



DEIRDRE LOGUE
BEYOND THE USUAL LIMITS

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 that 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 that has seen too much. This is our pass-key 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. These faces are a testament: *I was there and didn't look away. I saw what it was. And now I give you the gift of this face that has looked.*

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 30 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 moulded into the body of the camera, a crappy little thing 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 attention spans were any longer or shorter than they are now, so it's hard to vouch for 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 déjà art vu. 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 30-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* and then, five years later, *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes*.

The artist performs in each of her movies. This work is too important to be left to others. She never leaves the stage of the frame, and hardly speaks – she lets her body do the talking. She shows, demonstrating the cost of living in a body. She offers us the trial of ideas and their execution, her skin appearing as a book, written over and over, and without end.

MH: You often appear as the subject of your movies, and the camera accompaniment seems to bring with it a particular pressure that manifests as punishment. The camera doesn't glance or graze; instead, it seems to push its look toward you, like the wind, an unseen force that compels you to act, even if these actions are painful. There's a question in that wind and I'm looking for it now. Could you comment about this duet of bodies, yours and the camera's?

DL: On the implications of there being two (of us).

My arm is a branch, the camera in my hand a leaf, photosynthesizing.

There is my body – me, and then a warm 'something' inside the camera that I allow myself to believe in and relate to when I record things. It is another somebody, but it's small, only part human, and it can be turned on and off, which I like to do often. I am prone to talking to it in simple terms. I often ask it for things, negotiating the probability of success or failure, looking into the lens for feedback, critiquing my image and sharing with it my insecurities. We often commiserate, expressing a shared sorrow and trying our shared best to put on a good face.

Despite our closeness, I feel the camera can sometimes be very quick to judge. In fact, I've recorded lots of things I felt the camera simply didn't like.

I think the creation of an anthropomorphic relationship with the camera is essential to working with your self as subject. The camera is always there, held easily in the hand, just an arm's length away, waiting for you to make something of the moment. To act. This perceived need from the camera and its consistent proximity makes for a very intimate yet demanding experience. I almost always feel like I'm being watched. And it is precisely this intimacy mixed with expectation and antagonism that makes it personal for me. It's really just the two of us.

If the camera had no carnality, who but me alone would be left?

MH: Curious, I always felt the camera was an equal-opportunity looker. It never turns away or refuses its subject: *no, please, not that, it's too much*. Every bit of gore and terror and banality is rendered in the same glass stare. But you have embraced this stare in a new suite of videos entitled *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* (33 min, 2005). After the party's over and everyone's gone home, the two of you are left together, quiet conspirators, conjuring something that may be fit for public consumption (for strangers) later, but certainly not now. Now, it's just the two of you in a series of encounters that are intimate but not confessional. Can you talk about how your relation to the camera has changed (from film to video, from something that has to be wound up to something that is ready all the time, not to mention the recording of sound)? Why do you always shoot with your face so very close to the lens, as if you were pressing your face into its face, the two of you locked in a forever kiss?

DL: One of the things that seems very different for me between using film and video is the device.

When I use a film camera, I make a big to-do about loading the film into it – this part always scares me, actually. Once it's loaded, I feel like it's then a matter of using the material within it, like paint in a tube. Even when I am throwing the camera around, being a bit cavalier about it, the emulsion inside feels precious to me, like it has a special purpose and life of its own. I have never felt this with video.

The way I work with a film camera incorporates my not being able to see myself, not being centred in the frame, unsure of the exposure, just not 100 percent in control of the potential image. I have to try and trust it and allow that my 'mistakes' are a part of what I do. I depend on the film and the camera to record my image, but on its own terms.

I am aware of and a bit embarrassed by my attraction to self-referencing devices and my current infatuation with video cameras. A video camera feels to me more like a mirror than a



Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes (Per Se)

mirror. With a mirror, once you step away, your image leaves with you. With a video camera, your presence or absence is caught quickly like a fish on a hook. I have never felt this with film.

As soon as I take it out and plug it in, the video camera starts feeding on me and I let it. I can see myself in the little screen and I'm surprised. I like to get as close as I can to the lens so I can see everything, even if it's ugly. I like to see how I look up close, how I could look different, older, maybe younger, if I shift just so and the camera just hums along, taking whatever I give it, listening to me breathing as I wonder what to do about everything and it never tires, and I indulge myself and I am ashamed.

MH: Shame – could you tell me more about that? Is it produced in the moment of encounter, because of something you do, or fail to do? Or does it only come later, when you revisit a moment?

When you do something again? Isn't there something about a life with cameras that means doing something again? Doesn't having a camera around mean it never happens for the first time, only over and over? Isn't there already something compulsive, looping, eternal or interminable about the act of a camera's reproduction, which is already shameful?

DL: A life with cameras is a life of moments captured and moments missed.

Moments are times when my wetware is on.

And then it's here, the moment and the body and the camera and the knowledge and the desire, it's all ready to go. And then it comes, the shame that comes with even thinking for a second that anyone would ever be interested in you or what you think.

And then it comes, the self-doubt, the feeling of worthlessness, inadequacy and ineptitude and the shamefulness inherent in a desire to expose your imperfect, all-messed-up, uncertain, poorly defined, needy self to another.

MH: Another question: much of your work carries echoes of the earliest moments of video art. I'm thinking of folks like Vito Acconci or Ulrike Rosenbach, when time was real and tapes were unedited. Solo performances for camera. Do you feel you are part of this line of makers? Some of these artists were also part of a gesture sometimes named Body Art, using the artist's body as a material to conjure experience or ideas. Your work fits rather easily into this niche, so I wonder: are their bodies also your body? Are you not only recalling their bodies in some of your work, but inhabiting them, or allowing them to inhabit you? Is this how tradition works, and when it reappears, does it turn the present into a ghost? Does it turn the body – your body, for instance – into a haunted house, a ghost chamber, a grieving vehicle?

DL: Early conceptual art, body art, performance, happenings, have had a significant impact on my work. It was actually this kind of work and only this kind of work (for a long time anyway) that attracted me to an art practice. I remember recognizing an immediate, distinct and terrifying difference between this work, these artists and the rest. I remember seeing the works and being shocked – face flushed, mouth dry – by the flesh, the confrontational voice, the dangerous ideas, the deception, the duration, the moments of exposure, courage, irreverence and the humility of it all.

I like to think that any similarities between what I do and this body of practices means carrying on in a tradition. This happens out of admiration, because I believe it's important work to make and recalling their bodies brings information for my own.

I love the idea of having one's body haunted by the ghosts of dead performance/body artists from the '60s and '70s. It would be a very raw, introspective, sad and complex life, full of smoking, coffee, art openings and profound misunderstandings. (Wait a second ... this sounds very familiar.)

In anticipation of your next question: I would be the bastard child of Sophie Calle and Bas Jan Ader (he would still go missing at sea). My babysitter: Yves Klein. My first teen crush: Hanna Wilke. My first love: Jenny Holzer. My first and last couple crush: Marina and Ulay. Smoking buddy: Vito Acconci. Arts school dream team: Chris Burden, Bruce Nauman. Crazy lady next door who would tell me things only she could tell: Carolee Schneemann. Cameraman: Bill Viola. Funeral director: Orlan. And music by Laurie Anderson.



Enlightened Nonsense (Tape)

MH: There are so many ways of looking, and the camera, one of our machines of looking, makes certain kinds of looking visible. It shows us a view, it presents us with a scene, but it also shows us the way a scene is looked at. One of the 'scenes' you turn to over and over has something to do with the unwatchable, with what cannot be shown or said. In *Per Se*, the opening movement of your new *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes*, you appear in front of the camera insisting that there are things that can't be shared, that there's a line between the visible and the invisible that the camera redraws. On the other hand, mainstream cameras are busy giving us the illusion that we, the audience, have the best seat in the house – that we are seeing everything, and from an optimal position. Your camera, however, is trained on twilight moments when the thing itself cannot be shown; it sometimes looks 'off-screen' to a place outside representation. This look is also a refusal; your camera look is sometimes a way of saying *no, this much but no more*.

The camera look seems to hurt you, wound you; it seems that other looks have arrived before this one and left their scars, and now the camera has returned to pick at them. And behind the camera is the weight of 'us,' the unseen viewers, ready to receive confession, the artist's palette of sufferings large and small. What does a 'wounded sight' mean for you? When you bandage yourself or draw stitches all over your body in *Enlightened Nonsense* (22 min, 2000), are you re-marking the wounds that are already there, that you want above all to escape from, even as you can't help showing them?

DL: Sight and language are located in two of our most visible and most articulate wounds, the eye and the mouth. These are not simply openings in the body where certain things can occur – they are opened and closed with intention. (My nephew, when he doesn't want to accept a situation or, more specifically, hear what

you are saying to him, he turns his head ever so slightly and simply closes his eyes. They remain closed until the situation changes.)

There are many different ways in which I deal with the concept of 'wounds' in my work. Most often, these wounds are specific to my experience – they are my psychic wounds, given a physical representation or a chance to speak. They are made visible not simply to prove they exist, but so we (artist and audience) can determine their dimensions, contemplate their origins, examine their characteristics. So, for example, in applying bandages to my hand in *Why Always*, we assume that a wound is being covered even though none is seen. After ten or 20 or 30 bandages have been applied, we know this is about something larger, not simply a cut or a scrape, but something more substantial. This is some kind of wound that a million bandages could never fix. It is also in the urgency of the application of the bandages and in the excessive number of them that we sense the need in the individual to cover, to protect, to expedite healing, to stop the bleeding.

I believe my moments of disclosure occur not in the public recognition of the wound but in my response to them. This is what I let you see: my fighting with them, my talking to them, my trying to understand them – this is the work I make. Artist and audience discover together and simultaneously both the visible and the invisible wound.

And cameras, like the eye and the mouth, are opened with intention and closed when they have seen enough, for the moment anyway.

MH: *Per Se* is the opening salvo of your new movie, *Why Always*. In it you talk to the camera and remark that there are many things you could say, might even want to say, but can't. Instead, these words, this preface. Once again you make a line between what is

allowed and what is not allowed; you alert us to the off-screen space of your life and its onscreen symptom of demonstration. Is it out of a sense of decorum, privacy, embarrassment, that these facts are pointed to but then omitted? If we were to know more about you, more details about your life, would that diminish your work, make it less 'artful' somehow? I remember interviewing a filmmaker who was pregnant and making a movie about pregnancy, but who didn't want to mention her own condition, as if that would render her making impulse impure. Do you share that feeling?

DL: *Per Se* is the disclaimer warning viewers of the confusion made possible in a space where fact and fiction collide. *Per Se* is about the subject of subjectivity and the difficulty of accessing language. I wanted to give the audience a sense – in preparation for understanding the work to follow – of how making images about oneself feels uneasy and how the act of articulation can render one suddenly uncertain about the truth.

I want to speak – and am in fact speaking – but in *Per Se*, I have presented my statements as precarious. Not so precarious as to be unbelievable, but just enough to be suspect. I should be able to say that I know who I am, but I can't, not exactly. I can say that I know something of who I am – but there are still so many questions, can I really say for sure?

MH: Both your major projects, *Enlightened Nonsense* and *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes*, are works made in parts (or sections, chapters), and in their insistent focus on the body it is difficult not to imagine them as Frankenstein bodies, stitched together out of parts composed and decomposed. It's difficult to think that you would begin with anything like a master narrative (who knows what the body will produce in advance?), so I'm wondering if you could describe the process of assembly, the afterthoughts that bring all these parts together?



Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes (Eclipse)

DL: For me it's an accumulative process. I have chosen to work in this way – in parts that accumulate toward a larger, more articulate part (a whole?) – because I believe that I am a composite of fragments. When I am falling apart, I feel it literally, pieces of me separating out, bricks coming loose. When I am together, I feel it too, all parts close, tight, all parts touching. I have never felt like an entity.

In both *Enlightened Nonsense* and *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes*, I started with a basic premise within which all works are produced. There is no beginning, but there is a beginning of the act of making. Once that has begun, all works relate back to the first act in some way. So it really is a series of actions or events for the camera, falling loosely into an overarching theme.

The body could be considered that overarching theme, but more specifically, it would be the body's failure, weakness, betrayal and ultimately its instability – physically, emotionally and metaphorically. I do not work from or with a master narrative unless one would allow that master narrative to be me.

With both works, I set out with the explicit intention to produce a series of ten to 12 shorts within a particular theme. I then determine an order in which they will function conceptually and formally together. They are interrelated and so pose an interesting challenge – it's like lining up ten stormy skies. Each may appear similar, but each sky produces a different storm.

I do not edit the works either. I might make changes to affect their speed or colour or make additions, but little if anything is taken away from what is captured. I show everything that comes out of the process of shooting that particular part as 'complete.' Like in *Eclipse*, where I'm cracking my jaw: the piece is one continuous shot, with the black 'spot' added to respond to the brightest part of the image.

This 'blackness' starts to creep into the image like bad thoughts sometimes creep into a perfectly good day and spoil it entirely. This blackness takes over, eating up all of the light. It then narrows in on the area of my face I am preoccupied with: my jaw and cheek, where the cracking comes from. It then grows as if feeding off the energy of my obsession, to obliterate me, erase me, consume me, like obsessions sometimes do.

As for Frankenstein, there are many works that refer directly to the idea of a Frankenstein body. There are stitches, illness and doctors and the study of my physiology. There are cracks and bandages and reconstruction and transformation. The idea of being a monster, well, that's there too, always.

MH: You run a series of three very short home-movie fragments in *Why Always*: one shows a boy popping a wheelie and falling, another shows a pair of tricycles colliding, another a trio of girls dancing. Each loop has superimposed

titles that begin: 'When I was 38 years old ...' Where are these loops from? Why have you chosen these in particular and why these titles?

DL: The tricyclists and the *Wheelie* popper are from an amazing film from the '60s on toy safety. The audio clip 'that beauty right there' from *That Beauty* is also from this film. The *Worry* loop is myself at a Christmas party, I was around seven or eight, I would think; the dervish in the foreground is my sister Glynis, and the two in the back are my cousins Judy and Suzie.

The toy-safety film is terrifying. It is narrated by a football or maybe baseball star, a handsome, commanding sort in a monogrammed jacket. It's educational, made for young adults and their parents, and proceeds throughout to identify a long list of toys you (foolish you) thought were safe, but (gasp) are child-killers. And it's not the most obvious toys either, and maybe that's why it's fascinating to me. It's a bit of a game: they sort of ask you, as an audience, to guess which toy is the worst. And it's never the science kit with its saltpetre and acids and glass – it's always the teddy bear. In fact, in *That Beauty* I have grabbed the audio from a scene where the narrator shows us a plastic eye he has just removed from a teddy bear's face – the eye has a three-inch spike on the back, and the camera zooms in on the offending spike and the narrator says, 'like that beauty right there,' as if he is describing a prize leech.

This found film footage has an everyday, commonplace, innocent aspect to it combined with something deeply sinister, unpredictable and life-threatening. So, kids, watch out next time you hold that plain, normal, loving teddy bear too close to your face! Total blindness is just a kiss away. And it keeps going. Kids keep trying things, wrong things, and crashing and falling and rubbing their elbows and wiping their eyes; toddlers are holding throat-size blocks up to their not-so-tiny mouths ... It's mayhem! And it is from here that I retrieved my crashing cyclists. Maybe it's obvious, but I was looking for cycles and accidents and more specifically for both happening at the same time.

Worry, which shows the girls dancing, is more a reflection on my own history. When I see old home movies of myself, I can see myself performing, like in *Sleep Study* (from *Enlightened Nonsense*), hungry for the lens of a camera, serious about its presence, anxious to make an impression. I can also see the worry evolve and grow and take up residence in me. Like a virus, it spread throughout my childhood and remains a constant for me in adulthood.

The texts are a reflection for me on my failings. While I am busy repeating my mistakes, going round in circles, crashing into the same old walls, I am missing things, and forgetting, and subsequently failing to do (new) things.

And around it goes. And then I start to worry that there's not enough time, that I've missed my chance, and my chest gets tight, and it's harder to breathe, and around it goes.

MH: I think the audience fave of *Why Always* is the section where you crawl between the mattress and the box spring. Can you talk about why you shot this, and why you never show us what you find on 'the other side.' Why does the camera remain in a single, fixed position throughout?

DL: First, let me say that I think the bed is the only place where we are able to be really 'in ourselves,' alone or with another, whether in sleep or in sex. I love my bed and yet each night I have to be either convinced or coerced to go to it. I love my bed once I'm in it, but until then I am estranged from this place where we are 'in ourselves' to such an extent. I'm not a good sleeper.

The *Beyond the Usual Limits* series, of which there are three in *Why Always*, is a group of works based on a few concepts that sort of coexist to 'inform' me as I work. One is the concept of disappearance, i.e., disappearance between the mattress and box spring, a hand disappearing under a hundred band-aids, an ear or a face into blackness, a person into a space, a space into a person.

By exploring this desire for disappearance, I am able to see exactly what I'm trying to hide (from me and from you), which I couldn't have identified before trying (if that makes any sense). As an example, am I trying to hide my ear by painting it black? No. I am trying to make my ear disappear so I don't hear what I don't want to hear. I see the 'disappearing' ear as shutting out, a sealing off of the entry point of language. Sometimes I am tired of hearing, but really I'm tired of listening.

So, in the case of the work where I enter and crawl into the bed, I am performing a disappearance. I am 'hiding' in a very intimate setting, inside a very intimate object. Look around your house ... there are few places 'all of you' can disappear into



Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes (Wheelie)

(fridge too cold, furnace too hot). The bed was the only object I could find that was meant to fit me (albeit the other way round) and also had meaning. So it was here, in the bedroom, wearing a T-shirt and underwear, that I proposed to myself that I 'try' to disappear. After a scraping and splintering attempt at the laundry hamper, I settled on and subsequently into the object best suited to fit 'me' formally and conceptually.

Another is the concept of silencing the body's constant hum. I feel/hear this weird noise in me I can't really quiet. And some of that noise is the body's crying out for food and sex and water and comfort and sleep and all those 'normal' almost conversational noises. But then there's this other white noise, and it's a mean, buzzing sort of annoying noise. Some call this noise anxiety. It's this one that I try to silence. I shut it off at the ear with black paint, smother it in soft cloth, pinch it between two heavy thick buffers. I look for ways to dominate it, even if just for a moment.

And finally there is the idea of testing my strength, both physically and emotionally. I started to explore this in 1997 when I began *Enlightened Nonsense*. I choose small feats for myself, ones that can't be so hard as to be impossible for me, yet they must challenge my physical ability and carry some emotional weight. Despite a certain 'accomplishment' communicated in the piece with the mattress and box spring, that shit is really hard. It is physically very intense. The box spring is not meant for the body – its wooden slats are bare and sharp and hard. And if you add the weight of the mattress on your back (80 to 100 pounds, I know, I called Sleep Country) to the weight of your own physicality (150 pounds) and then try and slide (push, shove, drag) your almost-naked self along this hard, sharp object over a six-foot span (plus your own length, which must be put in first and extracted later), it is painful and exhausting. There is no air, and it's hot. Your shirt really rides up and your ribs get scraped, and your knees get rubbed raw and your elbows get sore. (A real crowd-pleaser.) And then, as suddenly as it started, you are out on the carpet on the other side, sweating, injured and red-faced, and a winner in the psychic Olympics of your own weird little life.

MH: In the *Eclipse* section of *Why Always*, you appear in night-vision mode, your face very close to the camera, cracking your jaw. After a short time, you interrupt your solo camera performance because 'somebody,' you say, is coming around, and you put the camera away. It makes us feel that we are witness to something private, but also that there is something shameful at work here. A curious dichotomy, that you would hide this activity from 'somebody' and yet display the results to anonymous audiences. Is this dichotomy another 'crack' you are exploring?



Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes (Beyond the Usual Limits Part 1)

DL: I like to explore the subtle differences between intimacy and privacy. When does something become private, what lines get crossed to make privacy occur, what measures do we use to determine it, can something be intimate and private and still be public? Is there some sort of universal way to determine privacy? Like, two or more witnesses to an event or action = public?

In *Eclipse*, you are witnessing something I would call semi-private. I'm in my house and there is another person there somewhere, but I've found a little moment and I'm just doing what I'm doing in that chunk of semi-private time and space. I'm in the act, so to speak, when I hear the footsteps of someone coming too close for me to maintain my intimacy with the camera. This relationship that I play out with the camera is something I don't want people to see. It's like a secret recipe; you can eat the cake but not know how I made it so special. So even though it's something private, made for a public, only the making is the private part. And yes, it's a curious dichotomy, but a necessary one.

This crack I am exploring is like a fault line that runs the length of my earth; each day it gets a little bigger, a little longer, threatening each day to open me up and swallow me whole.

MH: In *Blue*, you use a split-screen to show yourself blowing up a bag, and then allowing it to deflate or exhale (inside yourself), again and again. The same action appears on both screens, though it's not identical footage. Why the two screens? And why is this section shot on film and tinted blue? Is the breath meditation another way of composing the frame, a meditation on artistic self-reliance, a tautology?

DL: *Blue* is one of my favourite sections in *Why Always*. I shot it in PixelVision in an edit suite at the Centre for Art Tapes. (I hard-wired the camera right into the Avid so that it was acting as a lens and always kicking around on standby.)

I love these cameras for their neither-film-nor-video aesthetic and for their 'either/or' response to light. It's like making a work with photosensitive blocks of ripe cheese. These cameras are also perpetually broken; mine is, in fact, broken (which, as you have probably already figured out, is something I relate to), and most people who own one have had a variety of experiences with them being broken in some way, at least once, if not forever. (Why, Mr. Fisher Price, why?)

Like in *Repair*, I have the same image relating to itself. In *Blue*, it's the same image mirrored and delayed in such a way as to create the sense that they are feeding off one another. We have two images, codependent and coexisting – creating a third.

There are lots of references here, including ones to hyperventilation, anxiety and subsequently hysteria, but it's also a formal work based on the concept of exchange. Start with one, make it two and make them share.

And it's as if through this sharing and the asynchronous formal element that the image calmed right down. It surprised me in that way. A work that felt anxious in the making now feels so zen. The sound, an electrical static, increasing in intensity as the bags fill, becomes more organic than antagonistic (as was the initial intention).

Blue is the colour of blood that has been through the body and is on its return to the heart and lungs. When I made *Blue* (and *Suckling*), I was also falling very deeply in love. I was experiencing an amazing and sudden symbiosis. I was falling in love with someone and myself through the eyes of another. Everything became flesh and blood, breath and body, you and I and all that we are or could together become. *Blue* is sending and receiving, a passing of something essential between two bodies and a touching of each other's insides.

MH: As the son of immigrant parents, I was granted a double vision: the world as picture arrived through the usual scrim of childhood confusion, but also through the experience of faraway places and devastations that I could find no evidence for but sensed lurking beneath everything. This unsettled look provided the basis for my interest in fringe media, where both the way and the what of retelling is up for grabs, new contents demanding new forms, because notions of the 'natural' or 'transparent reality' were never available to me. I wonder if you could talk about your work in relation to queer culture, or being queer – is it easily or uneasily located in the large queer nexus of media work here in Toronto? I also sense in your work this double vision at work, which is related to the sometimes discomfiting, paranormal queering of experience.

DL: I am always curious if audiences see anything with a capital Q in the work. Not much has been discussed about the works,

never mind from this particular point of departure. I think if it was pursued, much of my psychosexual and psychosocial experiences could easily be located in the works – many of the underlying themes are linked to issues of gender and sexuality.

As a cultural producer, I believe that my queerness and my artistic production are intrinsically linked. Outside of this, the degree of queerness in my work varies depending on the context within which the work is presented. The idea of a double vision, or a queering of more universal experiences, is certainly a part of my subject matter. In the works there is lots of duality and doubling and codependent, relational images suggesting some duality of experience as well.

Am I part of a queer nexus? I think Toronto is overflowing with queer production, but I feel that useful discourse on the subject of queer, experimental media is absent. I've often wondered, can you be queer and an artist at the same time, or do you have to choose between one or the other? I suspect the latter.



Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes (Repair)

MH: Why do you feel you have to make a choice between being queer and being an artist here in Toronto? Isn't the media-arts scene suffused with queer sensibilities, and isn't there something about queer performative stylings that underlies many places/works/nights out? Do you feel your work lands into that circle of folks that you see when you go out? The folks who showed up at the Gladstone Hotel for the premiere of *Why Always*, for instance, do they make it worthwhile? Or is that only another obstacle?

DL: It embarrasses me a little to say what I'm about to say, but here goes.

I really don't feel like the Toronto arts community – straight or queer, media or visual – has expressed that much interest in my work since I moved here permanently in 1995. This is also true for the larger Canadian media and in particular the visual arts

community. I have had my works shown in queer festivals (very few straight ones) and had a few individual works curated into shows (very few straight ones) and have even had solo shows at two relatively large artist-run centres, but overall I feel my work has had little attention. This is not to suggest it should receive more attention necessarily either (see, here's the rub). And I'm embarrassed to say this because ... (in my darker hours I wonder) why should it?

Does everyone feel this way or is it my fragile ego?

I try not to think about your question, because to feel somehow underappreciated as an artist in such a powerful and supportive arts community (by comparison to many) feels ungrateful, self-centred and myopic. I'm sure many would see me as one of the lucky ones, and I probably am. But I think feeling under-recognized as an artist plagues a great many 'queer media artists' (see, now I'm one of 'them'), and it's not because the community – queer or otherwise – is unsupportive. I'm not sure



Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes (That Beauty)

why this is exactly. I wonder this in response to your question – if there is so much queer work out there, and 'we' have created such a strong and unified presence as cultural producers, why would anyone feel isolated within this?

But I do.

Is there too much work or too little, too many exhibition opportunities or not enough? I say more of everything, but most importantly, I think many 'queer media artists' – as artists of significance – are grossly underrepresented in the majority of our public institutions, if not all. There is a conspicuous absence of 'queer media artists' – as artists of significance – in the press and in publications, and there is little representation of 'queer media artists' – as artists of significance – in most commercial settings. We don't talk enough about 'queer media art' as 'art,' we talk about it as queer. And I guess that's why I get scared and feel like I have to choose. Because

I choose to make art first, I guess I feel like an artist first and queer second.

Am I horrible?

I want to also suggest that people, for the most part, find the film and video work I make hard. It's about things that are not really easy to program or take responsibility for programming. It's difficult work, and I think it makes it difficult to contextualize, talk about, recognize or even see. I often feel like it's the subject matter of my work that keeps me on the outside of the in crowd.

Am I a freak?

And, of course, each and every person who came to see *Why Always* at the Gladstone made a difference, made it worthwhile. I fought tears throughout the experience, and not because I was (like so many in Toronto) 'exhausted' and not because I was relieved or overwhelmed by my own accomplishment. I felt the moment speeding past me, I couldn't catch it, keep it, hold it or make sense of it. I cried when it was over because it was personal and it was gone. And it is rare.

Am I too sensitive?

It's also important to acknowledge my own kind of refusal to be absorbed into a larger, more present and perhaps more active, queer cultural community. I am often invited to make things for events or screenings or programs, and I say no. I say no because I really can't make work that way. My process is very introspective and it takes time, and even when the work is done, I am reticent to exhibit it and I can't make stuff for fun. Even if sometimes I wish I could, making things for fun in order to be part of it all is something I resist.

Am I mean?

MH: You have been active in Canada's fringe media communities for the past couple of decades, working for the Media City Festival in Windsor, running the Images Festival and the

Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre before moving on to Vtape. The small pictures made and disseminated in these places, aren't they simply reaching the usual suspects, isn't 'community' just another name for an insular incrowd already hip to fringe pictures? Does the failure of fringe media to sustain wider audiences mark a failure in the project of alternative work? And can this failure be located in the work (who could watch that?) or the delivery systems?

DL: I ask myself this question daily. I wake up and wonder, 'What can I do to ensure that art made with film and video is seen by as many people as possible?' Unfortunately, I go to bed every night asking myself, 'I wonder if you really can make over \$1,500 a day stuffing envelopes from home?'

I believe experimental film and video is the most important kind of 'media.' I believe in its aesthetic innovation and its

capacity to change us. Despite numerous outstanding bills at Blockbuster video stores all over Toronto, I have little patience for commercial productions. Works that operate deliberately outside of the mainstream are one of the few things I feel I can talk to and about. I love them. They are my people.

I have been a part of a large community of dedicated individuals trying to make sure that audiences are complex, that the works are represented well, that the works are paid for and have a life beyond the cultural closet. I think 'we' – you and I and our 'community' – are more savvy to fringe media than we all were 15 years ago, but this to me does not signal its failure, it signals its ability to function, at least on some of us.

The fact that this kind of work (my work and yours) lacks a substantial and sustainable audience is not the failure of the projects, the practitioners or the organizations charged with the task of dissemination. I believe this is a result of social ignorance and cultural apathy, for which I blame the performing arts.

And yes, you, my community, are my first and often my only audience.

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. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have taken place at 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, Art Star in Ottawa and Article in Montreal. She was a founding member of Media City in Windsor, the executive director of the Images Festival, the executive director of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, is currently the development director at Vtape and lives in Toronto. www.deirdrelogue.com

Deirdre Logue's Media Work

Enlightened Nonsense: 10 short performance films

22 min 2000

Untitled Human #1: Ride 8 min 2002

That Beauty 2 min 2003

Prototypes 1–6 15 min 2005 (film projection performance)

Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes: 12 short film and videos

33 min 2003–2005

Distributed by Vtape.

