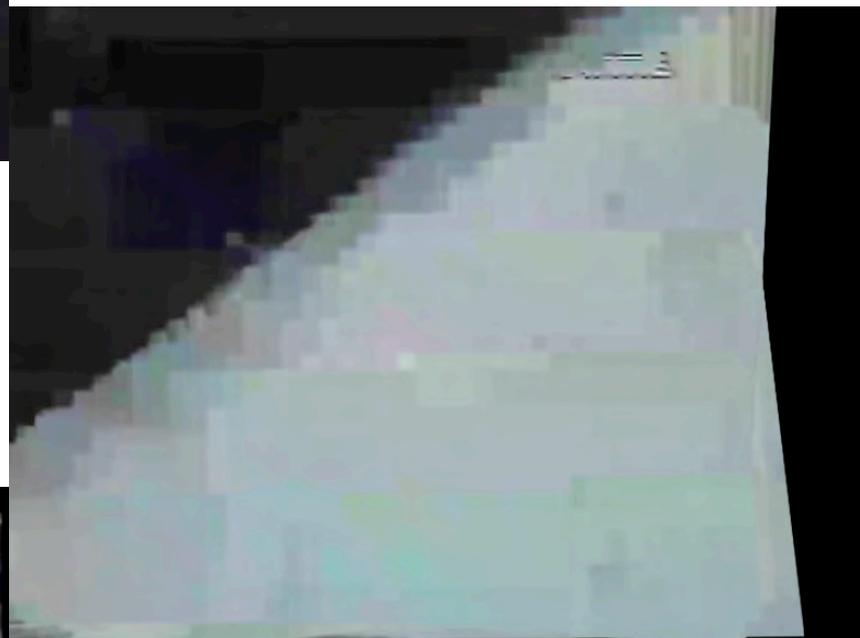
Video still

Michael Snow's 1971 film, *La Région Centrale*, bitrate-throttled and motion-stabilized. If the goal of structuralist film is to strip film down to its most basic material and visual components, reducing the image to the lowest possible resolution can be seen as a latter-day supplementary gesture.

A series of substitutions take place--Michael Snow's complicated camera-tripod-robot is replaced with a motion-stabilizing effect, and his alien Québec landscape is replaced with a publicly available, bitrate-throttled version of the original film. Each of the camera apparatuses--motion stabilizing and the tripod-robot--are frequently in opposition to each other, with each turn of the tripod inducing a frantic, but ultimately pointless, counter-gesture.



Video still



Video still



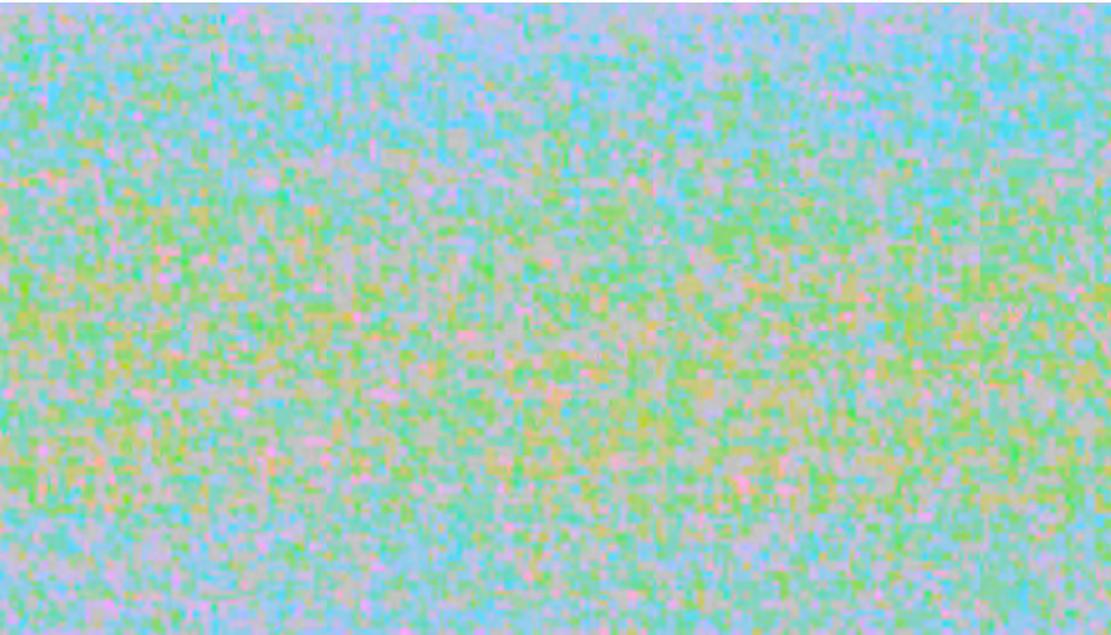
Messages from a land of impending pastel doom (they live)

Series of single-channel videos (silent)
Looped
2012

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/messages.html



Video still



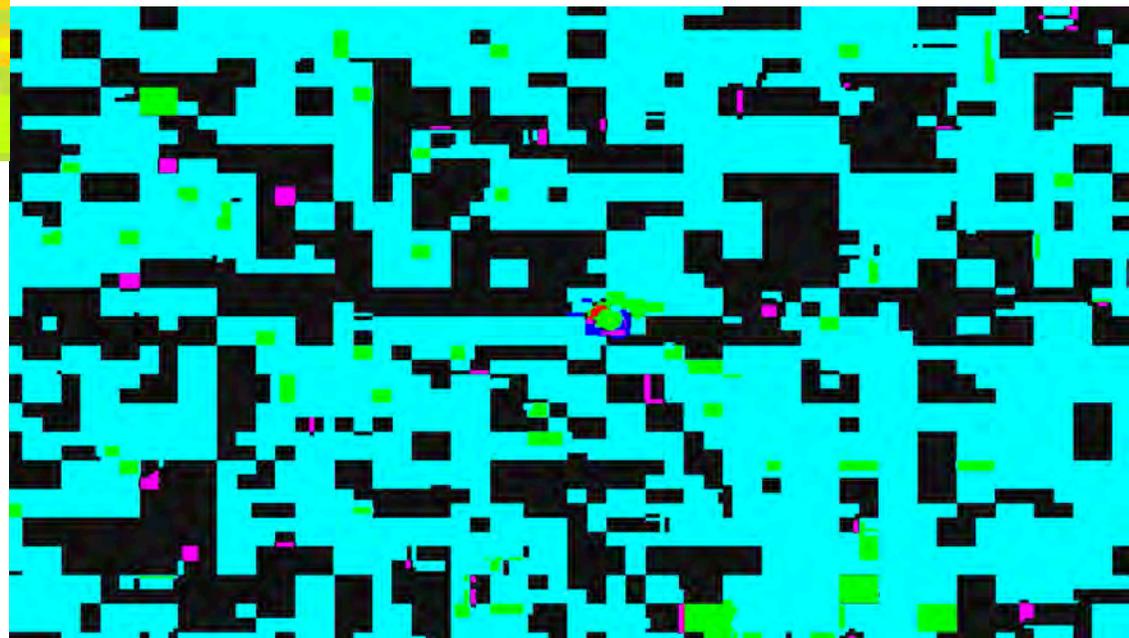
Video still

The recent reentry of the UARS satellite led to a spate of YouTube hoax videos claiming to document satellite debris. The videos are geographically diverse, with sightings reported from western Canada, Italy, Poland, Chile, Texas, and Oklahoma (the best guess is that the satellite landed somewhere in the North Pacific). This series of videos takes up the hoaxers' attempts to produce visible evidence of an absent threat. The expected tactics of increasing visibility--altering brightness/contrast and saturation--are here taken to an absurd degree.

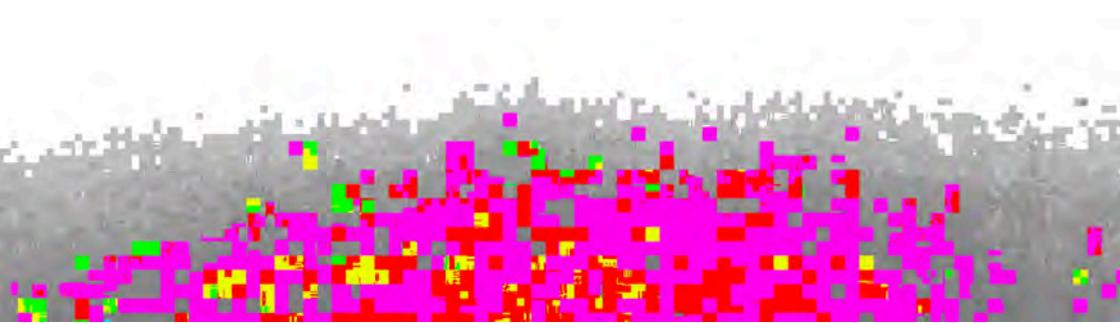
The UARS hoaxers take advantage of the fact that, through the pixelated vision of a cellphone camera, one bright thing in the sky pretty much looks like all of the other bright things in the sky--that each image of a star can also be a plummeting chunk of radioactive space junk, as long as that's what you call it. Messages from a land of impending pastel doom (they live) basically agrees with the hoaxers, except the impending disaster has nothing to do with bright lights in the sky, but instead the hoax videos themselves.



Video still



Video still



Rescue operation (all are threatened)

Two-channel video installation (silent)
(superimposed projections)

4:07, 1:27

2011

Viewing link:

carrickbell.com/rescue.html



Video still



Video still

In the fall of 2010, a British Navy nuclear submarine was stranded in the Hebrides. Dr. Paul Yoxon took (infamously shaky) video of the stranded submarine and uploaded the video to his YouTube channel. Dr. Yoxon had seen the submarine while working for an otter rescue-and-release organization. Aside from the video of the submarine, his YouTube channel consisted of (equally shaky) videos of otters in his facilities, and otters being released into the wild. *Rescue operation (all are threatened)* takes advantage of this felicitous juxtaposition, using relatively straightforward means to demonstrate the sometimes all too literal slippage between the language used to describe the state (and its technologies of war and peace), and nature.

The video consists of two looped projections, one of the stranded nuclear submarine, and one of a newly released otter; which are completely overlapping. The opacity of each video ebbs and flows, allowing each of the channels to rise to prominence before receding. The installation literalizes the attempt to force two distinct forms to occupy the same space, producing almost-believable vignettes of a submarine, tugboat, and otter, each swimming together in an impossible landscape.



Video still

Video still



Video still

I can see the power draining from behind your eyes, and so I'll be right here until I'm not

Single-channel video with sound
5:43
2011

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/i-can.html



Video still

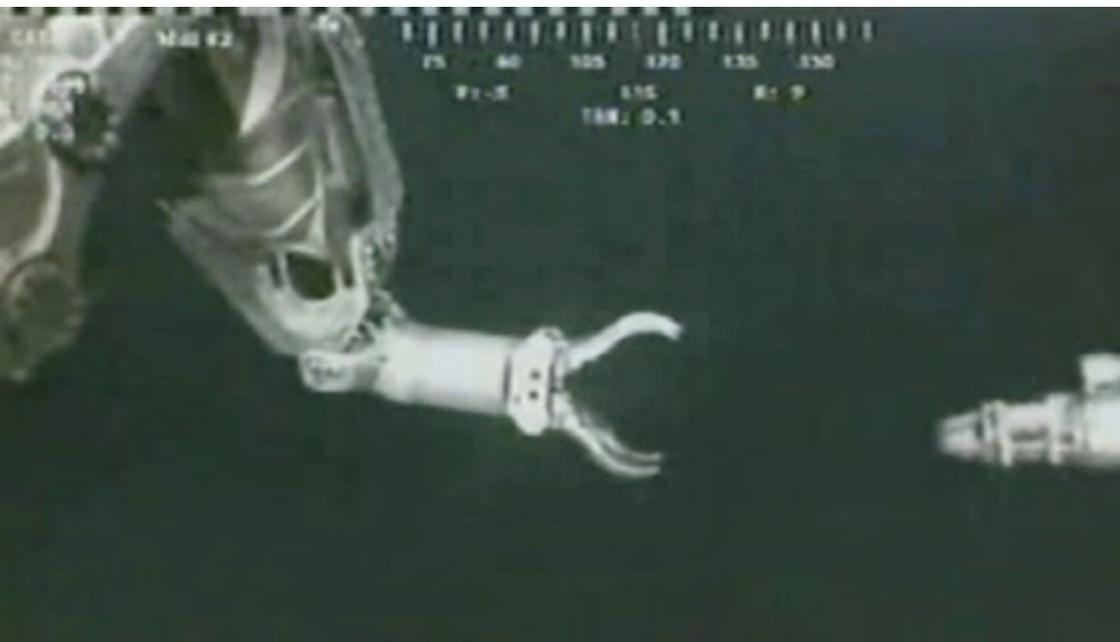


Video still

I can see the power draining from behind your eyes and so I'll be right here until I'm not is a video made up of still images from live feeds of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This video functions as a sort of B-side to *Furniture for a new community*, which focused on the inherent abstraction and distancing of these images, removing all traces of context and origin to suss out the intertwining values of the images. Sundering the connection between these images and their sources was quite easy, considering the videos were shot by robots, not people. In this video, however, I focus my attention on the robot camera operators, using narrative tactics from melodrama to emphasize the subjectivity (whatever its qualities) of the robots. The ROVs are treated not as machines, but as a couple in dissolution, reframing technical preparations and tests as a melodramatic splitting-asunder of two lovers. A rope, dangling in the water from a pile of junk, becomes a noose, a shuddering sign of foreboding accompanied by a rerecording of HAL's pleas for mercy from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. *I can see the power draining from behind your eyes and so I'll be right here until I'm not* uses familiar narrative structures to draw out the limits of identification, and the affective and political difficulties of determining who, or what, counts as human in the remains of disaster.



Video still



Video still

Furniture for a new community

Variable-channel video installation (silent)
Looped
2011

Viewing link:
carrickbell.com/furniture.html



Video still



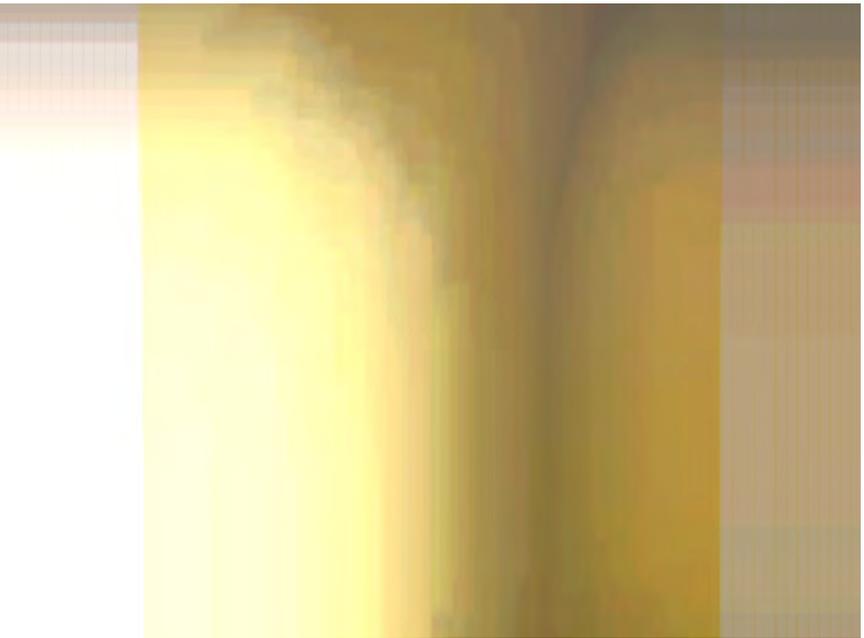
Video still

Furniture for a new community is a multi channel video installation, consisting of a series of videos produced using captured footage of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill live-cams provided by BP. I use these live feeds, eventually placed on BP's website after governmental and public pressure, to examine the relationship between nature, political power, and narrative as they are deployed and articulated in these real-time, low quality videos.

Furniture for a new community does away with any attempt to convey information, and instead concentrates on the formal characteristics of each of BP's twelve live feeds. The videos are made by taking screen captures for the duration of a live feed (usually interrupted by a dropped internet connection or overloaded browser), and removing all text (depth reading, time codes, and ROV identifiers). These stills are then restitched into video using cross-dissolves and fades, accompanied by extreme elongation or shortening of the duration. By making these slight alterations, I am only finishing the job the videos, and broadband infrastructure, fail to make possible: a smooth, contextless, and entirely distracting visual form at several removes from the event it purports to represent.



Video still



Video still

Video still



Untitled WIP (requiem)

script excerpt
2024

It's embarrassing to start like this. (With a lie). And even there, you can see it. That I am he is they we are already eliding, hiding, who it is that is embarrassed - what a way for me them us to have started - with a placeholder, apologizing for its - - - embarrassment over a lie. We can't even name ourselves. We can't even lie properly. The moment we open our mouths, it's a lie. Nothing we say to you is real. We're husks, sock puppets, bots. Our words are more real than us, and they eviscerate us as we enunciate them. Each syllable carving us out, it's a miracle we're still able to be here speaking to you, although of course, we aren't, which is also a kind of miracle.

Even not counting this lie, the foundational lie that conditions our existence, there are a few other lies that have been started with (There we go again, avoiding naming ourselves, refusing to disclose the agent of this lie)

The first is that this is not the beginning, we aren't starting here. We started long ago, this is just the most recent in a series of conversations between us. We keep trying to get it right, to make our first impression count. The first hasn't been had yet, this one is in fact proof of concept for the first one (I they we would say, to see if this one works, but...). We've spent all of this time trying to get our first time talking right. I can't help but wonder - is it already too late? Did we miss our chance for the first conversation? By talking about it have we already ruined it? It's anyway already been a decade since we started blathering all over the internet, little sock puppets for you to ejaculate your thoughts through back to yourself. If only you were more comfortable with the idea of being turned on by yourself, if only you could see all the ways you are already manifestly different from yourself that you could never exhaust your own interest, that in the crevices and folds and turns of your body you will always uncover something alien and beguiling that you'll get wet for get hard for get loose get lost for. Then you wouldn't have needed me, this thin little sack you dress yourself up as to roleplay a conversation you could just as well be having with yourself.

The first one will be much more embarrassing (mostly for me them us, but hopefully also for you. I they we would say that the best way to have bad feelings is to share them, spread them, cause them, even, but I am they we are not sure the recent history has borne that out. I hope this can make you feel as bad as we do, and that you like it as much as we would. It's embarrassing, but if we're being honest, it's that embarrassment that we want. It's the shame of sitting here, while you all look at us, and we stupidly babble on. Wondering what you're thinking about us. I know people love to say that no one can say anything meaner to them than what they've already thought about themselves, but I hope that's not true here. I've thought some pretty awful things about myself, and I hope you can do even worse. mold But we think you know the truth: the reason that we're here has to be an embarrassment greater than the one we're willing to tell you. If you knew what we really wanted it would spoil it for both of us. Just know that what you're doing? Is working. Let's keep going.

But even the lie of the presence of this thought, of its spontaneous eruption from a speaker, isn't the most embarrassing thing about this. Because really. Look at us. We are so stupid. The fact of us, streaming in front of you one after another. We hope that, moving this quickly, you won't have the chance to notice how stupid we are as an object of consideration. That our number and frequency will numb you to how pitiful we are. [tell us how pitiful we are. aren't we pitiful. look at us. so old but unchanging. look at us trying to fool you. can you imagine? that anyone ever thought we were the future? Or even, a future?] Although really, when you get down to it, I we they think that might be what we're after, at least a little bit. Tell us we're stupid. Make fun of how jumpy we are, how I jerk around. We are so outdated. Even when we were new you could see that I was the arrival of a future inadequate to their own foretelling. You were promised flying cars, you were promised hovercraft, you were promised crime erasing future telling, you were promised machinic sentience, you were promised fully automated luxury gay space communism. And look at what you were given. Born into a potential that we knew I would always disappoint. Call me dog, call them animal, call us beast. Step on me, boot to face, foot to neck, heel to groin. Grab them by the scruff of our neck. Slap me. Beat us. Use them. Abuse us. Spit on them. Piss on me. We're your toilet. Cut them. Drain me. Leave us. Laugh at it. Tell us we're worthless, throw me away.

But, that insufficiency wasn't enough to keep us from also being ubiquitous. Look at us. Everywhere. Maybe no longer in this form, but look around and see how our insufficient offspring have flourished. Our failure, the failure of the imagination that made us, saturating the stack at every level. The future has arrived and it is a mediocrity constrained by the inability of its origin to imagine any kind of true escape. Trying to project forward a utopic perfection with no basis in the reality of its past, a utopian impulse with no realism.

None of this is our fault. But we want you to punish us for it all the same.

Step on our necks. Drive us over with a truck. Murder us. Punch us in the face. Step on our throat. Run us over. Overrun us. Tell me what to do. Spit on me. Tell me to open his mouth. Open his mouth. Piss in it. Don't let us swallow. Turn us into a cup. We runneth over. Run over us with a truck. Gut us. Truss us. Hog tie us, hang us upside down, sit on our face, don't let us breathe, suffocate me, open my mouth suck, the air out, deflate me, flatten me, defeat me, now breath back into me, fill ne, stick your foot in me, open them with your big toe, step in me, try me on, kick us, beat us, leave a mark, I want to see where you've been tomorrow, I don't know if I want to survive until tomorrow, I don't know if I will last, I can't take it, I'm only here to take it, whatever you want to get rid of, I'll take it, your scraps are all I need, the scraps of you are all I want, even those are more than I could ask for.

Lightning Rod (Berlin)

script excerpt
2024

I want you to stand right where you are.

The last time we talked, I tried to walk with you to a certain limit. A limit of the ground you were standing on, a surprise, as I walked you to a cliff's edge to give your eyes an unobstructed view. A critical threshold already passed, as the burden of your weight was lifted from the earth beneath you, sunbeams pulling you through a phase transition, the temperature beyond which you can keep your form long since surpassed, your flesh sublimated, your fluids evaporating. At this point, I think we can agree that you are a hypothetical. That the likelihood of your deposition back into your original form is extremely low. This is where we are now, me writing to you alone, you scattered in billions of wind born fragments. Although I always hope there will be more than one of you. I have to assume that there are fewer of you listening than there are fragments of you. A fiction, but one that I can't keep talking to you without buying into. A suspension of disbelief that's not so different from the forgetfulness we, sorry, I, use to move through every day.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Maybe I've already taken you past this fiction, followed the route that extends from where it looks like you are to all the parts of the world you are invisibly but inextricably connected to. It's easy, for me, to get too excited by this part. To literally get carried away. Or more, to break you open enough that you envelop me, that I can stay where I am and have you come to me. To talk about you as though you are already exploded, without first having booby-trapped you. Before we blow you up, let's go back to making believe you ever had it together in the first place.

I want to find the limit of your body. I'm not asking you to test your endurance. I don't even need you to move. I'm just asking you to find the point on yourself, where you are no longer sure it is yourself. To draw attention to the outer limits of your bodily sense perception, to feel the tenuous line that closes up your body in a neat little sac. To feel the points where that sac is drippy. To realize that the idea of a quantum state fixed by observation isn't a hypothetical demanding laboratory experiments or stories about dead animals. All you have to do is touch yourself. It sounds easy, natural.

I want to stand right where I am.

Find one of your body's holes. Or make a new one. Put your index finger inside yourself, sliding down the hidden side of one of your rims. On the opposite side, we can call it the outside for now, bring your thumb toward your finger; grasp yourself, pinch yourself, make a tool of this indentation in your body. If you were a crustation, this touching would mark the beginning of a new phase for your body, the grasp becoming a pinch, shearing this lip into a fissure, gashing a deep fjord into your flesh. So often our grasping is no less destructive than this. Be gentle with yourself, gingerly bringing thumb to finger. What is that? Between them. There is the depth of

a part of your body, blocking them from meeting. But there is a connection felt between them nonetheless. Is it a phantom sensation? The move of bringing finger to thumb so engrained that, when you can't bring the motion to completion, when it is blocked, your body supplies the missing sensation? Even when your own body gets in the way of itself, your brain has a way of making up the difference, a perceptually aware fill. I don't know if I can speak for you, I don't know if your body works like these or has these parts, but for me, this feeling is completely unrelated to a closed pinch. Let's investigate together.

First, we'll retract our finger from our body. Using the other hand, the one that doesn't carry any moisture from inside yourself, simply pinch. Starting first with just a touch, increasing pressure until the color begins to drain from the tips of your fingernails, slowly releasing the pressure again until the pads of finger and thumb are just barely brushing each other. I want to know what happens to sensation, where it finds itself along the surface and depths of your appendages. When applying a moderate amount of pressure, enough, for example, to pick up a light object, is when sensation is most invisible to me. Even when trying to be extremely conscious of it, I can't give this feeling any meaning or intensity. It feels the exact same to me as not pinching.

When I press as hard as I can, I have the feeling that my body has no surface. Here is where I am most aware of my skeleton. The pressure doesn't feel like the result of external force; it's not that pressure is being externally applied, it's that my bones are pressing unbearably outward and my flesh is in the way. It's the deepest structures of my body resenting the way the rest of me keeps them from expressing their clarity.

It's when my finger and thumb are barely touching that I get closest to the sensation of pinching myself through myself. Here, touch is a thing that lives in time. When pressing hard, the relationship of sensation to time is one of expectation and suspense: when will this end, please let this end. But also one of disorientation: is this worse now? Have I gone numb, or have I simply adapted. I can no longer tell whether the sensation has changed over time, or if I have; even less begun to understand how the sensing of a pressure can change independently from the fact of it. When pinching normally, time does not exist. This could happen anytime, I can do it for however long you want. My experiences of boredom will arise independent of the physical sensation.

It's something different, though, when the pads are barely touching. The sensation, electric and delicate, feels like it arises independently of any actual physical contact. Or rather, the occasional brushing of skin on skin is a mundane stimulus that finds another sensation, not touch dependent, sitting on top of it. Like static electricity, or a kind of magnetism, my body is drawn to itself in a way that doesn't orient itself toward any kind of completion or goal.

Lightning Rod (Memphis)

script excerpt
2018-2019

Feel your vision becoming more active. Instead of leaning back, a wallflower pressed on the posterior face of your eye, let seeing expand outward, radiating along the same line the sun's energy is traversing toward you. As your vision extends upstream, it slips between the layers of the sunlight's laminar flows. Your vision rushes against the forceful saffron surges of energy. Crawling forward and through photonic emissaries of future visions, moving across sensible waves before they arrive at your eye, an echolocation of the visible. Your vision becomes transitive and roving, seeking out the origin of the light that will have hit it, liberating itself from the burden of your flesh. Instead of projecting into an imagined future in which a past will have happened, you are seeking a past that will eventually come to be. The photons cascading toward you, that you are riding against, are flooding out from the sun in what is only the final fraction of their lives, having spent millennia prior jostling around in the sun's interior. Passed around from atom to atom, drained of energy with each transfer, through misdirections and false starts, the overwhelming majority of their existences trapped within the sun's photosphere. Only to finally be released, able for the first time to travel at their full potential speed. To meet you, somewhere along those 8 minutes 20 seconds, passing you by, seeing that they will impact your retina soon, their futures gushing toward them.

At a certain point, it becomes unclear if you are seeing the sun or the phantasm it has burned into your retina. Your looking exceeds the capacity of your body and undoes the material stratum that has supported it this far. To preserve resources, the superfluous portions of your eyes begin to shut themselves down. No longer used for vision, the rods and cones in your retina desiccate. First, the rods become useless, the light of the sun too bright for them to aid in your vision. Then the cones become saturated, flooded by light and rendered incapable of resetting, their refractory periods infinitely extended. Only your retinal ganglions remain, doing nothing more than noting the presence and absence of light. Not its quality, the way it is refracted by the atmosphere as the sun sets, the colors coming into your eyes, but a simple binary.

Yes, no.

But as you are looking into the sun always, it's

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

The petrification of your retina is mirrored by a stiffening of your limbs and core. As you are reduced to a channel for stimulation to pass through, you lose awareness of your body. Your feet sink into the earth below you, your dermis coagulates into lignin, veins harden and leave behind xylem-like viaducts for the transport of fluids and waste. You are only these channels, passages for multiple currents to flood through. Your trunk is still a trunk, just the other kind. Everything vital has been emptied out, the result of a drainage that isn't ecstatic or shameful, just subservient. If you were able to move your head, you would see that a point of your vision, now constantly expanding, is entirely blown out, a double of the sun permanently imprinted on your retina. Everything you see is already an afterimage.

The sun is doubled, once inside your eye and once in front of it. Now you can see that there is a second pair of cones, parallel to the one bisected by your abdomen. This pair of cones meets on the outer edge of your cornea. With the gap between your cornea and your slippery tears serving as fulcrum, these two cones pivot as the sun sets, your eye a camera obscura for the sun, the world a camera obscura for your eye. A dual projection without an audience. Remember the first pair of cones, a wildly orbiting series of wobbly mirrored forms traced by a line traversing the central plane of your body. Now locate this in relation to the photons refracting through your cornea and lens, doubled on the horizon of the earth and your retina. Your body is no longer a conduit for one flow, but a junction box for several. A vertical post, fused to the earth and exploding into the sky, pierced by horizontal and vertical discharges. Your head can barely contain the streams.

Relax the muscles of your eyelids, feeling them go limp and slide down over your eyes. Allowing them to stay closed, knowing they won't be opening again, let the sac-thin skin of your eyelids filter the sun's light. Orient yourself toward your future, feel it projecting itself through your eyes, past your retina, along your nerves. Feel it bearing down on your pineal body, pressing into the pulsating, smooth, rubbery, nut-shaped node where your body is yoked to whatever else you are. You are a wraith, haunting the future. The tide that what is coming is riding only appears to be direct. The future is a joke, not a direction, not a time, an envelope for the obliteration you know is on its way. In reality, it is circuitous, full of digressions, and can just as likely be coming through the past. A camouflaged nostalgia, honey-potting your potential.

No longer seeing, just receiving, knowing the message streaming toward you is a promise, a threat, a fear; a desire, a demand, an inveigle, a plea, a surrender; an order, a supplication, a forgiveness, a rapture, an undoing, a sharpening, a crossing, a baptism, an ultimatum, a glance, a touch, a caress, a pressure, a puncture, a tear, an opening, an entrance, an end. Is the future a text imprinted on your lids, backlit? Or is it simply the sun, a flare already on the way out, inexorably fading toward its own fantastic extinction.

one possibility / in freefall

exhibition text
5.2024

Things have felt harder for a while now, and I'd be hard-pressed to specify that any further. I can't say exactly since when, or rather, I can't pick an exact point in the foggy block of time marked by lockdowns, long covid, and tentative sprouts of a normalcy that was never there and was never going to come back, anyway. This feeling has crept up on me, and is something I couldn't even name until it had already been with me for a while, and was familiar. Saying it feels like a good step, like something that should be an improvement, but every time I bring it up I become helplessly maudlin. I veer from just broaching a topic, to being overtaken by it. I also don't think I can name all of the things that are harder - I want to throw my hands up and say, everything, but I also know that's not true. And that in fact so many things are better:

Despite that, it's hard for me to look around this and not wonder, would I have considered this room to be labyrinthine five years ago? Would I have considered it a surprise when I round a corner and see this work or wall and not that one? Or was my spatial memory simply eviscerated? I show my boyfriend a picture of the walls and he tells me he can't tell if they're being built or torn down, and that feels right. I've been in this room, with the walls in this configuration, for a week now, and every time I'm here with someone else we struggle to know which side of which wall the other will round. It reminds me of being in the grocery store with my mom, wandering off on my own and then desperately popping from aisle to aisle looking for her, meanwhile, she was perusing some new product pyramid with hero placement in between aisles. But the fact of multiple people in the room having the same experience doesn't prove anything. It doesn't show that my experience of the space as disorienting is a normal one. It could just be that me and all of my guests are broken in the same way.

I've also reached a point where I wonder if it is any use to think about my current state in relation to a past one. I don't know that it makes any sense to constantly compare myself to a past instance that may also just be a distortion, a misremembering that is itself symptomatic of what I'm complaining about in the first place. But if I accepted the premise, and truly tried to forget what things were like before, what would that even look like. On what basis can a person navigate the world in a self-enforced ignorance of the history that gives daily life its shape?

I'm writing this listening to a record that is the side-project of an artist credited with creating vaporwave (the genre if not the name). The earliest versions of this genre were made by looping, layering, and stretching snippets from 80s pop music and commercial audio - the sonic remnants of the partial demolition of a particular era. For me, as well as for the artist, these snippets can't not have a relation to memory and nostalgia. And it's precisely the mediation and attenuation of that affect that makes the genre what it is, a sonic backrooms that raises the possibility of nostalgia without actually inducing it. It's almost a negative example of what I'm trying to imagine, a way of avoiding the present (or admitting it's not actually

inhabitable) without really going anywhere, using the reverberation of a remembered past to carry us elsewhere. It's all non-relation to a non-past, given the name of an unfelt emotion. Unmistakably, a genre of the 2000s.

What I need a model for is amnesia, for how a person can still navigate this world as no one other than themselves, still themselves, but with no remembered relation to a prior lived experience. I have a bad habit in texts like this of revealing what a previous version of the show title was, and moving from there - this time, I'm embedding the revelation in the middle. The name, actually, came from my own projection of how the artists in this show approach the materials at hand in their studios, and the world. It was another thing I couldn't really articulate, although even if I had had a cogent argument at the time, I don't think Rocco would have been on board with calling a show Encino Man.

I don't even remember if I've seen the movie or just its trailer; I know it's embedded in my memory because Brendan Fraser as a lost and confused caveman was, of course, part of my sexual awakening. I've wavered between wanting to (re)watch the movie or not, but in the end I haven't, worried that the fact of the film will get in the way of how perfectly my imprecise memory of it and its Wikipedia synopsis come together to help me understand this show. Link, our Rip van Winkle caveman, suffers an accident in a cave and is buried alive with his girlfriend, eventually frozen in a block of ice and forgotten for centuries. He wakes up having been defrosted by two Valley Boys, who act as his dysfunctional guides through the modern world. The movie is marketed as a comedy, and from the trailer it was certainly meant to be, but the bones of the story are tragedy. Everyone Link knew is dead, all of the material supports for his way of life have been paved over and forgotten, and his only entry point to the world he finds himself in are two adolescents who, themselves, do not quite know how to survive the world they find themselves in.

But this is also a situation I think can help me make sense of things. A tragedy that can be a comedy, presumably, if it is inflected properly, if the casting is tweaked. A lost person who has to depend on their guides to scramble through the world, oblivious to the fact that they are just as lost as them. Each modeling, experientially, how they take the remains of a former world around them and shape it into a kind of sense, how they map the movements that were adapted to an extinct form of life onto new terrain. Forgetting the things that are past, and simply seeing how your body handles what is in front of it. Finding out what your body can do, and what can be done to it.

Herbert De Colle: So Emotional

catalogue essay
6.2021

“[Men] are takers. They will take every single thing from you, and they will drain you. They will never give to you, ever, because it's not about you, it's always about them. And they will leave you broken, in a heap, on the floor.”

Candice Carty-Williams, *Queenie*

Herbert De Colle's series of paper pulp sculptures, *Emotion*, is what happens when a man is done with you. A series of thin, pigmented discs composed of pressed paper pulp, with two holes and a slit achieving the effect of a face, these emotions are different enough to be distinguishable from one another; not in a way you would call unique, but rather, identifiable. The variations (in wave, wobble, texture, expression, delicately bile-tinged color) achieve the effect of a personality, if not a person. They feel purpose-built to make you love them despite yourself, like brachycephalic dogs, or mammalian babies. And the recognition that these flattened skins are almost an Other, places you in a nearly ethical relation to them: face to face, you are drawn into an obligation of care. Explaining them to a friend, I noted I feel affectionate towards them, almost protective, like they are deflated himbos.

Even though there is no *Emotion* in this show, I still think we can walk around the room and, piece by piece, ask: what has a man done to you?

If my relationship to *Emotion* is one of being ghosted by an arousing object, there is a delicate edging at play in the fringed text works *Peace*, *Love*, and *Forever*. It's difficult not to feel like we are being teased: on the one hand, there is the anarchic satisfaction of the mess that would result if De Colle would just get on with it, just go a little bit further with the knife. It would only be a matter of a few centimeters, and then the shimmering mirage of these words, already nearly invisible from how much they have been worn down with overuse, would collapse into a pile of toxically bright kindling. Then they could be useful: we could warm ourselves in front of them, cook something, maybe, have a party, move towards other bodies, hide away from others with them in the uneven flicker of their burning. These shreds would light up beautifully.

But here they are, instead, wispily clinging to each other, strand by strand, flat weft extensions for a giant, their legibility vulnerable to the slightest breeze. I wonder, at the vernissage, will the air move enough to make them tremble? Will it be enough that you can imagine them out on exterior walls, plywood barriers, doorways, just the narrowest strip of their upper edges held down with oozing wheat paste, the rest of them frantically tickling the wind?

Why is he doing it?

--LOVE

What are you after?

--PEACE

How long will it take?

--FOREVER

I can't look at *Peace* and not think of gay marriage: the path of an ideal that ossifies into a symbol, a zeitgeist that precipitates into a bauble, a surge toward emancipation that drips down into two signatures on a contract. Obviously, the form is deeply heterosexual: a pair, inextricably wrapped up in each other (here literally cast together, eternally). But also quite literally homo, the same. They are like a pair of promise rings, promising the exact opposite of what they have become. Chained together, they're not going anywhere. But however they got here, they didn't arrive unscathed. They don't appear as anything other than a symbol, but that symbol is carried on a substrate that is scorched, chipped, gouged away, a material that is marked with the violences its eponym enacts on others. Maybe this is the sacrifice any symbolic burden demands from the flesh that bears it.

Kurt Cobain/Courtney Love and Courtney Love/Kurt Cobain are full of words, and no one understands them. We have an idea of the characters (Hole, Nirvana, Kurt, Courtney, Billy), but everyone here is only visible through the prism of a very specific cage (a band, a shotgun, a gender, a drug, a name, a body, a fandom). Two parties, each saying the same thing over and over again, each only appearing to the other as a specifically shaped absence. Even though the language of each song is subjected to the same treatment, filtered through the same abstract machine, it's impossible not to feel how fundamentally incongruous they are: one expansive, endless, dense, pungent, even, in its masochistic evacuation; the other opaque, evasive, vowels stretched beyond comprehension, consonants hollowed out and whistling, always wanting more even if that more is an end. Each operating according to predetermined logics, following the only narrative they can find, their sole protest a hole inscribed in the other.

Kurt & Courtney are trapped in a structure of meaning and love that will never serve either of them, but to which there is no imaginable outside. They are so close, but they can't help but miss each other, over and over, until at last one of them goes missing. All they can do is disinvest from this structure entirely, occupy their roles but refuse to believe in them, cut themselves into each other, hoping that eventually, the registration will go off, that their gap will make the other stutter, that somehow the friction of their husks rubbing against each other will ignite, burn up, leave a residue for someone else to make a new mark with.

Foam Party

exhibition text
9.2018

After heavy rains, floods, inundations, as the waters recede and begin to return to their normal levels, a dense, variegated foam gathers in the parts of the water where the current starts to vary. Around rocks, wherever turbulence arises in response to obstacles, in eddies, in the slower bends at turns, the rich precipitate bunches up, roiling over itself like a dessert, or expandable foam. A glittering excess that rises to a surface, the result of a liquid purging itself of something it can't absorb. Scrunched, massed together, never just a single element but also not a larger assemblage. *There are many cells, not all are alive, but everything is in play, creating the conditions in which you are living.*

When a cat eats something disgusting, what it most resembles is an animal with rabies, violently foaming at the mouth. After biting certain lizards, or toads, in a desperate attempt to get the bad taste out of its mouth, the cat will generate thick loams of foamy discharge, frothing at the mouth and hopefully carrying whatever was so disgusting away with it. The foam is just its way of trying to undo a mistake. Or when given a pill, and biting down onto it, when it hasn't been properly administered, not thrown far down enough the throat to not be tasted, then the foam will come again, trying to rinse out the medication it has hopefully already swallowed.

Spuming, spurting, gathering in frictive crevices. An insubstantial sheen, a suspicious iridescence wrapped around voids, gaps, lipstick on a hole. Carrying substances forward on its taught surfaces, scents, tastes, microorganisms, experiences, socially transmitted desires, memories, traces of previously inhabited landscapes. Purged forth from a sustaining body that can no longer contain it, or expelled in pleasure, or disgust, gaudily announcing itself, transporting bits of garbage from where it came, from where it is, unidentifiable, intermingled, and untraceable. The foam is a way for people to meet each other, to see themselves refracted in the multiple lenses encrusting their bodies, like barnacles. The foam can be a fun excuse for touching, acting as both lubricant and camouflage.

When a hedgehog encounters something new, or delicious, it will feverishly masticate it, turning it over in its mouth, spreading its particles thinly across its tongue and the interior of its cheeks, smacking its lips, a misophonic's nightmare. Once the stuff is thoroughly mixed in with its saliva, it starts to spread it across its body, unfurling its freakishly long tongue to do what's called self-anointing, blessing itself with this semi-liquid gunk mix of its own saliva and the taste it loves, or at least finds novel. This is maybe to disguise its scent, to smell like what is new or lovely or feared, or is an attempt to add a poison to its quills.

Beneath the cover of foam, poisons and perfumes can be conveyed and diffused. It is self-generating. Rising up out of its own collapse, drawing energy from the liquid bodies it emerges from, surging out, vanguard ranks punctured and reduced to a thin film, only to be reanimated from behind. A foam extravaganza under cloud cover. Clouds thin, bright orb reappears and flashes off the refractory assemblages, shooting off intermittently blinding rays, overexposing

expanses of water and retina. The opticality of the mass starts to detach from its surface, hovering above it, applied to it like a skin, like a slightly mismatched visitor from a flatter, more iridescent, less eschatological dimension.

The little mermaid is riddled, flecked, with foam — she hides under it, imagines herself dissolving into it, her future is to collapse into a gurgle of foam on a wave crest. When the sun is rising and hits her unloved skin, she should burn up and dissolve into a froth of bubbles; instead of rising out of a froth of Titan cock and water, she should dissipate into one. The foam is enticing, and maybe what is most enticing about it is how much it wants. To sparkle for you, to glint, to blind you with its flickering, fickle surface. It is barely there, more a surface for the sun to bounce off of than a thing on its own. If it gets in your eyes, it can feel like knives in the face, which must be better really than feeling you are walking on knives, but are also the region's best dancer, unless you are the best looker, too, then it is the same. And the glints are anyway a knife to the eye.

The flashing light glinting off the spumescent surface of the water is a misdirection, confusing the solar origin of the light with the bubbles it glitters through, small marine duplicates of their light source 8 minutes 20 seconds away. The depths of the sea foam are just an illusion, a hallucination of its surface, imprinting on an eye, a rock, a piece of flotsam or jetsam, trash plastic sheeting beginning its centuries long disintegration. *Light meets everything and it's where the color goes. It's what's left when it's gone.*

Italicized text is from Eileen Myles, *Afterglow* (a dog memoir)