



Published by The Mission Projects

1431 W. Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60642

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# OVERKILL

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# CURATORIAL ESSAY

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, video art was partially conceived as an exploration for sketching and documenting performative acts. Video work became a means of infiltrating popular culture and provided a more democratic way to produce and view new work. Bruce Nauman, Joan Jonas and Paul McCarthy were artists that began to use this new media, creating work that related to the body and space. Works such as *Violin Tuned D.E.A.D.* (1969) by Bruce Nauman, *Left Side Right Side* (1972) by Joan Jonas and *Black and White Tapes* (1970-75) by Paul McCarthy change and distort the body's reaction to the space of film.

These seminal works are comprised of repetitive performance acts that occurred throughout the duration of the videotape or film. Here, these performances were enacted within the studio and oftentimes occurred without an audience and existed as isolated moments for exploration.

The television was an important context in which to explore these video works as it began to frame the studio acts of these artists. Or, with respect to *Left Side Right Side*, the television became a critical means for investigating the work and questioning the medium itself. These early media works could be seen in totality or in moments on the space of a television monitor. Also, by means of using the video loop, where the work is thus repeated over and over, they took on an entirely different relationship. The television was a part of everyday life and not only offered a public space for the work to be viewed, but it helped to shape the context of the work.

# OVERPARK

BY JEFFERSON GODDARD



Television had become a popular and economically feasible means of broadcast and came to represent a proscenium by which we experienced public life. It gave these former denizens of the city that had begun to migrate to outer territories the chance to connect to city; the television also became a representation for the public realm.

Public space within the public realm can also be seen as a physical space that is activated and charged by the interaction of bodies relating to one another. This level of engagement is performative; whether accidental or intentional, these acts affect change unto the urban environment. Both architecture and film help to frame these overwrought movements or performances. The result is saturation, redundancy and discomfort within, outside and around the frame. All are consequences that affect people moving through the city at every level of engagement.

*Overkill* is an attempt to examine this moment in which our bodies are barraged in the active urban environment by the over saturation of sounds and images. Overloading on information is part of daily life and assaults our bodies. Our culture is one that is fragmented and often repeats itself in short repetitive behaviors. In the urban realm, this onslaught is framed within interstitial or in-between spaces and peripheral zones that exist on the outside. Globalization, simulation and suburbanization are all consequences for this decentralizing of the urban realm. These spaces are often overflowing with information and force us to confront one another. Personal space is a space that urban dwellers cannot afford; we consistently travel towards each other. No longer do we navigate

towards a center. It is through the daily acts that give a specific character to the public space of the city.

Candice Breitz isolates the words "you and I" from Whitney Houston's pop anthem in *Double Whitney (I Will Always Love You, 1999/2000)*. This shortened moment in time captures and isolates these simplistic means of identity. The "you and the I" repeat the self; making a self-obsessive mantra that travels throughout the space. It's repeated performance and the dual placement of monitors forces the viewer within a dissected space. By angling this installation, it serves to shift the viewer intentionally off-center. Navigating between boundaries and intersecting spaces, **Casilda Sanchez' *As Inside as the Eye can See* (2009) confronts a wall space projection with converging bodies that interlace vulnerable spaces and create an interstitial space. This in between space thus creates a peripheral boundary by which the scale of the work both confronts and dominates the viewer. Uncomfortable and overblown, the space of the projected image also represents a private boundary where only architecture can frame this savage act.**

*Blow* (2010) by EJ Hill pushes the boundaries between performance and peril as the artist exhausts himself in the attempt to resuscitate the audience. A close-up fixed camera view of the artist highlights this vulnerability as his repetitive and exhaustive breathing towards the viewer is but a momentary gift. Much like the early work of Paul McCarthy and Chris Burden, EJ pushes the boundaries of discomfort in an effort to give of himself to the space. Only the viewer is left helplessly implicated by witnessing this piece.

Also implicating the viewer is the work of Manon de Boer who invites a dancer, Cynthia Loemij to respond to a violin sonata composed by Eugène Ysaÿe in *Dissonant* (2010). For the duration of the video, Manon documents Cynthia remembering the sonata while interpreting the piece through dance. Through the act of splicing the film into segments but allowing the audio to continue uninterrupted, the artist reinforces this duality of memory and interpretation. Through the implied space of sound, the viewer is left to construct the interstitial moments of this segmented and pieced together video. Here, both artist and viewer work together.

By making the smallest movement and gesture in *The 4-1/2 inch Insight* (2010), Diego Leclery slyly peeks out from the outer boundary. This singular gesture is

like that of Bruce Nauman's singular studio gestures from his early video work. Repeated over and over, this act framed within the space of a television screen questions the space and the other works within the gallery. Leclery's act is not intent on what is in front, but rather what is beyond as he looks away and towards the outside. This space is the space of insight as the artist pokes fun at the frame.

Within *Overkill*, the space of the gallery exists within a frame and is challenged by the act of the body. These five performance-based works are seen as a means of interpreting and bounding the space of the gallery to reference specific spatial conditions within Chicago. Public meeting places like plazas and train stations can serve the city, but can also isolate the human in terms of scale. Therefore they rely upon activity and density. Another spatial condition is the ubiquitous alley that has been part of Chicago's physical fabric following the great fire. Through the use of the frame, both by the television or employing the framing element of city design, these spaces are often experienced by sensation or memory. Oftentimes, we must navigate from visual cues and personal landmarks through these alleyways and public meeting spaces. *Overkill* emphasizes both sensation and memory as we recognize and witness these repetitive actions of the performer within the videos shown. However, *Overkill* is not set up like a stage, instead it immerses the viewer within the frame.







# CASILDA SANCHEZ

My work explores an immersion in the experience of vision and its relationship to a physical beating body.

With video installation I explore ideas and gestures of vision, voyeurism and intimacy, examining their contradictions and exposing them as

*"As Inside as the Eye can See" 2009 | Courtesy the Artist (Chicago)*



metaphorical behaviors. By depicting concrete situations zoomed to the very basic image of the eye decontextualized from its continent, I intend to reflect about our interpersonal communication dynamics.

We are all voyeurs at some point. At least I know I am. I have always been inclined to observe the intimacy of others, if what we call intimacy can be susceptible to being eyed. I believe intimacy is something that - when it exists and occurs - must be apprehensible, and so, I am on the trail. Intimacy is not linked to individualism but to a fold where I can relate to myself as well as to others. Jose Luis Pardo, in his essay *Intimacy*, writes, "There is no greater intimacy than the shared". In my work I examine community and intimacy as a pairing, as disparate behaviors originating from an identical drive. Not only are these dichotomies not exclusive, but complexly complementary.

I am interested in the practice of voyeurism as an act of entering into another's space, of paying close attention to someone else. The eyesight may not necessarily be the best sense to comprehend and explore intimacy; think of the immediacy of touch, smell, taste or hearing. It

is because sight is considered to "maintain the most emphatic exteriority of its object", as Cathryn Vasseleu points out, that it becomes enormously motivating and relevant to explore those moments and faults where it crosses the surface and partakes of the perceived subject.

These ideas drove me to consider how might we study intimacy through the act of looking. The paradox: if I am becoming a voyeur in order to see intimacy and join somebody's inner space, how can that be possible if intimacy implies relation and community, and the voyeur's equation contains distance and detachment on it?

This question informs the video installation entitled *"As Inside as the Eye can See"*. In this piece two eyes look at each other intently all the while moving closer and closer. The desire of "seeing" the "other", of entering her space and trying to understand, or even share, the other person's intimacy through the gaze turns out to be an effort in vain because without distance we cannot see. We find ourselves again in the paradox: so close but unable to see more than a blurred image. The gaze becomes now more of a haptic sense, perceiving the other not through the sight but through the rubbing of the eyelashes. The resulting image embodies a physical eye that beats, touches and relates intimately.