

# Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes

## A Deirdre Logue Monograph

Ed. Mike Hoolboom

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# Against Autobiography

by Steve Reinke

Persephone—stolen by Hades to be Queen of the Underworld for the winter months, her abduction witnessed only by the sun, pomegranate seeds in her pockets. The name means something like "she who destroys light." Deirdre Logue's half hour **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes**—made of a dozen individually titled components—does not exactly destroy light. But it revels in anxiety, sensualizes it, renders it seductive, beautiful. It excavates points of light from darkness, is sustained within an infrared nuclear glow. Earlier work was slapstick: physical misfortunes came from external forces. In these new works the body is buffeted by itself, an inside job. Anxiety is a purely internal force that makes only a slight, wistfully comic, mark on the world.

The first component is titled **Per Se**, which evokes a silenced Persephone, a Persephone without the phone. (There is always something silly about riffing on the possible associations of names, as in Derrida's writings on Genet and Ponge. Silly, yet compulsively engaging. One finds meaning where no meaning should be, where no meaning has been consciously, explicitly authored. The kind of meaning-making that slips so easily into the paranoia of conspiracy theories.

Certain signs may be arbitrary, but meaning—if it is meaningful—must surely be motivated.) In **Per Se** a light-destroyer performs a self-silencing monologue.

**Per Se** functions as a limit-setting introduction to the components that follow. It is an explanation and apologia. In extreme close-up—her face fills the frame—Logue whispers in the conspiratorial tone of secret-telling, "What I really want to say is private," the starting point of all confession and much autobiography. Her face has a violet tint reminiscent of reflected monitor light, the voice is distorted and the image stutters with some kind of motion blur. Still, the voice seems to belong to the body. We don't see much of the body, not even the entire head: it's all face, the age is indeterminate, the gender is nominally female, like a hockey mom or dyke. (Students in my grad seminar *Queer Pictures* including a female-to-male transsexual identified Logue as possibly transsexual or, as they preferred, "gender queer," a term I had not heard before.) She continues:

What I really wanna say is private, so what makes it so hard to say is that I don't really understand it, **Per Se**. And so what I really wanna know is how I can say it even though it's still private and you can know it without me telling you, **Per Se**. That's what I wanna try to do. Then I will have something that you can take away that will give you a sense of me without actually



knowing who I am, **Per Se**. Or what I'm trying to say, **Per Se**. Sorry. That's not very much to go on. Let me try again. If, if I tell you what I mean by all of this then I will be giving you more than I'm willing to, **Per Se**. And it's not exactly that it's a secret, **Per Se**. It's just that I don't know how to say it the right way, **Per Se**.

While Logue enunciates individual words with a clear deliberateness, the rhythm of the sentences is slow, with uneven pauses. The words "**Per Se**" act as refrain and punctuation, the repetition draining the words of their referentiality, their linguistic meaning. Logue deploys "**Per Se**" as a parody of the way in which the term is colloquially used as a slightly formal way of hedging one's bets by calling into question the accuracy of particular categories, definitions or events. When one hears, "It wasn't exactly iambic pentameter, **Per Se**," the speaker usually means, "It wasn't exactly iambic pentameter, exactly," and nothing more.

"**Per Se**" (in Logue's video) is a metonym for the impossibility of any linguistically-based representation of an authentic fact or experience of the world to be self evident, a thing in itself. There is no "**Per Se**" in Logue's monologue: no utterance is self-evident. "**Per Se**" obliterates the very possibility it calls for, parodically setting the limits of speech before turning, in the video's subsequent components, to modes of discourse that are not primarily linguistic.

The trap, the double bind, of first-person discourse in the now-dominant mode of confessional autobiography: "I can tell you anything that is not a secret" co-exists with "The only things worth hearing are secrets." Together, they form the engine of the false candour on which we thrive. The more fundamental question—particularly for an artist—is why say anything at all. But, taking for granted the necessity of a discursive self-presentation, one must proceed with the task of self-representation.

Identity politics collapsed under the weight of its own hypocrisy: it refused to acknowledge or negotiate the always-profound difference between group identity and individual subjectivity. (Or, perhaps more generously, it prioritized group identity over the complexities of an always already alienated individual subjectivity.) The question under the recently eclipsed regime of identity politics was always a spooky one for me: How do I manifest the attributes of the various groups of which I am, or claim to be, a constituent? Still, it was a question.

In **Per Se** Logue succinctly traces the limit of post-identity politics' self-presentational discourse.

**The Exemplary** - "Exemplary" is a strange word as it means both the best of its kind (A+) or the most characteristic (C). Still, things seem so often to be exemplary in both

respects simultaneously. **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** is exemplary. It is, to follow a thesaurus' synonyms, excellent, outstanding and commendable as well as illustrative, characteristic and typical.

As my graduate students noted, many of the segments are clearly situated in a tradition of video performance in which the artist performs a simple action with their body and a few props. The actions generally have a psycho-sexual and sculptural aspect and are recorded by a single, stationary camera in a single take. Certain tropes reappear: compulsive repetition; a masturbatory, intense concentration; use of domestic objects and spaces for contrary ends; gaze fixed on something off-camera, presumably a monitor; actions which vacillate between comfort and trauma.

The best segments exceed their clichés in various ways. One is Logue's interest in the texture of the image. Many segments combine, through layers and superimpositions, hand-processed film (both 16mm and small gauge) and digital video. Often there is a dominant, representational image with the textural flatness of digital video that is superimposed with a blotchy, grainy film image that, rather than representing objects figuratively or visually, pushes the entire visual field into a haptic territory.

Even in the most familiar of the segments, something is going on in addition to a clichéd video performance.

Logue's persistent use of doublings, reversals, superimpositions, as well as having the segments formally paired with each other creates an overall structure in which individual components—sometimes slight on their own—resonate.

**Against Autobiography** - In Godard's masterwork **JLG par JLG** he states that the film (**JLG par JLG**) is not autobiography but self-portrait. The distinction is, I think, important. Autobiography is a retrospective narrative told in the first person in which the author, narrator and implied author coincide. Moreover, autobiography has the goal of arriving, through its backward journey, at a true or authentic self knowledge, the subject's profound, inner core. Typically, the autobiography is prose.

The self-portrait is typically an image: painting, photograph. In writing, the self-portrait is often referred to as a sketch, and tends to be more descriptive than narrative.

The act of autobiography is not active, not performative, but reflective. Autobiography requires an act of removal. The subject must step out of the narrative stream of life events and recount,

remember, reflect from a position that is inactive, neutral, removed. In autobiography, introspection is retrospection. The self-portrait is not retrospective but, relatively speaking, immediate, in the present.

(There remains the dream of an autobiography that consists entirely of an account of its own writing, a completely reflexive text in which the subject's life consists entirely of writing/recording the activity of writing/recording the life of writing/recording. Perhaps a bit like those early epistolary novels in which the characters write letters recounting events even as those events are unfolding. Of course, such a life would be no life at all. Evidence, perhaps, that the possibility of life converging with art is remote. Art must be used as a wedge against life. Or: there is no life, only art.)

One can have but one authentic autobiography, but an endless number of self-portraits.

Can autobiography even exist in the moving image? I'm beginning to doubt it. Film or video cannot be retrospective in the way writing can. In autobiography the subject necessarily fragments into separate agents: author, narrator, implied author. What becomes of the subject in self-portraiture? They do not become merely a reference point for gauging verisimilitude, surely. Not simply the origin for a series of possible likenesses. In the self-portrait, the subject

does not fragment into separate agents, but regresses into masquerade, into play. Not the rotation of empty (hollow, death) masks that Derrida characterized the project of autobiography to be, but a series of poses that are struck, recorded, abandoned.

Autobiography wants everything. It wants you dead. It is teleological. It begins at the end, and then works—inevitably, inexorably—to that end.

It is difficult to think of introspection without retrospection, introspection without temporal depth. Self-portraiture is a flash of introspection, shallow, immediate, without depth. Surface introspection. A queer thing.

Autobiography can never be capricious.

No longer "Know thyself." Instead "Keep your self to yourself." Or, possibly, "Keep yourself to your self."

**Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** is not autobiography but self-portraiture, a series of self-portraits.

**Steve Reinke** is an artist and writer best known for his videos. **The Hundred Videos** was his work as a young artist. His current project, **Final Thoughts**, is a digital archive that will not be complete until his death. He recently co-edited, with Chris Gehman, ***The Sharpest Point: Animation at the End of Cinema***. A book of his videos, **Everybody Loves Nothing**, was published by Coach House.

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# Circles of Confusion

by Jon Davies

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I would like to begin by describing two noteworthy and astonishing loops in world cinema. At the end of **Stroszek** (1977), Werner Herzog's surreal, primal denunciation of a cheerily barbaric post-war America, the eponymous suicidal outsider-hero rigs up a stolen truck to drive around and around in a never-ending circle. While the truck circulates (before bursting into flames), Stroszek visits an arcade stocked with caged animals that perform amusing stunts by rote: the star is the Dancing Chicken. After watching these animals do their endearing but grotesquely mechanical routines, Stroszek mounts a ski lift, making the rounds several times before shooting himself. The film ends with an extended sequence of the unstoppable Dancing Chicken's relentless automatic soft-shoe before mercifully fading to black. Such Sisyphean metaphors of futility and sublime kitsch suggest the perverse way that American ideology keeps motoring ahead into its own glorious mythology, ignorant of its self-destructive, materialist and morally bankrupt direction. It is a deformation of the factory assembly line that symbolized the American dream, the aspirations that Stroszek himself moved from Germany to the USA to follow: rather than churning out bubble gum or bombs, this conveyor belt to



nowhere just drags its citizens deeper into soul-killing ignorance and aggression.

**Memory for Max, Claire, Ida and Company** (2005), Alan King's jaw-dropping *verité* documentary about Alzheimer's disease is a very different beast than Herzog's epic. Claire is a real person who lives at the Jewish Home for the Aged at the Bayview Centre for Geriatric Care in Toronto; she also seems much more together than many of her compatriots. One day, Max, her fellow resident and best friend passes away. Claire is inconsolable, distraught beyond words. However, after a few days Claire completely forgets that Max has died, and it must be explained to her not only that he has died and that there was already a memorial service, but that they had already told her all of this, that she was present at the memorial. We are forced to watch her go through the process of discovering and grieving his death anew. The horrible punchline: she is stuck in a short circuit of forgetting that she has no hope of breaking.

Deirdre Logue's *Enlightened Nonsense: 10 Short Performance Films About Repetition 1997–2000* is a series of such circuits, circles and loops. An exceedingly rich and suggestive series of performance documentations that put the material of the queer body and the film medium through rigorous, ridiculous and potentially injurious paces, **Enlightened Nonsense** hovers somewhere

between the registers of Herzog's fiction and King's fact like the shaded portion of a Venn diagram: between travesty and tragedy, metaphor and mortal coil, absurdity and anguish.

When a body or a mind like Stroszek's, Claire's or Logue's becomes trapped in a loop it immediately becomes dysfunctional. Banal, everyday acts and gestures become starkly disturbing the more they are repeated. Human and non-human animals that are forced to spend extended periods of time in cages incessantly pace back and forth or methodically pound their heads against the wall. This catatonia is so symbolically aligned with trauma and madness because a loop folds back on itself, returns to the beginning, rather than evolving: It is so troubling because it aborts progress. Someone in a loop does not reach any place, they always and only go nowhere. Logue has described her process thus: "The films were shot, hand-processed and edited within a total of approximately one week. Like a week long performance, self imposed limitations, a concentration of time and the intensity of the production framework are elements conducive to and in keeping with the subject matter [...] I am the primary performer, director and technician."

By trapping her own body in a proscribed system, Logue is heir to a fruitful tradition of performers who dramatize a body in crisis such as Bruce Nauman and



Vito Acconci. Nauman's self-explanatory **Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square** (1967–8) documented his body's deliberate pacing around a masking-tape quadrangle in his studio, while **Bouncing in the Corner** (1968) featured the artist rocking back and forth in the corner of his studio for a full hour, arms slapping against the walls. Both are archetypal manifestations of Nauman's preoccupation with irritating and dull repetition, often played out with his own body. Acconci described his **Trademarks** (1970) as "Turning in on myself, turning on myself (my action drives me into a circle): a way to connect, re-connect, my body [...] Reasons to move: move into myself—move around myself—move in order to close a system. Reasons to move: show myself to myself—show myself through myself—show myself outside." This pure, closed work involved Acconci twisting his body into contortions in order to forcefully bite every part of his body within reach, leaving tooth-prints as marks. Such experiments engender a condition of stasis that permits reflection on and knowledge about both the physical world and the ephemeral—abstract concepts, emotions, limits of the body.

In many ways, Logue's performances mantle the themes and the contradictions of these two canonical, American male artists. The repetitive gesture has very different meanings for Nauman and for Acconci in relation to their view of the self. For the former, the

repetitive gesture was the building block for a career-long exploration with the vacuity, absurdity and even sublime horror that is generated by circular patterns, linguistic or corporal. His performances from the late sixties are not about Bruce Nauman the way that Acconci's are about Vito Acconci, for whom gestures were repeated to signify the intensity of his obsessive examination of the body's and the psyche's relationship to space and territory, to creating both a geography of the self and a subjectifying of public space. Logue queers both of these practices by matching Nauman's ludicrous irrationality with Acconci's ontological mapping, lunacy with severity; the artist's identity is both abstracted and cultivated. Logue's temporal and queer distance from this period of performance body art allows her to critically work over its tropes.

To employ a queer cliché, the films are about "processing": not only of body and mind, but of film. Unlike her body art predecessors in the sixties and seventies who used film and video predominantly for documentation, Logue exerts as much energy on the recording as on the performance. Logue has claimed, "Each film is about the body versus fill in the blank [...]" You'll notice in the films there is always a pairing of at least two things." This quality extends to the post-production process where it becomes a confrontation between Logue and the celluloid. They are hand-processed, tinted, roughed up, edited, some

solarized, some painted, some scratched, and they bear the evidence of a very raw and tangible contact between filmmaker and film that mirrors those interactions recorded in their frames. The act of representing and reproducing the circular acts on-screen further compounds their repetitiveness by permitting them to be re-viewed over and over again. Such abundant redundancy allows us to pay attention to the small details and fissures that distinguish one action from the seemingly identical next, or as critic Kathryn Chiong puts it: "the irregular pulse of a body that falters, accelerates, decelerates."

This attention to the recording medium casts her as both director and star, and Logue's consistent use of the close-up in **Enlightened Nonsense** seems to parody this technique's use in Hollywood cinema and television. Historically, the close-up is intended to draw attention to the intensity of emotion visible on the actor's face which is often exquisitely lit and made-up. By contrast, Logue's use of the close-up in **Patch**, **H2Oh Oh** and **Tape**, for example, focuses on her performing unpleasant, distressing and illogical actions to her visage in a rhythmic, non-narrative way: sticking and unsticking a patch on her face clockwise until she has covered its entire surface twice, dousing her head in water—hidden below the frame line—like a torture victim acting as her own unrelenting interrogator (her use of reverse motion in this scene contributes to the sense of uncanniness and

inescapability), wrapping and unwrapping her head with packing tape (the most painful to watch—and by far the longest—I am tempted to subtitle it "mummification for the modern girl"). As opposed to earlier body art, where durable audiovisual documentations—simply framed recordings masking their mediation were required to evidence ephemeral performances, Logue is a filmmaker, thinking through framing, camera distance and angles cinematically and televisually. By positioning a butch queer female body that is largely invisible in film and television in such a mediated way, **Enlightened Nonsense** exaggerates and burlesques the ordinary ways that the body—especially the queer body—is poked and prodded by a wide range of mechanisms of power on an everyday basis, making a melodrama of queer abjection. One can't help but also think of Judith Butler's theories of gender as performativity, an unconscious citation of a fictional ideal, a stylized repetition of oppressive acts. And those who fail to live up to this coherent norm—namely androgynous bodies like Logue's (and mine)—are usually punished through shame. In an interview with Karyn Sandlos, Logue carefully positioned the work as not freakish and not about self-abuse, but instead dealing with feelings of despair, humiliation, confusion—and materials—food, water, adhesives—that are very common and mundane. This ordinariness is partly accomplished through its cinematic and televisual codes that resist reification.

Another difference from the early performances of Nauman and Acconci—which seem to have been recorded in studios and galleries, in any case on indoor sets—is that all but one of Logue's performances take place in the great outdoors, in what appears to be a dry, hardscrabble plain. This strategy both refuses the myth of queerness as a purely urban phenomenon, and permits a kind of seclusion in an elemental environment away from other—perhaps hostile—bodies of the social world. Queerness has always had a contentious relationship to the "natural," and it is almost as if Logue is crashing her body against the natural world to see what kind of chemical reaction might result. In this way, we can align her repetitive gestures as much to the necessary and inescapable cycles of the earth and heavens as to self-generated obstacle courses; the rotation of the globe and the revolution around the sun are the epitome of "natural" but no human body could endure such regimentation. In **Road Trip** and **Fall**, the trials she exerts on her body require the environment as a participant, they are as much about exposing the body to the outside world as about performing actions on oneself. Films such as these could not have been shot just anywhere: Crawling on the brushy ground on all fours with her tongue licking the terrain in **Road Trip** and experiencing the impact of collapsing onto this (presumably) same earth over and over again in **Fall** (It is interesting to also note that **Fall** affords us the most direct, unobstructed view of Logue's

appearance, from many different angles and distances). This wrangling with the organic is also evident in her preference for an analog soundtrack created from playing with the film medium itself rather than bringing in outside music. In pieces like **Tape** and **Milk & Cream**, the sounds she creates by manipulating the optical soundtrack take on a pulsating quality, an unyielding beat that further emphasizes the repetitiveness and oppressive inescapability of her actions (a function that sound also accomplishes for Nauman). Significantly, along with the stark and harrowing **H2Oh Oh**, these two pieces feature Logue in the most danger of self-suffocation.

However, even though the obvious danger courted or discomfort caused by her activities make one cringe, **Enlightened Nonsense** maintains a fine balance between suffering and nonsense. In discussing her tone, Logue describes it as "like cynicism, and cynicism is a kind of wit that draws on despair." In **Always a Bridesmaid Never a Bride of Frankenstein**, Logue draws large cartoonish scars on her body with a magic marker, using the process of hand-scratching the film stock to add charges of electricity to the stylus's path, adding a crackle of energy that has a very tactile presence and lends a palpable sting to what are clearly artificial wounds. This piece seems quite loaded precisely because Logue is not harming herself but is instead generating

scars—conspicuous visual proof of the imperfect healing of past traumas (This activity is reminiscent of **Patch** where the stitching on the old baseball leather she moves around her face bears a strong resemblance to a scar but a mobile and impermanent one). To emphasize the excess of her verbose and witty title, she bookends the piece with a campy excerpt of an unexpected phone call from a cheesy TV melodrama. Perhaps the most outlandish piece—both silly and unsettling—involves a reclining Logue filling her mouth to bursting with whip cream and milk in two different performances (and outfits) intercut together. The black and white **Milk & Cream** is stained by hand-painted splotches reminiscent of human waste that visually punctuate the gluttony: yellow spots on the gushes of milk, rusty brown on the daubs of cream. This kind of abject over-consumption and infantile regression has both high art and low culture precedents from Paul McCarthy's condiment-slathered 1974 performance **Hot Dog**, to a rural pie-eating contest that one might see reported on TV on a slow news day.

**Moohead** is a miniature masterpiece that is incredibly comical, campy, craftily edited and conceptually evocative. It employs a perverse, reddened-with-age television commercial from what looks to be the seventies to sell a milky gelatin dessert; cutesy children enthusiastically extol the virtues of the shimmying dairy treat's jiggling and wobbling. Logue,

meanwhile, is subject to a basketball being bounced off of her head over and over and over again and she cuts back and forth between celebratory commercial and sternly wry self-hurt. The great coup is how Logue cuts the piece according to sound so that snippets of the ad's jingle and sound effects punctuate the precise instant when the ball strikes her noggin; because of this delay, the clips from the commercial itself are largely silent. While Logue's own catalogue entry on the series focus on her internal and self-contained process, we cannot help but wonder who the invisible, off-screen ball thrower is in this piece. Because it references the socioeconomic realities of the outside world of capitalism and consumption through using the commercial, and the inclusion of this unseen but essential co-performer, **Moohead** is striking for opening up what is most often a closed circuit in the other works.

**Enlightened Nonsense** also uses the loop conceptually through the occasional use of found footage, placing Logue's body in the lineage of past celluloid bodies that have now been consigned to the archival heap, their current state unknown. This is especially true of the mysterious, oneiric and near-silent **Sleep Study**. While it is not stated overtly, the protagonist—a young, rugged blonde girl, her image recorded off of a television (the other found footage does not employ such mediation)—is clearly Logue, who uncannily resembles the creepily sweet-faced girl



at the end of **Moohead**. As we watch this young lass perform for the camera, her show is interrupted by an extreme close-up scan of a sleeping body—the present-day, grown-up Logue—that is wired up for what the title implies is a scientific experiment to measure her dreams. We then cut back to the young girl who returns into the distance of the schoolyard from where she had originated. This piece is quite different from the others in its relative linearity, its melancholic air and in the eclipsing of Logue's current body for the more diffuse and ethereal body of her as a child. There is no repeated action here: instead the loop is a circuit of past and present, child and adult, that is permitted by the easy access of indexical media to document us at all stages of life.

The final piece of **Enlightened Nonsense** left to discuss is the fast, complex and dense **Scratch**. The only segment to use inter-titles, it acts as a sort of manifesto for the entire series: "My path is deliberately difficult / My reasons endlessly repetitious / But it is through this that I know myself." As with **Moohead**, **Scratch** juxtaposes found footage—of scissors and other implements, of breaking dishes, and of a bed that miraculously moves by itself (as is only possible in retro TV commercials) with another example of Logue's altercations with the natural world: her removal of a nest of burrs from her pubic hair (we also see the Velcro-like flora in exquisite detail throughout). This sole act of groinal self-

exposure in the piece her crotch shot in tight close-up as her face had been is cleverly bracketed by the bed in the ad stripping through the magic of stop-motion animation as Logue herself undoes her pants and takes down her underwear. After the burr-removal the bed remakes itself as she pulls up her bottoms.

A final note: While looping one's actions alters the performer and the viewer's sense of linear time, it is interesting to note that alongside a single-channel version, **Enlightened Nonsense** was also originally installed as a looping multi-monitor mosaic installation in the window of YYZ Artists' Outlet. By presenting the multiple pieces simultaneously, time is even further spatialized and fragmented, our attention splintered over all the loops at once, much like a security surveillance system. And while there might be nine Logues visible together: the psychic scrutiny taking place, the inner life animating all of these inward-driving closed circuits, remains meticulously hidden.

**Jon Davies** is an independent curator and film, media and visual arts critic. Originally from Montreal, he moved to Toronto in 2002 to complete an MA in film and video, critical and historical studies at York University. Jon has worked as a writer/editor for the Toronto International Film Festival's publications department and his writing has also been published in *Cinema Scope*, *Canadian Art*, *University of Toronto Quarterly* and *Xtra!*. He has been on the programming collective of Pleasure Dome since 2004.

# Notes From An Editor

by Aleesa Cohene

I first worked with Deirdre about four years ago. She was curating a program for Inside Out called *Exquisite Corpse* which needed to be compiled and titled. Three works were about the head, three the torso, and three the legs which together represented the whole body. I was totally interested in her as an artist as well as the work she brought to me, and was really impressed by Deirdre's thought and interest in the relationships between the work; the body that is only defined by art. We also worked on a trailer for the program which visually expressed the curatorial concept (a three layer picture-in-picture made up of stretched images from the movies).

I've since worked with her on several projects. Deirdre comes to the edit room more prepared than any artist I've worked with. She is prepared with amazing (and beautiful) notes, tapes on ALL formats, good snacks for both of us (now that Allyson is in her life), and always needs to work after her day job ends. She is lead by an idea and I'm so happy to compliment it with technical form. She presents her concepts to me very matter-of-factly; describing only what she did and sometimes how she did it. What it "means" is almost always unspoken but remarkably clear. Even when she is still thinking something through she has good

instincts about whether we should work on it in the Avid, or she should spend more time with it on her own. Deirdre doesn't allow either of us to struggle with technology. Dangling frames, accidentally unrendered bits and any technical hiccups have their place and mostly she insists that I leave them alone. She says she is used to working with film and whenever she says it I imagine an animated hair and scratch following her around. I've recently discovered that we have a shared neurosis about cleaning which has alleviated my guilt about tidying up her sequences when she goes out to smoke. I think I have a good understanding of what adds texture and what looks sloppy and I know she trusts me with this. The form and content of her practice seem always in perfect sync. I wish I could describe that better because its something I've never experienced before working with Deirdre.

Mike, I know you want me to write about Deirdre's work and about what it's like being her editor but the pressure makes me feel like I have nothing to say. I remember her telling me that when we were done editing **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** she was going to erase all of her secrets from my mind. And maybe that's what happened. Maybe that's why I feel blocked and show it as anger towards you. The truth is that I know I have a good memory, especially of pictures. I almost always remember what someone was wearing, on what day (as the page in my day

planner), at what time (I see a clock) and what images we worked with. For some reason I can't remember the same kinds of things when I recall times I've spent working with Deirdre. I suppose this makes a good case for her wish having come true. You must be happy that this has at least given me something to write even if it's about nothing. Something makes me think the battle between something and nothing is one of your favourite subjects and that makes me even angrier; like you think you might get my secrets by asking for Deirdre's. I know you would admit openly to this desire but I'm still mad. Besides, like the manly woman's voice says in **Per Se** "what I really want to say is private." Maybe that's why this is hard.

In video we work in a system of infinite choice; 30 frames per second requires 30 decisions, conscious or not. Many of the choices follow logic or tradition and others offer subtleties and variables that can either expose or conceal beauty. A bad edit forms a scar and the scar then becomes the story; the form overrides its content. Sometimes this is a satisfying interruption and other times it's perhaps why people say they hate video art. I believe it's both. Just as the options are endless so are the meanings. I know this. Deirdre knows this and when two people believe they are on the same track they suspend disbelief and refer to it as "the way it should be" or "the right choice". Subjectivity merges, we believe certain truths and we make art. So when Deirdre says that she has

"this footage of her trying to crack her jaw" I treat it like a formula:

"this" = a familiar experiment; interesting enough to show me but not entirely resolved.

"footage of her" = most likely a close up on body part of interest

"trying" = don't touch it, let the trying play out unless I fall asleep

"crack her jaw" = the sensitive part; how she's broken

After I watch the footage, I ask her if my equation is right and make suggestions from there. I must tell you that once we arrive at a mutual understanding things don't usually take that long. Deirdre comes very prepared with a strong concept and it's my job to wrap it up well. This is why your interest in our work together feels peculiar. She is one of the clearest and most straight forward people I've ever worked with. It's only the "sensitive part" of the equation that can take longer to edit. The same editing decisions about pacing, rhythm, and mood, etc. are more fragile and require more time. And this is what feels private.

I remember her telling me that the discovery of the mirror is more important than the industrial revolution. When she said this I was reminded of something my mom told me when I was a kid. We were in the locker room after a swim lesson and a woman was talking to her through the mirror. She was looking in the mirror

and at my mom who was standing behind her attempted to have a conversation. My mom didn't seem to want to talk to her. I asked her later if she didn't like her and she said she hated it when people talked to her while looking at themselves in the mirror. I think she felt like the woman was too distracted by her appearance to have a sincere conversation. Writing about Deirdre's work makes me feel like I'm the woman trying to have a conversation with someone through the mirror. Self-consciousness lies at the core of her practice and as her editor I've often wondered whose self-consciousness prevails. On the one hand my editing tasks are simple and clear and on the other they require a deep honesty. I think this is also true of her audience. It's both uncomfortable and humbling to watch someone look at themselves in the mirror.

**Aleesa Cohene** is a video artist, in-house editor at Charles Street Video (a post-production centre for artists) and Deirdre Logue's long time editor. She writes about what it's been like.



## 13 Things I've been Meaning To Tell Her

by Marc Glassman

**1. Projection** - This is a cold city, Deirdre. You know that and I know that but somehow I never wanted to believe it. Years ago, when I was new on the scene, Judith Doyle and Eldon Garnet at *Impulse* magazine put out an issue called *Cold City Fiction*. I just thought it was a name, something to hang your hat on, a way of locating Toronto as a space that wasn't New York or Montreal. We all had inferiority complexes then. Coldness and bleakness and greyness seemed to be our lot in life.

Huddling together against the cold but unable to touch each other, we all formed groups. Committees to do good things. Organizations to fight racism and sexism and censorship. Groups to make videos or put out a magazine or organize a festival. The city needed all of those efforts. Best of all, it gave us a way to get to know each other without ever saying that we cared about anyone but ourselves and, oh yeah, the concept of good works.

Those were the days when I met you and Mike and Phil Hoffman and Janine Marchessault and all sorts of great people. In committees. Doing the right thing.

**2.Per se** - Your video is so amazing, Deirdre. The face so full of pain and anxiety. The brilliant things you say and don't say. I'm reminded of a Miles Davis anecdote. He was sitting in a bar one night, hearing Thelonious Monk play piano. An acolyte descended on his table and seeing him dig what was happening, said, "I love the notes he's playing." To which Miles replied, "I love the notes he isn't playing."

You say, "You can take away a sense of me without knowing who I am." Exactly. Have you ever read Saint John Perse? When he won the Nobel Prize for Literature, he said in Stockholm, "Every creation of the mind is first of all poetic." Don't we want that to be true?

**3.Beyond the Usual Limits, Part One** - Watching you crawl into a safe place, between your mattress and box spring, Deirdre, I'm reminded of the Christmas party where we all put on big wigs. Of course, I look hilarious in a wig—the white bald guy with a hat of hair on. What could be more ridiculous?

Then the wig is put on you. And suddenly, there you are, as if someone has placed a tiara on your head. I tell you that it's almost scary, how nice you look. You confer on me a smile that is a frown (or is it the other way around?) "I know," you say with infinite weariness.

**4. Repair** - Mess, mess, Deirdre: "Make mess, clean up mess." Ah, life in the arts, in the culture, in the community. Never ending messes. Fixing them or letting them go. When you make art, you make mess. When you are an arts administrator, you repair the damage.

I think of your band Messy playing at the Factory Theatre, closing out an Images festival. Maybe our 10th anniversary. Toute la gance est ici. All present and accounted for, from the Councils and the co-ops and the other festivals. And you've remade the Images Festival. It's full of punk and spice and spirit. Thanks to you.

It's your night and Messy plays and people dance and there's a frenzied, anarchical spirit in the air. Images has a programme called "Girls rule; boys drool" that year. The crowd shouts and cheers while Messy is on stage and it's all good.

**5.Crash** - I'm reminded of a Mike Hoolboom anecdote while watching this scene of two girls in yellow mags crashing their bicycles. Mike and I are looking at Manon Briand's film **Two Seconds** at a TIFF press screening. You remember her; we were always showing her shorts at Images until she went the feature film route. We emerge from the dark theatre space and I say, "Probably the best bicycle

film ever made in Canada." And Mike asks, "Isn't that damning with faint praise?"

I don't have a license to drive either. A license to kill is how I regard it, sometimes. Andy Paterson wrote a remarkable essay about not knowing how to drive in **Impulse**. The thesis had to do with being gay and not driving. When I told Andy I was straight and didn't drive I think he laughed.

**6.Suckling** - Well now you've got me, Deirdre. I guess I've become a Cold City guy after all. You're sucking your fingers and it's really erotic and I am not sure how to react. I realize how people convey so little about each other in their day-to-day personas. Ah, the right brain and the left. The groin and the upper lobe. We all live in our bodies, don't we?

**7.That Beauty** - This is my favourite section of the tape. It's so romantic, in a way, with the lights flashing and you silhouetted in the room, dancing. "That beauty feels... fragile, lonely, ashamed..."

I remember a meeting and you're a bit late so I ask why. And you say, "I've been to see my shrink." And I say, "Yeah? How often do you go?" And you just look at me. "Every day." You pause. "Sometimes I talk. And sometimes I don't say anything. And sometimes I

cry." Then you laugh, looking at me, trying to be nonchalant. "It's a fuck of a lot of money to cry," you tell me.

**8.Wheelie** - There should be more bike films, don't you think? The Images Festival has been at 401 Richmond for so long, it wasn't even hip when we arrived. There weren't as many bikes parked out there in the pre-Zeidler days. The door to the office used to get kicked in quite regularly. We had so many computers stolen that we stopped filing insurance claims. And there was no one to blame but us.

**9.Beyond the Usual Limits pt. 2** - Band aids, band aids, band aids: remember the cutting videos, Deirdre? So many tapes with people showing themselves with blades out, doing themselves harm so no one else could do it first. Hey, that never hit the mainstream media as a cool thing, did it?

I think of the wounds we'd inflict on each other. Psychic ones, but they hurt, too. I remember having an argument with you on the telephone. It was crazy; we were going around in circles about some policy issue. We'd start slow, try to be reasonable, but then I'd say something personal, or you would, and there we'd be, screaming at each other, across the line. I

think I slammed the phone down so hard that I actually cracked the receiver.

We never resolved it either. But a couple of days later, there we were, in the office, laughing as if nothing had happened.

**10.Worry** - I really like mantras, Deirdre. It's a great way to play out madness. "I worry; it will kill me." God, you can play that one out forever. So many different ways to interpret the lines. Worry, poetry—the best.

I'm a worrier, too, and didn't realize it for years. Isn't that crazy? Everybody must think of me that way. The artist Gertrude Kearns says she wants to paint me because I look so worried. She's also painted Dallaire and I feel ashamed at the comparison. Who wouldn't? Maybe she should paint you.

**11.Eclipse** - I've always been afraid of eclipses, thinking that I'd look at the wrong thing and burn out my eyes. Like Lot's wife.

Do you recall how crazy our meetings used to be? There was the time we tried to persuade Barb Mainguy to join the Images board. You had programmed her work and really loved it. And I had known her for years and years. She and I had hung

out with Martin Heath at the Gap—no, not that Gap—  
but a performance space that was a precursor to  
CineCycle.

Everything had been on reels or wheels at Martin's  
place but nothing had prepared us for the circles we  
navigated that night. Barb wanted to have her films  
programmed at Images even if she joined the Board.  
It was a policy we flip-flopped on, over the years. The  
meeting—and it wasn't just us, ten people were  
there—went on for five hours. Five hours. Castro  
delivers speeches in less time.

In the end, she agreed to join the Board. Then, a  
week later, she sent in a letter of resignation.

**12.Blue** - Blowing it. Yep, I used to think about that a  
lot. We were on the hiring committee, Deirdre. Have  
you tried to blank out those memories? They're  
etched in my brain. The people we tortured with  
questions. Bringing them back for second rounds, so  
they'd always know that they were finalists for jobs  
that paid miniscule wages. But, hey, it was a way into  
the arts. And we knew it. The people we turned down,  
what happened to them? Are they selling olives in  
Kensington Market now? Or voting for Harper?

**13. Beyond the Usual Limits, pt. 3** - Going too far,  
Deirdre? Isn't that what artists do? Or committed  
cultural workers?

Do you remember a meeting when we went at each  
other so hard that I made you cry? God, I was a  
bastard then. It's amazing to have that much belief in  
what you're saying.

I am reminded of ***Long Day's Journey into Night***,  
that wonderfully tormented play. It's about a  
dysfunctional family, a cliché now but all too real then.  
Families function, even the sad ones, by creating  
emotional responses in their group. If I could make  
you cry and I could that meant we were connected.  
Like family.

Well, we can hope for better. And we still want to  
foster good works. Those are things we truly have in  
common.

So now we're back at Images meetings, as advisory  
board members, offering suggestions for their 20th  
anniversary. For you, Deirdre, it must be weird. A  
senior artist and you're not even forty. Well, you've  
been through a lot. You face harsh truths about  
yourself and your community everyday. Let's imagine  
us in five years' time—or ten—at some meeting  
space. Probably at a building owned by the Zeidlers.  
We'll still be fighting and working for the community.  
Because it's what we do...



**Marc Glassman** is a veteran bookseller, journalist and cultural worker. He is the proprietor of Pages, a Queen Street bookshop in downtown Toronto, the editor of *POV* and *Montage* magazines and one of the founders of the Images Festival



# Can you hear that?

by Sarolta Jane Cump



The first time I met Deirdre was at the **Independent Imaging Retreat** in rural Ontario, yet another project in Canadian experimental filmmaking she is an integral part of. I was there for a week from San Francisco, sleeping in a tent without a fly on the outskirts of a golf course in a mobile home community. I had vastly underestimated the time it would take to walk the mile to Phil Hoffman's farm for the morning workshops. I tried to hitchhike to no avail. A 'farmhand' finally had to come and pick me up. As I ambled sheepishly down to the Barn to join the handtinting workshop, Deirdre looked up and shouted "Hitch! You made it!" and smiled. She had stuck me with my required moniker for the week. Sometimes amidst the unknown, naming can be a surprisingly comforting thing.

A year passes, and more. I watch Deirdre's movie **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes**. These pieces hold a familiar resonance, something I can't quite put my finger on. The pictures collide over and over again like the determined cyclists in **Crash**, preserved forever in their wrecking. "Did you hear that?" Deirdre asks in this tape. I hear Deirdre naming and unnameing with precision the struggle of the discourse in between.

Even depicted as a child in home movies, Deirdre is unblinking and faces the camera dead on. This occurred to me the other day while I was winding through the film archives at the **CFMDC**. I was inspecting for the many signs of damage that crop up as film stock slowly and inevitably decays. Sometimes you open a can and the sour smell of vinegar comes wafting out. Sometimes there are flecks of mold. Always you have to put the film on a split reel and inspect it, slowly turning the crank of the viewing station, watching as each frame passes. Watching for an aberration. Each moment fixed in time comes apart, as the optical soundtrack squiggles helplessly by. It is focused and tedious work yet an oddly relaxing practice.

Deirdre is volunteering on this project as well. Executive Director of the **CFMDC**, she stays after hours to examine the prints. She is unblinking and tireless, her face composed and smooth in intense concentration leaning over the viewing bench. Under the squeaking of reels, I wonder if I can hear her mind endlessly turning.

To the volunteers she tells the story of the demise of her fish aquarium. A hobby she started because she was told it is relaxing to watch fish in an aquarium. Ah yes relaxing. The daily anticipation of checking the tank for dead fish. The ordeal of moving with the fish: involving precise measurements of water

temperatures, PH levels (is it too alkaline?), re-heating and cooling water, fish in bags, fish in buckets. Fish in toilet.

Deirdre finishes the story and goes back to buzzing about, making sure everyone has taken a break. And again with the naming thing. We haven't chosen a name yet for this adhoc group of volunteer film inspectors though Deirdre is insistent on nicknames.

Onscreen, the shadow of a figure dances unselfconsciously while texts describe her interior states. Hands assembling and reassembling a tomato. Over and over. Deceptively simple and opposing actions. **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** is a document of the various incarnations of someone moving between the named and the act of unnamings.

"She looks like Golem", my housemate says of Deirdre in **Eclipse**. I am taken aback by this comment, but in her vulnerability Deirdre appears almost unrecognizable. She somehow appears unmasked in this mask of blue light. This is not a face I've ever seen before. But the balance of exposure and vulnerability that is present in **Eclipse** is balanced in a new way. Her wit still emerges, but something more has been revealed. Another deeper layer. The process has shifted, we are left without a ritual to name or contain the nakedness we are shown. This

time, she is asking something more of us. Listen, can you hear it?

**Sarolta Jane Cump** documents the slow but inevitable decline of U.S. empire working in film, video and the hybrid bastard of the two. She is currently working on her M.F.A. at York University.



# Grown Ups Don't Make Video Art

by Emily Vey Duke

How does one mature as an artist in a medium like video which is dedicated to sloppy whimsy? Sloppy whimsy is excusable in the young, but it doesn't age well. If it has to be messy let it be young. Sloppy video belongs to the young.

A week ago a package arrived from the country I used to live in. It has traveled by Express Post but still takes a week. When I open it there is news from home, a new video by Deirdre Logue called **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes**. I've agreed to write about it though I haven't seen a thing. When I put it in my video player, it stares back at me.

I know where Deirdre Logue is coming from. Intimately. Like her, I worry so much that I worry it might kill me. Like her, I feel fragile, feel lonely, feel ashamed. It even occurs to me, as it does to her, that I may never get my driver's license. And like her, my aberrant behaviors (hers are demonstrated in the episodes of her new tape called **Beyond the Usual Limits Parts 1 and 2**) are utterly lacking in drama. And in essence, I think that's what Logue's new work is about. It's a 33-minute suite of songs about the banality of transcendence (transcendent suffering, transcendent joy) in the modern world.

In the episode titled **Eclipse**, Logue appears as a googly-eyed space alien, her skin like the skin of a dolphin, gleaming wetly in the camera's eye. She's whispering, crouching down and squinting at us with some urgency. Everything in the scene tells us this moment is pregnant with something. Longing? Revelation? "Did you hear that?" she asks. And then again: "Did you hear that?" She peers into the camera like she's trying to catch our eye. Then suddenly we do hear it. Her jaw is making an awful, muted pop. It's nearly nauseating. But what's perhaps more unnerving than the gross noise is the certainty we feel that it really doesn't matter. Her lower mandible is still well attached to its mate. There's no blood. Her cheek, which she's pushing towards us, is almost impossibly smooth and clear.

What this piece is about—what all the little shards of **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** are about—is the trauma of being ordinary. Experimental film and video are ideally suited to express this particular trauma. How could it be otherwise? They stand in opposition to television and narrative cinema, the repositories of the extraordinary, the spectacular, the sublime. All one has to do is watch a single home movie of a vacation in the tropics to realize just how good the video camera is at rendering the sublime banal.



I think it's this transformation that Logue has taken as her subject in this work. She draws attention to that process by choosing as her structure the diaristic, performative, episodic mode most associated with artists in their teens and twenties—artists like Sadie Benning, Thirza Cuthand, Alex Bag, Steve Reinke, Sylvie LaLiberté, Lisa Steele, etc. It remains the domain of the young largely because they're the only ones who can tolerate seeing their images refracted through the mean spirited gaze of the camera. And we can tolerate such sloppy, whimsical narcissism on the part of the young. We even like it because it reminds us of our former, precocious selves.

But what Logue is saying with this work—and it's a brave thing to say—is that we don't ever have to decide that we're ready to stop being precocious. We don't ever decide that it's time for us to have lived up to our potential rather than just indicating that we have it. We don't ever stop realizing that life is hard and we're not as good at it as we'd hoped.

That nascentness, that sense of potential, is pointed up by Logue's use of ambiguity. In **Per Se**, the first segment of the tape, we sense that Logue has something really interesting to confess—something really filthy or tragic or abject but all she'll say is that she has something to say. There's the potential for confession, for voyeurism, but she forces the viewer to stay in a state of anticipation.

So what finally gets said, starting with **Per Se** and continuing throughout the rest of the tape, is that there is nothing. The confession is not juicy, not worthy of our voyeuristic impulse. The confession is that the narrator has nothing compelling to say. Which is a way of telling us, the viewers, that it's okay that we don't either. We're not alone.

What makes the work difficult is its plaintiveness. Logue is unabashedly, even artlessly, asking for our empathy. She doesn't employ any narrative tricks or special effects to get it (beyond the repetitions and glitches and reversals which are really conventions of experimental media). Nothing in **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** works on us invisibly, beneath the surface of the narrative. There's no diegesis to rupture—there is only rupture. There's no Deus Ex Machina because there's no machine. All she offers us is her raw and ordinary pain. It hasn't been mediated with strategies like humour or poetics or suspense or visual beauty.

That puts a lot of pressure on the viewer. One has to have a certain faith, either in the medium and its conventions or in the author herself, in order to become emotionally involved with the work. It's not exactly that one has to suspend disbelief because I don't think there could be any doubt that Logue's anxieties are sincerely felt. I think that the tape is asking us to suspend judgment of both the

author/subject and of the artwork itself. And I don't think this piece is unique in asking the viewer for that suspension. In fact, I think it's endemic to the world of confessional experimental film and video, and I think it's in large part what keeps that kind of work out of the mainstream (even the mainstream of the marginal art world).

As viewers, we don't like to feel that we are being asked to be sympathetic about someone else's traumatic ordinariness. It makes us uncomfortable. It makes us squirm. It makes us think about our own traumatic ordinariness and how nobody cares about it, and then we feel annoyed with the artist for asking us to care about theirs.

It's a pretty complicated maneuver Logue has pulled off with this piece, sending us from transcendence to ennui via the pain of being no longer precocious and landing us back at empathy. Because I think we can all admit that, like her, we on occasion feel that life is nothing but an endless loop of making messes and mopping them up. Or that all we've learned as we've aged is how to blame others for our shortcomings. From time to time we all, like Logue, feel anxious, feel lost, feel guilty and feel beautiful.

**Emily Vey Duke** has worked in collaboration with her partner Cooper Battersby since 1994. They work in printed matter, installation, curation and sound, but their primary practice is the production of single-channel video.



I WORRY

# Setup/Punchline/Repeat

by Daniel Cockburn

There's a new kind of closeup for us to deal with now—no longer the enormous landscape of movie faces, sculpted by expensive lighting and practiced emotion. Now we have the near ones, real-time and real size, detailed resolution not of dense grain but of high-definition pixels, faces free of artifice... or at least relatively so, and willing to reveal any artifice they do have. They do not look offscreen in search or service of some axis, but their sidelong eyeline does go towards our surrogate, the camera-mirrored viewfinder. It's an axis with only one end, the new subjective intimacy, when we know she's not looking at us, she's looking at herself.

Of course it would be this way. Have you ever tried playing a scene looking directly into the camera lens? It's a cold impersonal thing and it gives nothing back (there's a reason Errol Morris was compelled to invent the Interrotron). It's much easier to look an inch to your right (camera left) and see your own face, which holds all the fascination of those extended moments that you can spend trapped in your own bathroom-mirror eyes. You can perform easily to this face. It's your own, you know it better than anyone else—from the inside, anyway. When viewed from the outside, it's more a stranger to you than to the others. This

problem of inside/outside, of you the familiar stranger, is the endless fascination of the mirror, of the viewfinder, and to record your own face caught in the act of this fascination... well, how could that fascination not transmit itself to the viewers of this record? And what a gift (to them) that would be.

That's the idea, anyway.

But what's to prevent these moments from turning back into landscape, or, if not large enough to be landscape then dioramas, a series of frozen tableaux well-schooled in a shorthand of poses, static gestures, attitudes? Already the face-cam intimacy has grown familiar. What could be more revealing than showing my flaws in closeup... and then at least showing how I hide the other ones, the ones I don't want to reveal? This is a diorama, a prefab cube (one face cut away, for viewing from outside) containing storebought poses, cheaply-made plastic limbs pointing at each other in good-natured self-critical acknowledgement.

But is all this not just a little too easy?

And also: What is it, anyway, about Woody Allen? His flaws, his virility... mostly his flaws, but those end where the movie ends, whereas his virility extends beyond the bounds of the frame. Pity me for my flaws, love me out of pity—and poof!, a disappearing act.

His movies make of him an effigy, soliciting your affection for his endearing failings—failings you see as your own—and then the effigy is burned away. The flaws are gone but your love remains. The neurotic has martyred himself for the cause, and his virility sticks around to reap the benefits.

**Deconstructing Harry** was meant to put an end to all of this; though not his final film it certainly felt terminal at the time. This time the effigy was already incinerated before the first frame, nothing of Woody left to love. This time he was all misanthropic bile, spouting invective in language we'd never before heard pass the lips of even his most unsavoury characters, buying the indulgence of sexual fetishes he'd previously only euphemistically joked about, self-centered as always but now padlocked shut. This is the real me, the film seemed to say, this is what I've fooled you into loving for all these years, but things are winding down now and I've decided, out of mercy or generosity or maybe just fatigue, to call an end to this game. This ugly honesty, better late than never, was his gift to us.

That was the idea, anyway. But once the spectacle of selfishness had faded from our eyes, there arose the feeling that he'd escaped again. Once past the initial and by no means insignificant bravery of displaying himself as botched beyond redemption, he was then able to sneak out of the onscreen body, taking refuge

in the role of displayer. That's the benefit of casting yourself in this type of diorama: if it's well-wrought and close up and unpleasantly detailed enough, you are impervious to any criticism because you've already leveled them all at yourself. And the suspicion remains that perhaps his deck was stacked, that perhaps this too was just a little too easy.

The process of distasteful self-revelation, though at first negating affection, ends up bringing our pleasant feeling back to bear—just on the director, not the character. The warm-fuzzy machine, once it's set in motion, is pretty hard to stop.

Woody Allen thought he would make his terminal movie. But he couldn't. The Terminal Age, if it ever existed, is over. We're living in the time of the loop. It began as a simpler idea, an ideal which embraced rhythm, meter and regularity. Strike tympani with mallet. Repeat. Each strike was a different moment in time, similar but different. Identical pictures in identical frames must still occupy different spots on the wall.

This idea, however, becomes untenable in a world in which representation of time-based events is so slickly accurate as to be indistinguishable from the real thing. It's a world in which one no longer need strike the drum regularly; a single shot will suffice for the sample to be looped ad infinitum into a pulse, whatever beat you like. Is it any wonder that, in a



world such as this, obsessive-compulsion is a normal mode of activity, an acceptably worthy-of-investigation behaviour phenomenon? No moment too small, no action too brief! It seems so easy to loop things and make them... something. A little too easy.

(But are we perhaps overly concerned with effort? One way or another it's a criterion. Perhaps we marvel that the artist "makes it look so easy." Or perhaps, on the other hand, her strains of effort are so pronounced, the resultant howl so shriekishly strained, that we cannot doubt her difficulty. Or on a third hand—this is maybe the newest form of our attitude to artistic effort, an attitude made widely possible by the camcorder—we are overjoyed to see that a certain result can be achieved with no more work than we ourselves are capable of putting in. And so a certain kind of video art propagates itself.)

You can loop with edits, blowing up a moment to enormity and importance, or you can do it with performance, making yourself a loop. Deirdre Logue in **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** does it both ways, loops inside and outside, a tactic which seems in this case born of something not so much like fashion, sometimes like ease, but often enough like necessity.

She writes onscreen: "Although I still make mistakes, I have found more people to blame." That is to say, as

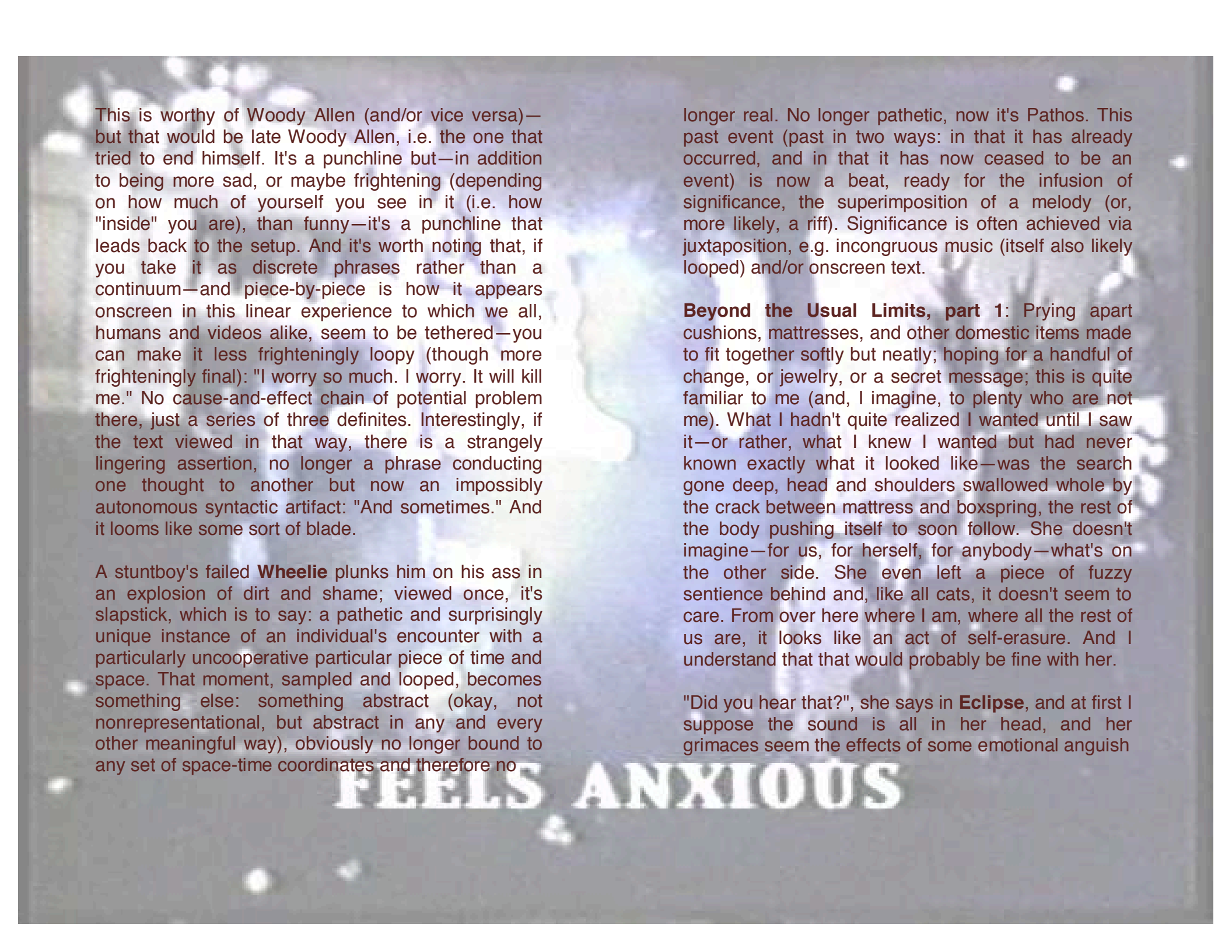
Woody Allen would say: Here, look at my problem. It's a problem which, if you find yourself in my proximity, may well result in my inflicting pain on you. But I am not apologizing. I am merely telling you a specific way in which I am bad. And you will probably see that you are similarly bad, and in this way I will solicit your affection. But Woody didn't say it; Deirdre did. And her iteration carries a little less of the Manhattan-cuddly neurosis, a little more of the Toronto-loop terror.

In **Deconstructing Harry** Woody was soliciting not our love (lost cause, that) but our admiration. The film forsakes humanity to strive for grandeur. Grandeur need not be large in scale; it need only be final in tone. This is a common implicit artistic goal: to create an artifact so fully epitomizing the medium/genre as to render all prior artifacts obsolete, all future ones superfluous. There is an attempt to make this the last one. This will be the summit of its type. That Woody made this terminal vocation explicit in a film through which he sought to also end himself is a fortuitous marriage of ambitions. Deirdre and her video occupy a similar betrothal, each side looking for its better half, hoping not so much to find it as to put an end to looking, to itself.

**Worry** is a loop, a few seconds' worth of super 8 footage emblazoned with a cyclical paean to cyclical neurosis: "I AM 38 YEARS OLD/AND SOMETIMES/I WORRY SO MUCH/I WORRY/IT WILL KILL ME."

FEELS FRAGILE





This is worthy of Woody Allen (and/or vice versa)—but that would be late Woody Allen, i.e. the one that tried to end himself. It's a punchline but—in addition to being more sad, or maybe frightening (depending on how much of yourself you see in it (i.e. how "inside" you are), than funny—it's a punchline that leads back to the setup. And it's worth noting that, if you take it as discrete phrases rather than a continuum—and piece-by-piece is how it appears onscreen in this linear experience to which we all, humans and videos alike, seem to be tethered—you can make it less frighteningly loopy (though more frighteningly final): "I worry so much. I worry. It will kill me." No cause-and-effect chain of potential problem there, just a series of three definites. Interestingly, if the text viewed in that way, there is a strangely lingering assertion, no longer a phrase conducting one thought to another but now an impossibly autonomous syntactic artifact: "And sometimes." And it looms like some sort of blade.

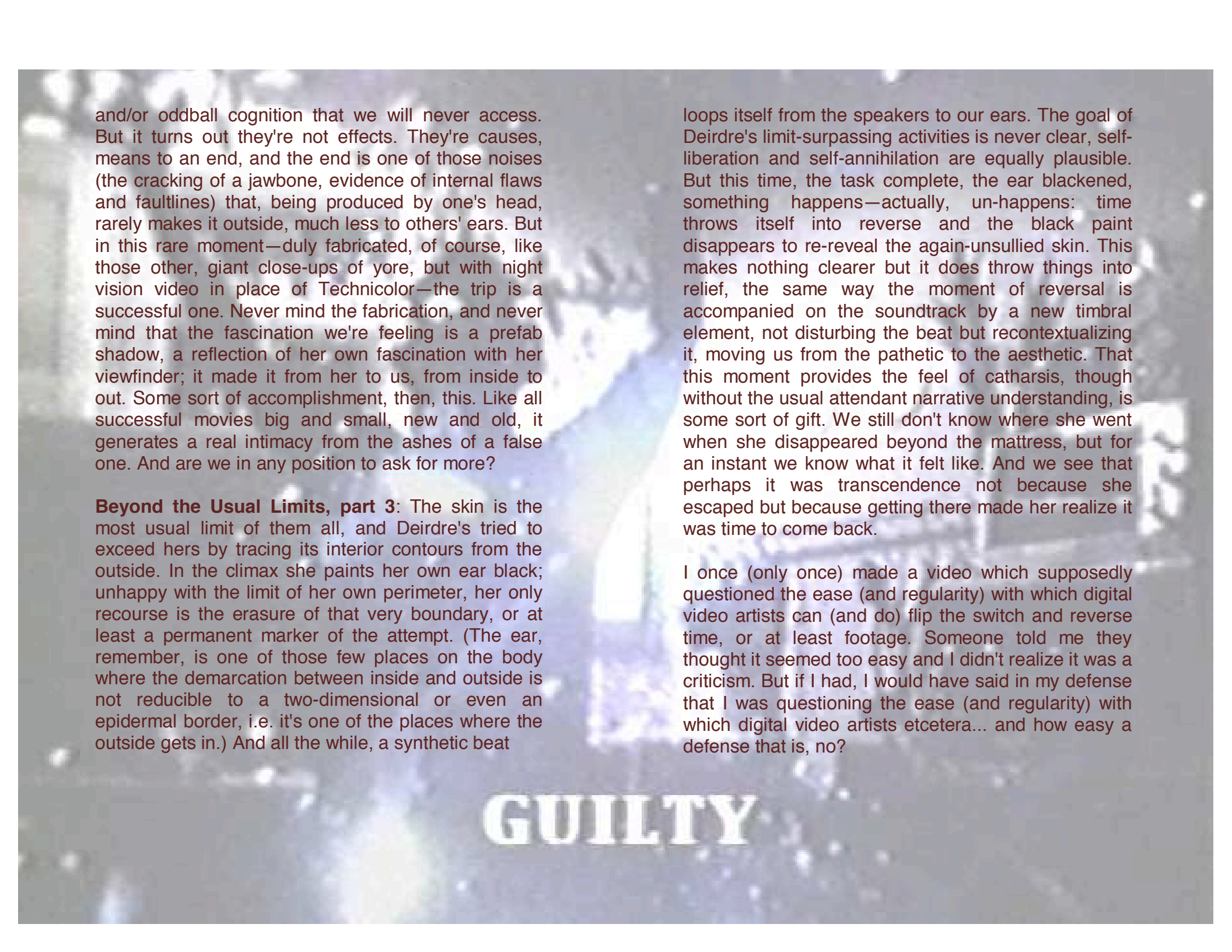
A stuntboy's failed **Wheelie** plunks him on his ass in an explosion of dirt and shame; viewed once, it's slapstick, which is to say: a pathetic and surprisingly unique instance of an individual's encounter with a particularly uncooperative particular piece of time and space. That moment, sampled and looped, becomes something else: something abstract (okay, not nonrepresentational, but abstract in any and every other meaningful way), obviously no longer bound to any set of space-time coordinates and therefore no

longer real. No longer pathetic, now it's Pathos. This past event (past in two ways: in that it has already occurred, and in that it has now ceased to be an event) is now a beat, ready for the infusion of significance, the superimposition of a melody (or, more likely, a riff). Significance is often achieved via juxtaposition, e.g. incongruous music (itself also likely looped) and/or onscreen text.

**Beyond the Usual Limits, part 1:** Prying apart cushions, mattresses, and other domestic items made to fit together softly but neatly; hoping for a handful of change, or jewelry, or a secret message; this is quite familiar to me (and, I imagine, to plenty who are not me). What I hadn't quite realized I wanted until I saw it—or rather, what I knew I wanted but had never known exactly what it looked like—was the search gone deep, head and shoulders swallowed whole by the crack between mattress and boxspring, the rest of the body pushing itself to soon follow. She doesn't imagine—for us, for herself, for anybody—what's on the other side. She even left a piece of fuzzy sentience behind and, like all cats, it doesn't seem to care. From over here where I am, where all the rest of us are, it looks like an act of self-erasure. And I understand that that would probably be fine with her.

"Did you hear that?", she says in **Eclipse**, and at first I suppose the sound is all in her head, and her grimaces seem the effects of some emotional anguish

FEELS ANXIOUS



and/or oddball cognition that we will never access. But it turns out they're not effects. They're causes, means to an end, and the end is one of those noises (the cracking of a jawbone, evidence of internal flaws and faultlines) that, being produced by one's head, rarely makes it outside, much less to others' ears. But in this rare moment—duly fabricated, of course, like those other, giant close-ups of yore, but with night vision video in place of Technicolor—the trip is a successful one. Never mind the fabrication, and never mind that the fascination we're feeling is a prefab shadow, a reflection of her own fascination with her viewfinder; it made it from her to us, from inside to out. Some sort of accomplishment, then, this. Like all successful movies big and small, new and old, it generates a real intimacy from the ashes of a false one. And are we in any position to ask for more?

**Beyond the Usual Limits, part 3:** The skin is the most usual limit of them all, and Deirdre's tried to exceed hers by tracing its interior contours from the outside. In the climax she paints her own ear black; unhappy with the limit of her own perimeter, her only recourse is the erasure of that very boundary, or at least a permanent marker of the attempt. (The ear, remember, is one of those few places on the body where the demarcation between inside and outside is not reducible to a two-dimensional or even an epidermal border, i.e. it's one of the places where the outside gets in.) And all the while, a synthetic beat

loops itself from the speakers to our ears. The goal of Deirdre's limit-surpassing activities is never clear, self-liberation and self-annihilation are equally plausible. But this time, the task complete, the ear blackened, something happens—actually, un-happens: time throws itself into reverse and the black paint disappears to re-reveal the again-unsullied skin. This makes nothing clearer but it does throw things into relief, the same way the moment of reversal is accompanied on the soundtrack by a new timbral element, not disturbing the beat but recontextualizing it, moving us from the pathetic to the aesthetic. That this moment provides the feel of catharsis, though without the usual attendant narrative understanding, is some sort of gift. We still don't know where she went when she disappeared beyond the mattress, but for an instant we know what it felt like. And we see that perhaps it was transcendence not because she escaped but because getting there made her realize it was time to come back.

I once (only once) made a video which supposedly questioned the ease (and regularity) with which digital video artists can (and do) flip the switch and reverse time, or at least footage. Someone told me they thought it seemed too easy and I didn't realize it was a criticism. But if I had, I would have said in my defense that I was questioning the ease (and regularity) with which digital video artists etcetera... and how easy a defense that is, no?

It's so damned important that I express myself, isn't it? That I give you a sense of myself? That's really the main thing, that's the goal. If I do that, then I've won. I thought I'd like to try writing this while watching Deirdre's tape, but the damn loops and beats and pictures, even the ones that are practically static, occupy my attention. It's something electric, and we know that the electric is neither alive nor real; it's fake because it's immortal.

Sometimes this repetition is enough to make you howl. But we don't howl, do we? I don't, anyhow, and neither does Deirdre. We have this other method, where we encase our whispers in little boxes and then blow the boxes up bigger than life, so we can parse the cracks and gaps in between our own whispersounds.

Have you ever had a moment of crisis on the dance floor? I'll bet Deirdre knows what I'm talking about: you find the groove, you fall into a four-limb step that perfectly epitomizes the way in which this song is rocking the joint. And then something happens: it might be the sideways glance of some girl you thought was digging you but who you now realize holds your body's motion in coldly amused contempt; or it might just be your own realization that you've been making the same pattern of moves for some time now, and you can't just stop and start something new, because that would contravene imperatives both

inside and outside. You're going to have to slowly, subtly, suavely mutate this you-loop into a new, better one. That's your best bet for a way out, you think over and over, as the Smiths (#2 most-common name in the world, I once read) sing I am human and I need to be loved, and you keep trying to assert and broadcast your individuality and unique manner of physical congruence with the song, just like everybody else does. At a certain point, once you're past the second chorus, this is inevitable.

Deirdre Logue may not be inevitable, but her video is. Like most motion pictures that we give ourselves these days, it's symptomatic. It has little interest in self-diagnosis—indeed, how could a symptom diagnose itself? Symptoms can only be noted. Or, in the case of a highly uncommon symptom, it can note itself. This symptom is indeed interested in something which—not always, but sometimes—exceeds simple notation. It hopes against hope (which is to say: against itself) for either a profound mutation or a lancing. At its bedraggled best it pries itself apart, crawls deep inside, into the crack, and looks for change.

**Daniel Cockburn** makes moving pictures which embody his love/hate/repeat relationship with the medium. One year ago he wrote a bio that ended with "soon it will be time for something else."

# Some Thoughts and Attempts to Articulate Reactions to "Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes," a 33 minute videotape in 12 parts by Deirdre Logue

by Barbara Sternberg

This is an IN YOUR FACE video—literally Deirdre's face is eyeball to eyeball with the camera/viewer—but its hard edge is softened by a dry, deadpan humour. (Much in the same way that I have experienced Deirdre in real life; for example, at Phil Hoffman's Film Farm she threateningly summoned participants to her—to receive a gift she had bought them for their hard work!) In **Per Se**, the first performed segment of the tape, the close-up image of Deirdre's face speaking to the camera/viewer—or is it a mirror she's looking into here and in later similar set ups?—blurs and staggers forward with a delay or drag, a heaviness in speech and heart, that is offset by a momentary direct eye gaze that challenges or menaces.

**Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** (a *cri de coeur*?) has three main parts **Beyond the Usual Limits Parts 1,2,3** and several subsections **Repair, Crash, Worry** etc., all of which are introduced and set up by the prologue **Per Se**. In this section the conundrums of art and the artist are articulated: knowing something that cannot be put into words; the need to tell but the desire to keep private; the artist as actor in her own life. Contradictions are indicated: showing versus telling; private versus public; knowing without saying; revealing and concealing. Does irony preclude sincerity?

The tape is unsettling throughout in its small 'misses'—things not quite right, not quite there, not caught fully. Like the step-printed slo-mo effect of picture and sound in **Per Se**, so that the mouth moving and the words emanating from it don't quite match up. Deirdre wants us to "know without my saying it **per se**, to give you a sense of me without actually knowing who I am **per se**."

The tape is organized in sections somewhat like a song with verses and choruses. The choruses, as I'm thinking of them, are segments that use old home movie footage (or footage made to look like that) and lyrics' (text on screen) which start "I am 38 years old" and end in ironic mode recounting some personal failing: "I worry so much, I worry it will kill me." These choruses serve as comic interludes—if there is such a thing as rueful comedy, hurting humour—perhaps akin to slipping on a banana peel—one laughs despite its not being funny! Or perhaps this is kvetching with ironic detachment.



I can imagine that in a room full of people at the tape's premiere at the Gladstone Hotel in Toronto, there was laughter. But in my viewing situation on a monitor with headphones, the effect was the opposite: I didn't laugh at what could be thought of as funny: two yellow slicker clad riders, the mirror image of each other, run their tricycles in a head—on collision and fall over sideways; a boy doing a "wheelie" falls over and over off the back of the bike ("if at first you don't succeed, try try again"); a little girl (I assume, Deirdre) shakes her head back and forth in a motion created by looping a bit of home—movie footage of girls dancing at a (birthday?) party. She looks determined or angry—there's that challenging look in the eyes again.

In all these scenarios the footage is looped. The effect of the repetition—which is a main feature of this work—needs to be considered. There is a lot of push and pull in this tape, a lot of mixed messages—come here/get away; see me/you can't really know me; this is serious, painful stuff/heh, heh, just kidding; I am laying myself bare... but not really. In a previous film in which Deirdre wound cellophane tape around and around her mouth in a repetitive action which was frightening in its implication of suffocation and self-inflicted violence, there came a moment when one realized that the film was rewinding, reversing itself, undoing the tape. The horror of suffocation and, metaphorically, of shutting oneself up was still there, but simultaneously, there was the knowledge and

relief that this is a film (a medium which intrinsically involves repetition), this is not irreversible. At the same time, however, further complicating the situation is the feeling imposed by the loop **per se**, that of being caught in a trap, this film that keeps repeating itself forward, then backwards—and then forward again. Conflicting responses arise.

Part of the conflict in response or the push—pull feeling as I've called it comes from contradictory messages arising from the image and from the voice or text. In **That Beauty**, light glittering on water lends a disco ball effect superimposed over the figure of Deirdre dancing in what appears to be a home studio space. The disco music sample plays and replays the phrase "that beauty right there." I like the beat. The text on the screen, however, sings a different tune: "feels fragile, feels lonely, feels ashamed..." Inner doubts and fears are externalised. I notice that Deirdre is wearing headphones as she dances alone in the dark, cut off from others, and the scene ends with the image only of light on water. She has been obliterated? Or, in a Buddhist frame of mind, I might read this as: when one goes into oneself, one merges with the oceanic All.

I trace four antecedent streams which feed this work: performance art, early video art, experimental film and popular culture—music sampling. Each segment



makes effective use of a different, visually enticing technique or style.

The image quality in **Eclipse** makes Deirdre's face and fingers look almost translucent—like the photos of an in utero fetus, while the dark purple of **Suckling** makes one strain to detect the act of sucking fingers—hidden, shameful, yet erotic. The title **Suckling** gives that segment an added unsettling twist. I would have expected 'sucking.' But suckling has the painful attribution of a baby (animal?) that is unweaned. Unseen past events give rise to unconscious present actions. The mirror motif running through the tape is most explicit in **Blue** where the same blue-tinted image of Deirdre breathing into a paper bag (as one does during a panic attack to restore normal breathing) is seen in twin boxes facing each other. (Both the 'direct gaze' and the 'mirror' are important aspects in feminist film theory of the seventies.)

Each segment is individually engaging, carefully and selectively constructed with a minimum of elements, yet remains cryptic with more than one possible interpretation, and allows for an ambivalent response. **Beyond the Usual Limits Part 1** is followed by a static camera, single—take shot of Deirdre squeezing herself head first under her mattress; that is, between the mattress and the box springs. Her body disappears as she wiggles under, awkwardly, and

floral sheets covering the mattress and floral—patterned spread and pillows jiggle atop her, as a kitschy cat picture looks on from the opposite wall. The segment ends when she is fully hidden and a live cat casually perches itself on the bed top. Funny, odd and somehow ominous. If not deadly, this doesn't seem a very comfortable or comforting thing to do. Does this refer to the hiding under the bed a child or animal does when afraid? Or is this "hiding one's head under the covers" (or "in the sand") gone to extremes and beyond the usual limit?

**Beyond the Usual Limits Part 2** is followed by a scene, sped up, staccato, in which Deirdre covers one of her hands, bandage by bandage. The action is performed perfectly identically, over and over until the covering is complete—the bandaged hand looks like a hockey glove—it has become an object for protection but made from bandages which imply a wound already happened. Contradictory. (I think, too, of Brian Jungen's *Native*—like masks from Nike shoes—the everyday item of popular culture transformed.)

The repetition in this work, loops and segments involving repeated actions acted out in real or altered time, serve different functions but are a consistent strategy of the work overall. In **Repair** and again in the last segment following the title **Part 3**, the act, the damage, is done and then undone. In **Repair**, in overlapping superimpositions, hands are continuously

crumbling apart and then reassembling what looks like a heart. Here we have visualized the "broken heart" of country music—and its mending. Mended, only to be broken again another day—or in another song.

**Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** is filled with images of pain. Is the popular saying, 'artists must suffer for their art,' true? Is suffering necessary in order to make art? Or is it the case that out of one's suffering, the artist can and often does create art? If one is happy, is there a need to make art? In my case I can't work when I'm really depressed, and only when I'm engaged in my work do I feel good, though making work certainly is not a bed of roses—all those thorny questions and self-doubt—another conundrum to add to the list.

In the final action of the tape, Deirdre, as in the first segment, is facing the camera, this time certainly checking her image in a mirror we don't see, as she carefully, painstakingly, paints her earlobe black. Again there is a sense of danger and self harm as she paints the inner portion of the lobe—won't this damage her hearing? I can't help thinking of Van Gogh slicing off his ear—the agony of the artist—and also of silence, absence. And then I detect that the brush strokes are a bit strange in their motion and see that in fact we are in reverse, the paint is disappearing. Is the blackening a blacking out of

noise, not to listen to dark, negative voices? Or a making visible of those black thoughts? I don't know what is good/desirable and what is to be feared. Perhaps all one can say is the fact, the truth, that negative and positive, positive and negative, both will always be with us. The end. (Though Deirdre does plan more segments still to come—so maybe not the end.)

**Barbara Sternberg** lives in Toronto and has been making experimental films (and some video, performance art, and installations) since the mid-seventies.



# My Jaw Aches

by Brenda Goldstein

**Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** shows twelve meditations on a personal wheel of suffering. It could be mistaken for a Buddhist text about understanding our own natures: the complexities of our lives become apparent, and the perspective we gain means that we can see with perfect clarity the endlessly looping cycles that form our consciousness, our dreams and desires. The first two of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths are acknowledging suffering, and understanding that within us are the roots and creation of suffering. Stuck in a tire tread, pinched powerfully between the grooves, we spin round and round, getting hit once each rotation when we hit the ground.

There is both inevitability and futility about Deirdre's film loops, they would repeat endlessly if we did not move onto the next scene of being beautifully flawed, beautifully doomed to repeat.

**Repair** - The titles "Make mess/Clean up mess" flash in succession onscreen as a pair of hands put together and take apart a "lump." The scratched, double-exposed, looped image points to the

possibility of another set of hands; it is difficult to tell if they are taking apart, or putting back together.

**Crash** - Two children on tricycles drive into each other and fall down. The image is looped. The accident happens again and again, with predictable results.

"I am 38 years old/and it occurs to me/I may never get a driver's license."

The titles declare as line after line flashes onto the screen. They are steeped in resignation, they have the tone of a confession, but both loops demonstrate the prickling way two people come together or misalign perfectly after enough scarring life experience. A friend of mine wrote a song with the lyrics "...Two porcupines under a blanket." The problem for porcupines is to find a way to embrace without wounding each other, something none of us seem to be able to avoid. Logue has no advice for us, only looping reoccurrences. The solution is absent, instead an uneasy resolution comes later in **Wheelie**: "Although I still make mistakes/I have found more people to blame."

**Beyond The Usual Limits, Parts One and Two** She crawls between the mattress and the box spring of a double bed. When I was a child I could pull the covers over my head, but now I have grown too big

for that, and my problems have grown exponentially. Living between the mattress and box spring seems the logical progression, at least as effective as hiding as a lump under covers. She puts band-aids on her fingers, dozens of them, drawing attention to the number of times and amount of hurt. It is a shrieking stoicism, "Oh this? It's just a band-aid..." it will do nothing to take away the pain. Even the soundtrack begins to drift apart, the right channel breaking away from the left, neither matching the image.

The fragments indicate the presence of others by making their absence obvious. One half of any interaction is all you can ever know, one consciousness, the rest is effect... Each scene in Logue's video has an absent "second," a referenced presence who never appears; it could be a relationship, or an idealized version of herself. The double exposure in **Repair**, the double bed, the two tricycles in **Crash**, stereo images in **Blue**. Each solitary performance reads like the re-enactment of a scene that involved someone else. The one-sided conversations in **Per Se** and **Eclipse** simultaneously invite the possibility of intimacy with another. Or are we just an automated confidant? It feels like the screen in my living room has become a fixture in her camera, turning it into an appliance for confession, or a surrogate for relating. Am I meant to be peering back through the pixels into her camera lens as her

Confessadaire or her Surrogator? Or am I just an interloper in a moment meant for someone else?

For each of these endless repetitions there is no explanation, in its absence there is a crushing anxiety. In **Eclipse** the blacks in the image begin to flow around her head, settling on her jaw, a river of negative energy that becomes a puddle, then a point. Folding in on itself, it drags every piece of light in as it collapses into darkness. The pooling of black in the image is like the little black holes that we carry around in our limbs, and our hearts, fueled by disappointment and resignation.

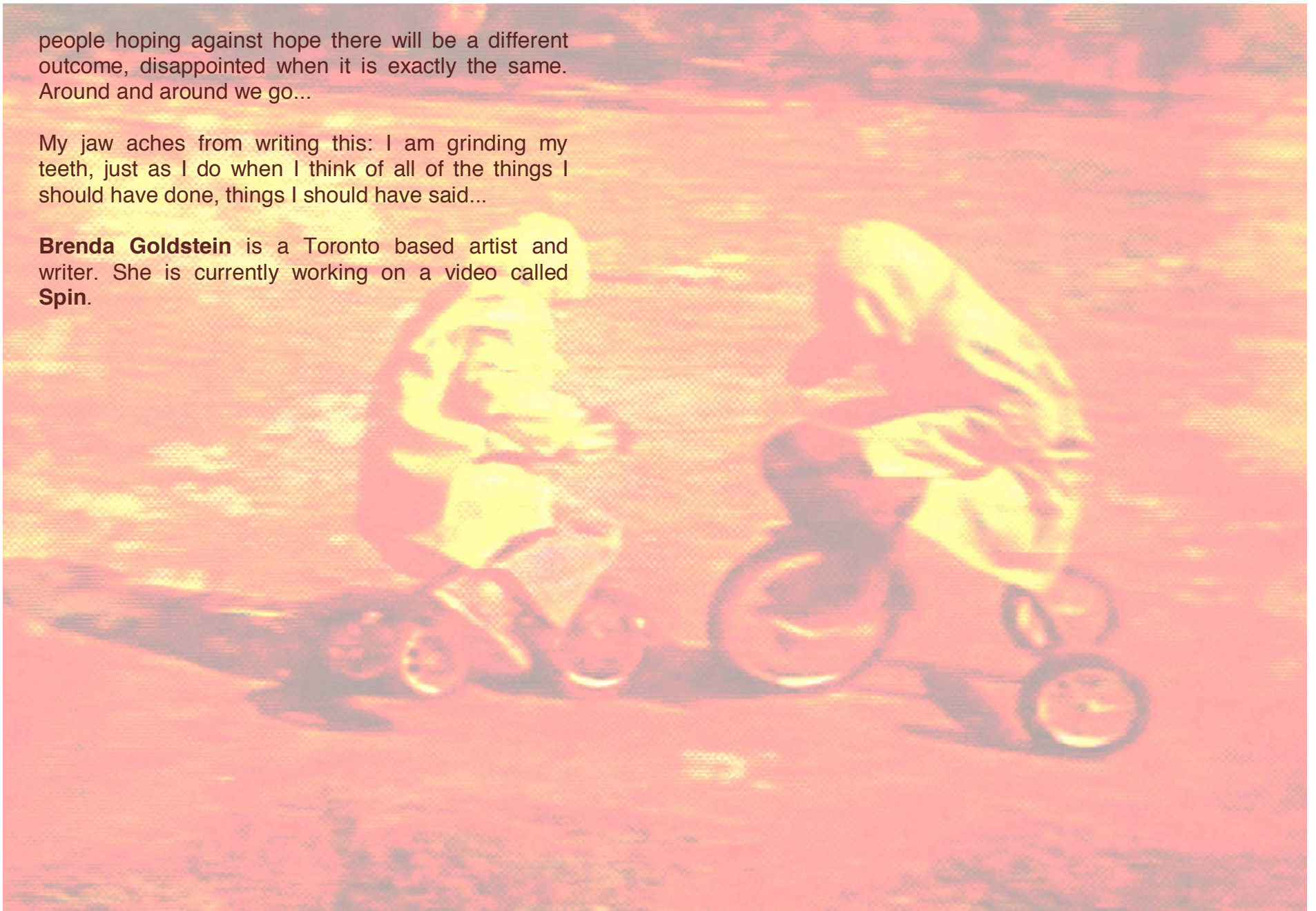
How much time do you spend thinking about unpleasant experiences that happened years ago? It is obvious with the traumatic, it is ostensible with banal disappointments. Why are you not the person you expected to be? How come your stomach still tightens if you walk into a bar and your ex is there? It has been over for years, but it still feels like a tiny splinter you can't see to dig out if you are honest with yourself. Why do you remember the details of your break up with perfect clarity, but you don't give a second thought to one pleasant moment that happened yesterday? It is so difficult to separate ourselves from the things we love, it is even harder to separate ourselves from the things we hate. We just keep coming back to them in thought, in deed, in word. We recreate the same dynamics with different



people hoping against hope there will be a different outcome, disappointed when it is exactly the same. Around and around we go...

My jaw aches from writing this: I am grinding my teeth, just as I do when I think of all of the things I should have done, things I should have said...

**Brenda Goldstein** is a Toronto based artist and writer. She is currently working on a video called **Spin**.





# Why Not Always?

by Mike Hoolboom

**Beauty** - My twelve year old nephew Jack doesn't have to work at it, that's the first thing. He doesn't have to pretend or get all juiced up in front of the mirror or put on his fancy pants. Nope, he just strolls out in some forgotten piece of denim breathing hard because he's still got adenoids that won't quit so he always sounds like he's just run up a hundred flights of stairs and his hair looks like he's lost another wrestling match with the raccoon that lives behind the tree that he likes to throw strawberries at but it doesn't matter. Jack still looks like the sun woke up in his face. Shining and perfect and looking back at me saying, "What?" or more usually, urgently, "Let's go!" He is always in movement, never looking back, or forward for that matter, there is only the abyss of RIGHT NOW which manages to swallow everything, I can hardly believe he recognizes me from one visit to another. Who are you again? He shares his beauty with most everyone else his age, it is his birthright, his inheritance, and he squanders it like the rich person he is. He doesn't notice it and no one around him, me included, would have it any other way. It's not innocence, that's something else. Or some embodied nostalgia. His blonde hopes are an easy beauty, the accustomed kind that lives out in the light, where

everyone can see it. It's so familiar in fact, that no one really notices at all.

But there is another kind of beauty, neither quite so blonde or so young. It is the beauty mentioned in the early moments of yet another Marguerite Duras autobiography, her most well known book, *The Lover*. One afternoon she is met by an older gent on the street who approaches with courtesy and caution and then braves a remark on the author's photo which shows her as a young girl. He tells her, "But I prefer your face the way it looks now, ravaged." What kind of writer, I wonder again and again, as I look over this passage, would include something like this up at the head of her story? This one here, this bit of rot on the vine, this is me. What kind of merciless overlord is able to walk into the high noon of their life and let strangers stare? Everything round me has stopped me from making this approach, which is why I'm still busy repeating my mistakes, each of which manages, as the years pass by, to wear a slightly different disguise. Each is a variation on a theme of course, and the name I grant to my mistakes is also a common place. I name it love.

Movies have been designed from the very beginning to promote the beauty spots of our lives, the high impact thrill of a face. But there is another kind of beauty which is unafraid to lose the mask of youth. It

is the beauty of witness, of a person who has returned from the frontier. What a gift this is, to be able to look into a face which has seen too much. This is our passkey to the labyrinth, to be granted admission to the very brink of what can be seen or imagined. This face, this look, carries it all, if we could learn to read it. If we would dare. These faces are a testament: I was there and I didn't look away. I looked. I saw what it was. And now I give you the gift of this face which has looked. This is another kind of beauty, this beauty is a rare gift, and goes unnoticed for the very opposite reason no one sees my nephew Jack. Most can't see the beauty in it at all. Perhaps because the pictures which surround us, which we can't help reproducing, are busy teaching us to look away, to refuse the act of looking. "I prefer your face the way it is now, ravaged." There is a cost to seeing for yourself, a cost which must be earned and won and earned again. This cost is very much in evidence in the work of Deirdre Logue. It is her beauty. I prefer the way her face looks now.



**Prolific** - Deirdre is not crazy prolific, she doesn't knock one movie out after another, she's just rolled out a new one and it is only, depending on how you count up these concerns, her second video, or perhaps that first one (**Enlightened Nonsense**) was really a collection of ten movies, which would make this number eleven. Or shall we count all these one at a time as well? I don't know how to account for them. And besides that, they don't look so different either. Already in these early moments of her making one could speak of a "body" of work. It all looks like it's come out of the same eye, the same kind of living.

She takes herself as its "subject" or at least, as its material. This work has fathers like Vito Acconci and John Baldessari who were there when video first started rolling across the heads of portable machines. If it was small enough to fit into a cab then artists could begin to work. They could find something useless to do with this new medium, they could put their cameras in front of something that might stop the act of looking away for instance. Or try something else equally outrageous.

In 1969 videotape was a single ribbon of black and white tape that lasted half an hour and if you edited it, you had to cut the damn thing with a razor blade which would produce a large glitch smack in the middle of the image. So mostly, nobody cut, you rolled the tape, and when you stopped the camera the tape was finished. It was standard fare in those early days to make tapes that ran the full length of a reel, which meant shots lasting thirty minutes of what they used to call "real time." Look at John painting his body green, look at Vito talking and talking and singing and talking some more. Thirty minutes of real time in black and white, SONY hadn't figured out how to turn the world into colour yet, and the microphone was a little pimple that was moulded into the body of the camera, a crappy little thing which was situated for maximum camera noise delivery and forget about adding music or anything later. What you see and hear in these tapes was what happened lo-fi style, what the camera

was staring at for half an hour and I don't believe that attention spans were any longer or shorter than they are now, so it's hard to vouch for sure how many people saw them, probably not a lot more than are watching Deirdre's movies. There is a line, a lineage. The way these early video thoughts are transmitted doesn't require a direct hit, it's all up in the air now, it's part of the weather, you breathe it in you breathe it out and sometimes it takes root, sometimes the seeds fall and it all comes up again as bad copies or *deja art vu*. Doesn't that look like the wheel of my car? But Deirdre doesn't have to worry about that, sure her chops are express delivered from these earliest moments of video art but she's found a way to live it and that means when the work is finally ready it arrives hard and clean and hurting, the way art is supposed to be. She's not much for thirty minute shots though, she reserves her punishments for herself, so instead of dishing the long take she slices it all up into pieces and then joins the data files in the computer until these so many moments are one movie and then she calls it **Enlightened Nonsense** (22 minutes, 2000) and now, five years later, **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** (33 minutes, 2005).

Let me run through it one section at a time, like the rooms in a house. Let me describe the decor as I get to it, as it gets to me, crawling up inside, rooting there. I can feel these roots, they come from a long time of

living, of seeing and being seen, of waiting until the object looks back and sees you.

**Per Se** - It should begin in close-up with a face, her face, what else? Up close and personal but not too personal. When she gets as close as she can get without turning into a blurry haze she confides, "What I really want to say is private." I believe everything she tells me though perhaps it's not a question of believing. Clearly she's performing for the camera, but this is the kind of performance where the more obvious the contrivance, the more abundant the signs of reproduction, the more raw and life-like, even "documentary" the subject appears. That's her alright. Putting on the make-up, striking a pose. Not that there's any make-up here, but the camera is already an accessory, a prosthetic. It absorbs these words but also applies pressure, it squeezes them out of her, doesn't it? Or is that me doing the squeezing, the one she will meet later without knowing it? The one she is preparing these words for, part of the unmet Others. Her audience.

Her voice is slow and muffled, though there's nothing else competing for attention so it comes through alright. Every word is there, right there, it's late so no need to turn down the traffic or the pop song accompaniments. There are no accompaniments, not

at this hour, and that's the point isn't it? "We" are all alone here.

There are picture frames missing, the image jumps across gaps and discontinuities, it's a small thing, the frame never changes, and it always shows her head, her larger than life head fills that frame, so every time these missing time capsules disappear her face twitches across this missing moment like something nervous, like something that can't quite keep the sweep of the clock's hands from jerking across the dial. It seems so easy for everyone else but "real time?" Forget about it. She appears in a stuttering continuity because time is no longer running smooth here, it might have once but who can remember?

She appears in broken time with her face looming in the lens, it's a bit too close, a bit too large, the soft focus doing little to hide the worry lines running over her face. She might have been ready for her close-up once upon a time, glossy and presentable, but that's not why she's turned her camera on. She's not interested in that kind of beauty. She's a performer and her theatre is the camera. Just let me do this alone, and then you can see what it is later. I'll show you later. The audience. The face that appears in front of us looks tired, let's admit it right here, we've hardly started and she looks worn out or worn down, or worn away. "I must have been that tired once," that's what I think when I watch her face looming into



my TV screen. "She looks as tired as Jean," I think, who is my personal gold standard for fatigue. Jean runs a documentary film festival in Switzerland and he runs after fatigue the way others chase stock tips or cruel men. It's not simply that he stops sleeping for two or three days. Or the international travel. Or living out of his lap top. Or seeing more than 3,000 movies each year. Jean is always leaving, always late, always needed somewhere else at the same time, always busy doing two and three things at once. Perhaps he's greedy enough to want to live two or three lives, or perhaps he's running from the one he has. But when I see her staring into the camera I can see something of Jean's face in this face. (This movie, I realize all of a sudden, is also about portraiture: how to produce a picture of a face.) This fatigue is necessary for Jean to defeat the habits of sentimentality and cliché which the monoculture tries to impose. As a result, while Jean may be distracted, his mouth is not a Hallmark Greeting Card. From the haze of, "It's too much, I can't take another step," he invents himself, his moment, his encounters, again and again. He leaves nostalgia and the laziness of the word "God" (or Allah or George Bush) behind in order to live in something like the present. In other words: he uses his fatigue in order to make an approach, in order to produce a picture. He invents the present by producing a picture. He defeats habit through fatigue. When he is sleepless, Jean is as large as a city: he opens his heart, at last he can see again, every nerve burning,

slowed down in the every day catastrophe of too much. This is also how Deirdre arrives at the beginning of her movie, peeking out from the rubble of her experience. Talking. She is talking to us. What is she saying?

"And so what I really want to know is how I can say it even though it's still private and you can know it without me telling you *per se*. That's what I want to try to do. Then I will have something that you can take away that will give you a sense of me without actually knowing who I am *per se*."

**Per Se** is the opening movement, the welcome mat, the establishing shot. Here we are, inside her face, her words, this monologue of negotiation. Something has already happened, the offscreen space is full of events which underlie this one, only the reaction shot is public, the rest, she insists, she can't say. Or won't say. **Per Se** makes a linguistic bridge between the "inner" life and its persona, what can be rescued, admitted, in this refusal of a confessional, this meta confessional, there are no lurid secrets here after all, only the lurid revelation that something has happened which we will never know, which she may never know, and its trace lies here, in this speaking. This listening.

"The scene is interminable, like language itself, it is language itself, taken in its infinity, that 'perpetual

adoration' which brings matters about in such a way that since man has existed, he has not stopped talking." (Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, Vintage: London, 2002, p. 207)

The object is speaking. The object of this face. The trail of her fatigue (the trail which has led her, surely and surely, to this very place) is written plainly on this face. (The face which demonstrates fatigue, which stages fatigue, which looks through fatigue in order to find us (the real secret, the audience, the strangers, the one she can't know). The object is speaking its sub text, defining its limits, the refusal which is also an admittance. I love you by refusing you. I am push-pulling you. When you are far enough away you will be close enough to touch me. Her face might be a bruised fruit core on the sidewalk, a mark burned into photographic paper. If these objects could speak they might say **Per Se**. They are all tokens of a mystery which cannot, will not be spoken.

Is this what she is trying to tell us?



**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part One** - Where do we look for our secrets? Under the bed. After **Per Se** the second episode of **Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes** starts up. It's done all in one shot, in real time, the camera perched low to the ground looking up at a big double bed. Deirdre enters screen left and lifts the mattress away from her boxspring and crawls into it, slowly making her way across this sandwich of a bed while a metronomic electro rhythm chirps lightly away. The room is a paradise of kitsch, the sheets are gaudy bouquets of orange and red flowers, a black velvet clown painting hangs on the far wall. Yes, a clown painting. And to complete the domestic scene, a cat sits on top of the mattress, jostled by the artist's movements below, shaken not stirred. When I saw it the first time the room rose up and kissed the screen, affirmative, this is what we want. Never mind that film students are still being told: no cemeteries and no pets, this is a crowd pleaser, this cat has maximum cute appeal, there is no stern performance artist at work here. It's a short trip, perhaps it lasts a minute or two, but nothing like the pilgrimages that once awaited those seeking miracle cures for their afflictions. This is a quest parody re-rendered as domestic trial, a Martha Stewart footnote ("And for you performance artists that like to work at home..."). Anti-heroic. Ironic. And clumsy. It's important, somehow, for Deirdre to maintain this clumsiness, even this quick crawl doesn't have a moment of grace in it, or dignity or

elevation. Instead Deirdre has to get down on her hands and knees and genuflect her way through this bed with her limbs sticking out in awkward places while this sugar mountain of a resting place heaves and jitters and shakes. Parody of a sex act? Acting out underneath the covers? She is going where we cannot go. She sees what we can't see and she's not bringing it all back to us. We watch her take the trip and that's as far as we can go. The only people who see what she sees are the ones who take the same trip. This kind of looking is not for tourists. At one moment, her legs still sticking out of the mattress, she pauses, has she found something, is she looking for some thing after all? But then she pushes on and the bed closes.

Why did the performance artist cross the road?



**Repair** - The third episode is entitled **Repair**. It shows a pair of hands taking apart a pomegranate and

putting it back together again. Presented as a simultaneous view with alternating titles which read, "Make Mess," "Clean Up Mess," in a stenciled font. The two actions are interdependent, if the fruit wasn't taken apart it couldn't be put back together again. The fruit is made whole again utilizing the simple technique of playing the same footage backwards. A final title (issued as a challenge? A plea?) reads: Repeat. This compulsive reflection of compulsion hopes, above all, to repeat itself. To repeat itself.

There are things I can't help repeating. Like the way I look at you, the way I can hold you with a look and then let you go. Call it a learned response, call it personality. I don't need to banish you to the furthest corner of my kingdom, I can just stop looking, that's all, that's all it takes. One moment you're here, you're front and centre, you're filling my eyes, my attention, and the next moment who are you again? It can happen that fast. I don't think it's a bad habit. It's the distance between us, that's all. It comes and goes. And then it comes again. What are friends for?

In **Repair** only her hands are visible. The movie shows a life of hands, it is hand-held, hand-made. The footage, I can't help noticing, has been hand-processed, the strips of film unspooled and soaked in baths chemists call solutions. There are marks and scratches, solarized flashes, satisfying analogue surface noises that serve as reminders of film's dual

(two-handed) status. In the hands of its maker it is an object, a material fact, but for the audience it is only light and shadow. The film audience is always sandwiched between pictures "going on behind their back" and the pictures in front of them, projected phantasms of light. Logue's rough handling of the material asks us to look over our shoulder, back to the place where pictures come from, where they are turned into light.

This miniature, like so much of her other work, is a synthesis of traditions. Minimalism, body art, underground film.

Logue uses her body the way a painter uses pigment, to provide the first principles of composition, but also: as an analogy of living, as the wound of living, its evidence and grieving mark. Whether falling in **Fall**, or licking a road in **Road Trip**, or peeling tape from her face in **Tape**, the body demonstrates the punishing trials of its repetition. This is Logue's first tragic principle: the body is condemned to repetition. A motif underscored by her looped installations in gallery settings, where they repeat all day, in all the visible hours of the gallery's life. As long as they can be seen, they can be seen again.

But the body's repetition is not exact, it does not adhere to digital codes where the copy is the original. Instead it performs its repetitions as theme and

variations, if one looks closely enough, inside each repetition there are small differences (the way we wash the dishes, brush our teeth, shave and shower, sleep) which may bring pleasure or pain.

Condemned. Is that too harsh a word to use? When I see this work I am reminded, again and again, that I am condemned to living in a body.

Sometimes two hands are not enough to show the work of two hands. In **Repair** we see only two, but they are multiplied. Logue superimposes the same two hands, performing the same action, on themselves. There are six hands altogether, pulling apart the pulpy interior of a pomegranate, then putting it back together again, or trying to. It looks disturbingly like cranial matter, shapeless in these hands, there are no corners or edges left, nothing one could lay a foundation with, nothing to be stacked or graded or separated. The undifferentiated mess she claws at has no centre around which the original shape can be re-formed, which underlines the futility, or at least, the endless nature of her repeating. A compulsion which feeds on itself. Which admits only that part of the world necessary for its repeating. The empires of prohibition which make prolonged depression possible. Errors in judgment which change a life, just like that, the small shifts which turn pessimism into hopelessness. There are moments of experience which function as black holes of time, they need to be



returned to again and again (please father, not there, never there), they don't stop happening, even after they've finished. These are the memories our bodies are busy becoming.

In **Repair** only her hands are visible in the arena of the frame, the site of public disclosure where this body enters to show itself, to show us, the cost of living in a body. Over these hands, like a reminder from the super ego, an after thought, alternating titles which appear stamped over the image: MAKE MESS. CLEAN UP MESS. Like the hands which fill the screen, the titles come in pairs. They also repeat, ensuring in their on/off nature, that whatever one hand will accomplish, the other will take away. (On the other hand every movie has its last word, in **Repair** the last word is: REPEAT) They appear to work at cross purposes, canceling one another out, but only apparently. What they ensure is that the work of these hands can continue, and without end. The hand which cleans up the mess relies on the one that produces the mess. The two hands are parts of one another, an alternating current, relying on their opposite, so these two hands in Logue's picture world become an image of perverse symmetry, of wholeness.



**Crash** - In **Crash** a pair of tots wearing raincoats ride their tricycles into each other and fall over. Superimposed on the background, a circular (repeating) pan of evergreen trees float by. A series of titles are superimposed which read, "I am 38 years old/It occurs to me now/that I may never get/a driver's license.

What are we presented with here? A moment from childhood, looped and replayed (like a compulsion, a wound which continues to open, eternally). But this wound is played for laughs (this fragment might be named "Just Kidding"). Perhaps it is the same image that collides into itself (the collision is an act of reproduction, the fall is real enough, or momentarily real, but the over and over is an act of memory, of memory being applied to a moment, unable to let it go. Or is it the other way round? Is the event itself unable to let go?) This moment, this movie, has been reconstructed as a collision as if in answer to this

riddle: there is a large field, a small girl and a tricycle. How does she manage to bump into herself? Yes, perhaps it's the same image which collides into itself, this is one little girl who is her own worst enemy. She keeps getting in her own way. She falls, and while the descent is not far, it occurs often. She keeps getting in her own way, but try as she might, she can't stop. She'd like to stop but the footage is finite, the personality is finite, and the time is so very long. As long as the rest of your life. The shot, the personality, needs to be stretched over this very long time, and that causes repetition. It's remembered, and what is memory if not repetition, if not over and over? Though this pretend trauma, this over and over wound, is not an image of the trauma, but only a place marker, the place the trauma belongs if it could be shown. But it can't be shown. In place of the unrepeatable, the terror, the thing which should never ever be made into a picture: this slapstuck repeating, this audiovisual stutter. Will it be enough to open the door?



**Suckling** - An image that is hardly there, grainy and dark, finally resolves into another close-up of the artist's face. Not: oh, it's her again. But instead: this is the material out of which I am making my art. In place of pigment and canvas, the artist's face. She is sucking on her fingers which plunge into the open wound of this face again and again. A theme with variations (if I did the math, timed the intervals and assertions, would I recover the momentum of the Goldberg Variations?) It's not purposeful, there is no destination in this traveling, no destination home. She has a ring (or is it a tattoo?) on her middle finger. Probably it's a tattoo. She fills her mouth with it, her mouth swallows the fingers, the two sides go back and forth again and again. After all this time: a return to mother.

"Only the Mother can regret: to be depressed, it is said, is to resemble the Mother as I imagine her regretting me eternally: a dead motionless image out of the nekuia; but the others are not the Mother: for them, mourning, for me, depression."(A Lover's Discourse by Roland Barthes, Vintage: London, 2001, p. 195)

**Suckling** shows an image of putting the body back inside itself. Of folding up the body, tucking and sucking, and incorporating. Nothing will stick out. There is nothing extra or left over. It is also an image

of retraction: I take that back! That hand, this elbow, this thigh. I am disappearing into myself.

I am sustaining myself with myself. I am all I need. Aren't these the words he used, repeated (like a compulsion) day after day? Take eat, this is my body. And she does.



**That Beauty - That Beauty** is another performance short about the beauty which can exist only over there, belonging to someone else, or in the past, or to come, that once and future beauty, but not now. **That Beauty** takes as its subject the listening body, driven by ears not eyes. The subject, the dancer and artist and performer is wearing headphones which cut her off from the world (from the viewer), which remakes the world as her world, though she is already part of a received wisdom, the song loop for instance which issues on the soundtrack, which I (we?) imagine are similarly rising into the headphones. They are not her songs,

though they are directed at her. She is a headphone solitary, the phones driving her inside the body, pushing the music inside, turning the body into music and rhythm. The song occurs in a loop, turned back on itself, asking us to play it again Sam. The chords swell and then a male voice speaks/sings: "That beauty right there." The music stops under the force of his pronouncement, the singer picks her out, singles her out from the crowd (the crowd is also the music, the crowd parts, the music stops). His voice is also a kind of look, a finger pointing RIGHT THERE. Meanwhile, in pixilated abandon, the performer dances on, apparently "all body" reduced (lifted?) to a symptom of sound, an effect of the locked groove, hips swaying, throwing her hands up in the air, smoking while she's shaking, she's feeling as good as it gets. And if it's filled with fear and anxiety and pain, well, that's all part of as good as it gets too.

She films herself as a high-contrast silhouette so we can't make out face or expression, underlining the fact that she is a body. A body held in thrall to a beat and a voice. That beauty. That voice, an idea of beauty. Or in Logue's re-draft: that abject beauty. The words onscreen appear as superimposed intertitles, answering the man's call, as if from the dancer's mind, the mindless mind, the carried away, overcome, overcooked mind of the headphoned solitary. The dancer who is also a writer as it turns out, filling in his sentence, projecting, saying what he (the imaginary

one, the suitor, the one who is out there right now waiting for her) cannot say. That beauty right there (he says) "FEELS FRAGILE" says the title. "FEELS ANXIOUS" answers the title. The emotions run from fragility through shame, invisibility (is invisibility an emotion? The first emotion?) and then finally forgotten (I'm nothing, never was, no place for hope to cling to). The body responds to its suitor the only way it knows how, by re-staging its past, over and over, with everyone who encounters it, until it can be absorbed, and let go, condemned to repeat until the record stops.

The body is mostly made of water, and here, in this one minute body brief, it's all about the body, it's about water, inside and out. The movie begins and ends with water, the dancer appears inside this wash of surf and crest and foam. Rising and falling and easy, it goes down so easy. She never leaves her kitchen.

Touch me if you must. If you dare. But know that some have entered this house and never left. You may meet them on your way towards a door which no longer exists. I hope you like it here, doesn't matter either way, just makes it easier.

**Wheelie** - **Wheelie** features another home movie loop. A young boy, five or six, pops a wheelie on his

bike (he rides on the rear tire, while "popping" the front tire up in the air) and then falls off of it. He lands on the ground though his bike continues to move forward, borne along by its momentum. Here is another country setting, the footage turned a strange colour owing to the age of the film, the colour dyes have shifted in the heat and cold of the years between producing the look, the glance that made this memory possible, and the stare that returns it as a fixed item in a personal image repertoire. The superimposed titles read: "I am 38 years old/Although I still make mistakes/I have found/more people/to blame." **Wheelie** is a slapstick of rising and falling, of modest ascent and abandon, met almost immediately with a coming to ground, a grounding, a fall to earth. Just kidding of course, but even kidding leaves behind a reminding bruise.







**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part Two** - A title announces the end of part one and the beginning of part two. All in the dark. Part two opens with a close-up shot of Deirdre wrapping her fingers and hands in bandages. The image is sped up, though still synchronous, imparting to proceedings a restless, nervous intensity. There are no visible cuts that need to be salved, the entire hand is a wound, this body is a wound, there will never be enough band-aids, she needs all the protection she can get, though it's still not enough.

And of course this sequence is about repeating, like all the rest. About the compulsions of the body, the compulsion that is memory (We are going back, again. In other words, returning to the body.) She doesn't put the same band-aid on the same hand, but it's the same kind of band-aid on the same hand. Over and over.

The band-aids are a covering, a second skin. Now you see it, now you don't. The hand exerts a "grasp," it "gets a grip." The hand is the moment of the body related to metaphors of control. What does it mean to cover up this control, to bind it? Is this not another way of saying, I don't have a handle on it, I'm losing my grip? "Get a handle on it." That's how the saying goes. But what if there is no handle? What if the riddle doesn't arrive with handles? What if the body you really want has no orifices, no place to admit the outside, what then? And worse, what if that body is your own?

A helped hand, not a helping one. A pointer to show how tender, how vulnerable this hand is. How raw the "first" skin is. This covered over hand (but not hidden or put away, it is right there in front of me, in close-up. The wound is examined, pulled at, fascinated.) How much longer? That's what I wonder when I watch this. Will it go on and on? Will she stop at her hand? Wait, she's covering her wrist, perhaps she'll do her entire arm and the body attached to that arm. While she applies her elasticized scars, disposing of their plastic containers by dropping them out of frame in a steady heap, I wait for her to cover the tip of that middle finger, and a moment of exposed palm. The longer the shot goes on, the more I am seeing her hand the way she sees it. Don't stop now, you might miss a spot. This is what I would like to whisper into her ear,

in order to urge her on. Not that she needs urging. Don't stop now or ever. And then it ends.

If there is no possibility of contact, of pleasure, or the pain which pleasure makes necessary, which deepens pleasure and allows it to ripen, at least I can make a sign. At least I can show the other one, the one who is trying to touch this body without orifices, that I am still here inside the fortress. If I can't touch you it's because I don't have hands anymore. Look. The artist is making an image with nothing more than a box of band-aids and two hands. Christo is busy covering the Reichstag, and that is another history of division, Deirdre begins at home, covering her own hands.

"Upon it we sleep, we are awake, we fight, we win and we are defeated, we seek our place, we experience our incomparable happiness and our astounding falls and collapses, we penetrate and we are penetrated, we love." (Gilles Deleuze)



**Worry - Worry** is another home movie brief, showing (parts of) four very young girls dancing. The girl in the foreground has her back to the camera and turns to face us, as soon as the turn is complete the shot ends. This takes about four seconds. Superimposed titles appear three times, bearing the same message: "I am 38 years old/and sometimes/I worry so much/I worry/it will kill me."

The loop is so short there is no time for a social relationship to develop between the four figures onscreen. Instead they become part of a rhythmic churning, which is centered on the act of the girl in the foreground who reveals her face. She is overexposed and grainy, the original made with cheap home movie equipment, so there is little detail in her face. We sense a face, she gives an impression of a face, but no matter how many times she comes around, her turning leaves only an impression of an impression. There is no gain, no addition, in this accumulation of a moment, which echoes the "worry" intertitles which are caught in a tautology of worrying (she worries about worrying).

The use of old home movies asks: was the worry already there? There, right there, in this moment which can be played and frozen and slowed under an adult's supervision. Is this the origin, the primal moment of worry? Even if it is, the artist suggests, we wouldn't know. Look at the face—it doesn't tell you a

thing. It's blank, project if you will, if you must. If there was a face that could appear in this turning it would be here, perched right on top of these shoulders, but her face hasn't occurred to her yet, she is not turning to reveal herself after all, only to show her secret, to show the place her picture would be, if she had one to share.



**Eclipse** - In **Eclipse** the artist appears in night vision mode, black and white and blue. Once more Deirdre is looming into a wide angle lens which bends her face around the glass. She moves her cheeks around trying to get them to make a sound, to crack her jaw. "Can you hear that? It's like a crack. Did you hear that? Oh here comes somebody." Somebody, I wonder? Deirdre is sitting in what looks like a domestic setting. She appears (again) as if the party's over and everyone's gone home and her lover's in bed and in this exhausted state she's begun (again) to speak with her camera. To perform herself. "Somebody," she says, though surely she has to know who this somebody is. Her lover, her best

friend, one of her parents maybe up wandering sleepless after a night of too many thought balloons. But for now she preserves this secret, this secret place, for now it's just us. The artist and her strangers, the ones who will come later in order to bear witness, to complete her with a look, with our attention, though we will arrive too late, when the moment the image could have arrived has already past. She invites us but only too late, we can find her only after she's gone, and we are left not with a picture of what she's done but of what she can show us after the action has taken place. It is as if we are watching the civil war in the Gaza Strip but we need to read it all, and without commentary, from a single face sitting at the window. And it is not happening live, it has already happened. They have already killed the rest of the family, bulldozed the neighbour's house, destroyed the school. The next day there is a face at the window. This face bears the mark of all that has happened, and though we can't read the specifics of what has occurred, the artist hopes that something else can be conveyed, some manner of facing the unfaceable, of standing at the brink of what cannot be shown, between the two worlds of the visible and the invisible. It is a dangerous place, no wonder she looks tired, and stretched out of shape, no wonder she is cracking up, falling apart, celebrating her fissures, her openings.

"Oh here comes somebody," she says, and before "somebody" comes in, the camera pans down to the ground so it's not pointing back at her face. So it doesn't look like she's doing THAT again. Then there is a cut and she is starting again. "Ow. Can you hear the cracks? Did you hear that? Did you hear that? Can you hear?" While she is speaking a dark, shuddering shape appears on her cheek, not quite circular, it changes shape as she moves, a dark hole added via the magic of video special effects. Once again the image the artist offers us of herself is unflattering, not quite grotesque or gargoyle-like, nonetheless she frowns persistently, her face is bent and misshapen, she appears to be in distress. And then there is the action itself which is repeated, like every action in each of these vignettes is repeated. Now she is pursuing the cracking of her jaw. It is the sound of a body under duress, the skeleton protests, rubbing against itself. The body is an instrument for producing sound, not only the familiar sounds of language but the protest noise of age and failure. "There is a crack in everything," Canadian poet Leonard Cohen sings on his disc *The Future*, "that's where the light comes in."

Alone, at night, she sounds her cracks and fissures. Is this an image of the artist at work, running her fingers over the fault lines, worrying them, unable to let go, letting the furrow run deep and deeper so that some uncomfortable and unbearable truth might emerge?

She will go where we cannot, and she won't bring back the story of that place, because there aren't stories left to tell. The myths are dry, the mouths are empty. But she can show us the cost of the travel, she can show us what it means to go this far, to look from this face.



**Blue** - In **Blue** a split screen shows the artist blowing up a paper bag and letting it deflate, in close-up of course, on small opposing screens. The bag almost fills the frame when it is fully extended, a measurement of breath (for the Greeks: spirit, in modern parlance: Esprit, the globalized chain fashion store). The breaths are counting moments, making a slow addition. How much and how far? Each breath fills the frame with its exhaustion, the repeatings of its hope, which is the same hope, to go on and on, to remember, to give and receive. But the bag (which provides evidence of her journey, which produces "the



image") also stops the outside from entering her. The outside world doesn't enter the artist, the artist applies her attention to the world. The artist enters the world with a frame and admits only those moments which fit inside it. It is a small frame and a small world. All too soon the artist is breathing their own breath, locked into their self-created system of knowing. What can come in, and what can come out? What can be shown of the outside? And what about self expression? Only the reality of the container is possible, the way experience is staged, only the stage itself can be shown. The main show has already happened, or has been buried in a necessary forgetting that the audience is already a part of, which the audience, the very fact of witness, of coming later, of surviving the too much of it, the audience makes this forgetting necessary. Blue? Well I guess so. Unable to get beyond your own bag (of tricks? In the hipster parlance of the beat generation a bag was your concern, your attention: What's your bag?). Unable to get beyond your own bag either to achieve self expression or to admit the world, here again is a body without orifices, a sealed off body, closed except for this demonstration of its frame or stage. Is it enough?



**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part Three** - She's close again, when the camera is on it seems she's always there, right there, filling the frame. Her face is the material this suite of fragments is built up out of. Now she appears in the daytime, on her porch perhaps, or out on the driveway. The look on her face shows her concentrating, no messing around here, it's important to get this just right. She uses the video monitor as a mirror, to show her what she's unable to see, extending her look through a vision prosthetic machine in an echo of the Vito Acconci tape where he shaves the back of his head, following the image in the monitor. He performs an action on himself relying on the camera to reveal moments of his body that are otherwise hidden to him. He follows the machine. She follows too.

She begins to apply black paint to her ear, one small stroke at a time. In **Eclipse**, a dark video glitch inhabited her face, now this abyss has become a consciously applied mark of separation. The ear is highlighted, marked off and zoned, the place of hearing has become an image. (Or has it been disappeared? Blacked out?) When the ear is completely black the image cuts and reverses Deirdre's features. Now she wields the brush from the other side and patiently undoes the painting. This scene reruns the first half backwards. "I take it all back!" It shows a world without consequences, where marks can be made and then withdrawn, as if they never happened at all. Here is my longest running fantasy brought to life—to return to my kindergarten self knowing everything I do now, to live a second chance. To be able to return to each moment in my life having already run through it the first time as a dress rehearsal. How satisfying (or so the fantasy goes) to be able to combine that unformed body with a mind and emotions that are still trying to stay above the water line in the present. But of course when I go back, or so the fantasy goes, the waterline would be far away, every dialogue delivered with more panache, the jokes a little sweeter, the timing tighter. Above all the abiding fear which has become such a reliable companion could be swapped for this double take, this eternal return (bearing in mind Marx's dictum: that everything in history appears twice. The first time as tragedy, the second as farce.)

I run my life back and forth across the tape heads, undoing remarks, softening the lighting until I can come up with a version I can stand to look at. This doesn't take long, I'm not worried about a precise memory, only a bearable one. Imagine cutting all your vegetables while never looking down, my memory is similarly a rough cut, an approximate assembly. Sometimes I pour attention into a moment, like my ear for instance, and then it falls off and I have to begin all over again.



**Making an Approach** - If I knew what I wanted, I wouldn't be in the movie theatre tonight, looking for more pictures. I need these pictures to say what I can't say, to show what I can't even begin to think about showing. These are small moments of taking heart and it's working, I'm encouraged, I want to go on repeating as well. Knowing it only again and again. Knowing that by coming here, by standing in front of these pictures, I am taking my place inside one of Dante's circles.

Every oppressor requires their victim, and I have come here, happily, my arms raised in surrender, my eyes open. I am ready to begin again, or middle again, reduced to a pair of eyes, not wanting to take responsibility for what I see and yet. Not wanting to account for what I saw and yet. "No one said it would be easy," my mother would tell me, and I couldn't wait to meet this new person, this "no one," but I never did. Not tonight, not all those other nights and going back wouldn't change a thing. Sometimes when I get up in the morning there is an arm missing, or a foot, an eye. It never lasts for long but the journey is not an easy one, from one part of the night to another. I will turn my tables back into forests. Stop trying to think more than one thought at the same time. Make an approach. It is time, past time now, to try and make an approach to the image. I will fail of course, the artist has shown me what it means to fail. She succeeds through failure. Failure is the portal, the entrance, the beginning of her work. Her videotapes, still so very young, are a cornucopia of failure. Let me count the ways. I will fail too. Falling down eight times, getting up nine. No need to worry about that any more, the marks it leaves behind are conversation pieces. Openings for strangers. For you.

# I Hate Deidre Logue

Aleesa Cohene is a Toronto artist who teaches a class in Avondale Alternative School called Video Production and Theory for grades eleven and twelve. She showed them Deidre's movie and asked them for responses. Here's what they wrote back.

I found all the pieces to represent her depressed and disturbed sense of mind. Although most of the effects were quite well done, ~~but~~ I felt the content was missing.

The piece I felt stood out above the rest was the one where she handed the 'banana'. The effect of motion was well presented, and clearly contrasted.

I saw most of the works as meaningless, overextended, and unnecessary.

Octav Morosani, 11  
om.silverbelte@hotmail.com

The series of films all had different effects on us. The one with the tomato was both very interesting and disturbing. Disturbing in that the tomato looked kinda nasty. But in that despite the use being painted at first, I thought it was just ~~an~~ pointless and stupid until the person was painting and taking away the paint. Kind of reminding or reversing the original process.

Charlie Schijda  
Danz-T.P@hotmail  
Grade 12

Deidre Logue

Jan 25<sup>th</sup> 36

Mon though bad - desired effect only reached for one moment.

I feel berated by this art.

No specific feelings evoked - setup that - I felt stupidified. If that's all, what's the message? Why am I being subjected to this?

**I HATE YOU** Deidre, get off the smack.

Aside from the fact I hate her lighting and black blob moving was interesting esthetically but would be more so if background wasn't eerie weird cracking, her jaw. I don't really see the continuity in this compilation, but I must say the editing was superb!!!

Loopy images that accompanied "I am 38 years old" pieces were nerve-shattering, made me feel sick. The pace of the compilation was not particularly enjoyable, although it allowed the aesthetics to imbue in my mind, I would look away because the images were overwhelming. The shots were often similar, seemed like she made it alone. The compilation definitely evoked discomfort and made me feel uneasy, I would go on a limb and say Deidre probably feels awkward.

Shane Freedman  
Grade 12  
shane.freedman@gmail.com

Wiley



25<sup>th</sup>  
Jun 06

Deirdre Logue

While watching these the main emotions I had were curiosity, confusion, humour and uneasiness. I wanted to know why she was making them and what they were for. Because I did not know anything about them it made me uncomfortable. For some reason I actually didn't find these pieces all that hard to watch, I even almost enjoyed ~~it~~ <sup>the video's</sup>. Without knowing anything about ~~them~~ <sup>the video's</sup>. This is also why it made me uncomfortable. Although I know most of the class found it frustrating to watch I found that they intrigued me and I also found some of them a little funny, which probably came from my uneasiness.

Emma Lantieri Grade 12 poisonous6969@hotmail.co.uk

Jonathan Perelmutter

Inspirations from Deirdre Logue

The prominent emotions that was invoked from me during the videos were discomfort, and worry, which were closely linked. The effort to cause discomfort was quite clearly intentional in the unconventional beat counts, constant repetition, and unusual aesthetic effects. These elements not only brought discomfort to me, the viewer, but also brought out a strong feeling of discomfort from the filmmaker, a feeling linked to her thematic objectives. Since these emotions were brought out, I had a clear sense of a curiosity in these thematic objectives. Although I was quite uncomfortable in the unconventionality of the piece, I was very drawn to it and interested in seeing the next puzzle piece in the mystery that she was showing me.

Jonathan Perelmutter

Grade 12

send it to jonathan@hotmail.com.

As a whole, I felt all the pieces got me on the edge of my seat. When I say the edge of my seat, I wasn't always anxious. With the first one I went through stages. At first I was uncomfortable, then I felt a bit scared. then it got to the point where I was laughing cause I was nervous, nervous to the point where I was getting mad. All in all I respected the fact that that one piece drove me to all those emotions. With the bed scene, I was trying to figure out what the point was, but in the middle I didn't feel like I was part of the audience, I felt like I was in the room with her and wanted to help her get through it. Now with the 38 year old series I got annoyed, but with the text at the bottom, it made the repetition make sense.

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Deirdre Logue:

Katherine Monteiro  
Jan. 24.06.

Sometimes the repetitiveness got to me but overall I enjoyed her work. As mentioned, I was amazed at how watching something could give me such strong physical feelings i.e. when she was crawling into the mattress or putting band-aids all over her hand I began to feel claustrophobic and found myself twitching. My favorite piece would have to be the home videos being played over and over again with the writing coming up in segments "I'm 38 yrs old ... Sometimes I worry so much .... I worry ... it will kill me" I can't really pinpoint the feeling but something about that made me relate and for that piece I feel I actually understood this woman's art. As for her other pieces (painting car, bike brackets etc) I liked her use of technology and her creativity when trying to find ways to express herself.

Katherine Monteiro  
Grade 12/11?  
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# When I Need To Be Somebody Else

by Deirdre Logue

**Disguise** - A woman with a mouth like a catfish is showing me her whiskers. They work like snake tongues, emerging and retracting from tiny holes at the sides of her mouth. When visible, they move as if sending or smelling. They are incredibly articulate and delicate. They also seem to present a danger, as if able to transmit a poison. I can tell right away, she is not who she appears to be. These whiskers are part of her but also a deliberate disguise. I am hypnotized by the movement of her tiny tongues. I cannot move. I am both terrified and amazed.

**Fragmentation** - As the body is broken down into its transmittable lines per inch, it can then be reconstructed into other forms of transmission. This breaking apart takes no prisoners.

**Names for Strangers** - I have always been in love with performance art. Even as a child I can recall being fascinated with the potential my mind and body had for both eliciting and sustaining a performative tone. Changing my name for strangers was just the beginning of what would fast become a lust for an increasingly fluid sense of self. Scolded on a regular

basis for lying about who I was, I began to realize that this desire was never purely intuitive but rather a strategy for surviving a serious case of ambiguity. As well as being myself I was also names, genders and identities I made up: Michael, DJ, Corey, Maggie, Paul, Sara, Kevin and Gary. I was all six of the Brady Bunch siblings (though I never identified with the kid added in later episodes); five out of Eight is Enough; Jodi from Family Affair (unlike the actual character, however, I knew Kung Fu); Sabrina from Bewitched and the star of Gilligan's dysfunctional, coconut isle. I refused to answer to my given name enough that I forced my mother and father to call after their daughter Kevin in the school yard parking lot. My patient parents eventually drew the line after one full week of watching their eldest child eat out of a dog bowl in the corner of the kitchen under the guise of Pal, the identity of a long dead family pet.

**Reflection** - Screaming into an ordinary kitchen spoon. The mouth opens to emit the sounds of Godzilla and of a million tiny screamers. In this minimalist moment, the distortion of the self that a scream elicits is acutely felt.

**Ignition** - The first time I lit something on fire, it was my self. Running through a dry field to try and beat the blaze that had once been my legs, I was soon

surrounded in flames. Only the warmth, the rocket ship adrenaline, moving through space and the sounds my feet made hitting the ground were comprehensible. I was moving, fast, like a cheetah, my favourite animal at the time. We were one, my cheetah and me, orange, yellow and black, crossing the plains, the hunted escaping the hunter.

**A Considered Self** - Early shape-shifting prepared me well for adolescence and I survived as many of us do by developing new identities over and over again, depending on who was asking. Once past the threshold of my sixteenth birthday, I felt I was entering a new era of self. A directed, considered, adult self who knew what she/he wanted and who she/he wanted to do that with. And although this was true to an extent, I have never lost my fascination with performing my body and mind into several selves. I am who I need to be, when I need to be somebody else. I am in a constant state of becoming, a sign of the future of who I may become. I am not singular.

**Dreams** - I am a transformer toy, the blue one that is a motorcycle that turns into a Power Ranger character. I am in the middle of the transformation process when I hear my mother crying out for help. I must get to her or she will surely perish. In a panic I

rush the assembly and put myself together in all the wrong ways. My head is in the right place but I am quickly becoming a jumbled mess of man and machine. As my mother's cries intensify, parts are everywhere and I accidentally break off one of my arms. In its place grows a spoon. I can see my reflection, and as if seeing myself for the first time, I begin to weep.

**Untitled Combustion** - As we watch the blue flame ignite the performer, we hold our breath. Not just from anticipation, but so as not to blow it out. Her crown catches fire and it quickly starts to burn. Onlookers cast out their lines towards her hoping to catch a spark, to participate in her chemical transformation, her bright shifting body of gas, her mixing with oxygen in the air.

(Originally published in ***Promise***, a catalogue for a show of performance-based video and film dedicate to different states of becoming, curated by Deirdre Logue. Published by YYZ Artists' Outlet, Sept. 1999)



# Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes: SCRIPT

**Per Se** - Monologue delivered to a fixed frame camera. The image is color video, the shutter is slow, producing periodic blurs. The artist's face appears in close-up, her voice is slowed down and filtered. "What I really want to say is private so what makes it so hard to say is that I don't really understand it, per se. And so what I really want to know is how I can say it even though it's still private and you can know it without me telling you, per se. That's what I want to try to do. Then I will have something that you can take away that will give you a sense of me without actually knowing who I am, per se. Or what I'm trying to say, per se. Sorry that's not very much to go on. Let me try again. If. If I tell you what I mean by all of this then I will be giving you more than I'm willing to, per se. And it's not exactly that it's a secret, per se. It's just that I don't know how to say it the right way, per se."

**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part 1** - Wordless action-the artist enters her bed, crawling between box spring and mattress. Fixed frame, wide shot, the camera is placed close the ground. A music loop plays.

**Repair** - The artist's hands appear in close-up, taking apart and rebuilding a smashed tomato. This action is superimposed on itself. The original footage was shot in black and white 16mm and hand processed. A pair of titles alternate in superimposition, "Make mess. Clean up mess." A final title reads: "Repeat."

**Crash** - 2 tri-cyclists intentionally run into one another, fall, right themselves and begin again while an acid yellow sky revolves above. Superimposed titles read: I am 38 years old it occurs to me now that I may never get a driver's license.

**Suckling** - The artist appears in grainy close-up, repeatedly putting her fingers/hand into her mouth.

**That Beauty** - A black and white, pixilated wide shot of a kitchen shows the artist wearing headphones and dancing alone. In colour an image of light reflecting on water is superimposed. The sound features a loop of a triumphant orchestra just beginning to signal victory and a man saying, "That beauty right there." A series of superimposed titles read:

Feels Fragile  
Feels Lonely  
Feels Ashamed  
Feels Insignificant  
Feels Afraid  
Feels Helpless  
Feels Reduced  
Feels Anxious  
Feels Lost  
Guilty  
Embarrassed  
Forgotten

**Wheelie** - Found footage loop shows a young boy riding his bicycle in a field. He pops a wheelie (rides on the rear wheel alone while the front wheel is up in the air). He falls off the seat and lands on the ground. A series of superimposed titles read: I am 38 years old although I still make mistakes I have found more people to blame.

**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part 2** - The artist's hands appear in close-up. Fixed frame, fast motion, synchronous sound, colour video. The artist unwraps and applies band-aids to her hand until it is completely covered.

**Worry** - Found footage loop shows four young girls dancing including the artist as a child. A set of superimposed titles appear three times in succession which read: I am 38 years old and sometimes I worry so much I worry it will kill me.

**Eclipse** - The artist's face appears in close-up. The frame is fixed, the sound is synchronous. The artist repeatedly cracks her jaw while speaking intermittently. A blackness slowly covers her face. "Can you hear that? It's like a crack. Did you hear that? Oh here comes somebody... Ow. Can you hear that? It's like a crack. It's like my jaw. It's full of cracks. Did you hear that? Can you hear the cracks? Oh, did you hear that? Did you hear that? Can you hear it? I feel like I'm going to get my period. I'm in a very bad mood. Did you hear that? Ow. Did you hear that? Did you hear that?"

**Blue** - The artist's face appears in close-up, shot in pixel vision with a fixed frame. In this frame appears two small video images (left and right), both show the same action, the right one is reversed and plays out of sync. The artist breathes into a paper bag on the left side that inflates, filling the frame and filling the bag on the right side.

**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part 3** - The artist's face appears in close-up. Fixed frame, colour video. The artist applies black paint to her right ear. Once the ear is completely black there is an edit that flips the image (left becomes right, what was on the right side of the frame is now on the left). Then the scene plays again backwards, the artist unpaints her ear until the black is removed.

# Biography

Deirdre Logue's film, video and installation work focuses on self-presentational discourse, the body as material, confessional autobiography and the passage of 'real' time. Deirdre's recent projects include *Enlightened Nonsense*, a series of 10 short performance films about repetition, her 12 channel self-portrait *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes*, and *Rough Count*, when, during the simple act of counting a bag of confetti - piece by piece - memory thresholds are found and failures amass. Deirdre's work addresses how it is that women organize their images and identities for mass consumption, and how this reflects or distracts from our knowledge of the individual.

Recent solo exhibitions of her work have taken place at YYZ Artist Outlet, Neutral Ground, the 2006 Images Festival – where she won both Best Installation and Best of the Festival – the Berlin International Film Festival, Beyond/In Western New York, Ottawa's video art Biennial, Art Star and at Articule in Montreal. Recent group exhibitions include *Traumatic Landscapes* at the Centre for Art Tapes, *Achtung Baby* at the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics in Buenos Aires and *Ceremonial Actions* upcoming at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre.

Deirdre has also spent the past 18 years working on behalf of media artists by organizing independent film, video and new media festivals and by participating in forums and symposiums on the future of independent artistic practice and film and video exhibition and distribution. She was a founding member of Media City in Windsor, the Executive Director of the Images Festival from 1995-1999, the Executive Director of the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre from 2001-2006, is currently the Development Director at Vtape and lives and works in Toronto, Ontario.

# Description of Why Always

Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes (2003-2006) is a selection of short self-portraits that record accomplishments without impact, small feats of moderate strength and moments of mild impudence. They are reflections on aging, breaking down and reparation. They are works that describe our need for intimacy and our fears of exposure. They are always, when we really wish they were just sometimes. WAIJS won both Best Installation/New Media Work as well as the Images Festival Prize in the 2006 Images Festival of Independent Film and Video.

**WAIJS** is made up of the following 12 parts and is presented simultaneously on 6, 19" flat screen, wall mounted 4x3 televisions:

**Per Se** - This short work is dedicated to the moment of hesitation that precedes actually saying something meaningful and to the difficulties of personal expression.

**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part 1** - There are things - stupid things - that I have always wanted to do, just to see if I could, just to see what it would feel like. This was one of those things.

**Repair - Repair** reflects on the impossibility of fixing the truly broken. It shows two hands, busy at work, trying desperately to mend, to repair and rebuild. More hands follow immediately behind, in the wake of the first. These are the mess makers, the ones who brought about the chaos, the ones who are responsible for destruction.

**Crash** - 2 tri-cyclists intentionally run into one another, fall, right themselves and begin again. This is their only ambition, their only accomplishment.

**Suckling** - In semi-darkness, the artist sucks at her fingers. An autoerotic performance of consumption, Sucking explores something of the intimacy and sensuality of addiction.

**That Beauty** - Existing somewhere between being lost and finding oneself, she hides within her own invented solar system, she is spectacular, like a dying star, burning bright.

**Wheelie** - Repetition drives this reflection on blaming others for what are our own, obvious mistakes.

**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part 2** - The simple act of applying a bandage becomes an act of desperate expedience. Shot in real time then compressed, an entire box of bandages is used to express the endless task of hiding one's wounds. Wounds not visible, yet always felt.



**Worry** - Since childhood worry has been both a preoccupation and a driving force. Now in adulthood, worry is a burden, unshakeable, relentless and likely fatal.

**Eclipse** - In her studio, the artist fears the worst. Camera up close, we watch as she tries to determine the source of that strange internal cracking, all the while a sinister blackness descends upon her.

**Blue** - Blue describes the co-dependency within. Two images of the artist are seen sharing the same breath. As one inhales the other concedes, then as if owed her turn, the other waits for a vital contribution.

**Beyond the Usual Limits: Part 3** - Like two sides of the same coin, her head is merely two halves stuck together in the womb. The 3rd in the series, this work describes the certainty that what goes up must come down.



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