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Pause to Catch Up

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Pause to Catch Up

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Report

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Abstract

A Pause to Catch Up

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These works are often predicated on a web of references to alternative histories, architecture, intimate public spaces and films. The complex layering of references can give the impression that somebody knows the purpose of the space, what's happening behind the scenes. This powerlessness offsets the psychological absorption [of the installation] with feelings of exclusions and otherness. That is to say, one is othered or alienated by this work and its specific signifiers because they cannot fully identify with them - one cannot find their own subjectivity reflected in these phenomena, these objects. Thus, the experience of the work as a whole is characterized by alienation.

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[Things of substance a physical material, a bench a picture, a radio device, these things exist and have dimension. Now, this is the story of a flimsy little two-legged specie with an extremely small head, whose name is man. This is Bobby Bevis, age 37, who is also real. He has flesh and blood, muscle and mind. Comes from a primitive planet named Earth. Bobby awakens from his slumber in a place he has neither visited in this world or any other, a place he can neither choose nor dream. He finds himself here, in a tiny cage, one that is softened into a gross curvature, where he is confronted with specie of animal brought back to alive. That used to exist, but doesn't any longer. Obtaining interestingly similarities of physical characteristics to human beings in movement, head, length, consistency, color, and a very tiny, undeveloped brain. You are about to witness how thin a line separates that which we assume to be real and that manufactured inside the mind. Man unshackling himself and sending his tiny little, groping head into the unknown. Seconds, minutes, hours, they crawl by on hands and knees for Bobby Bevis, who looks for a spark in the ashes of a land that once was. A headset connected to nothing but static, a screen with a broken picture running on repeat, a reflective black box, they surround him as battered monuments to what was but is no more. This is no utopia. Not a challenge to be achieved or an ideal to be realized, but a mode of attunement, a continuous responding to something not quite already given and yet somehow happening.]

Bobby Bevis:

Hello. Hello, is there anybody there? Hello.

Where am I? Is anyone there, someone?

[Pacing back and forth]

Where am I, and how did I get here? Where is everybody? Hello!

[Chuckles]

Huh...I guess there's nobody home. So...this is solitude. I've never had much of this before.



Figure 1. Pause to Catch Up, Thesis Installation, 2017

[Sits down and takes a deep breathe]

Well, there is time now. There's all the time I need and all the time I want. Time. Time. Time. Time. There's enough time at last. I...I am really fortunate. Yes, I am really fortunate...

[Clears his throat and steadies his hand]

Let's see, the worst part, the very worst part is being alone. At least there are some things to help keep my sanity. Something to...well anything so I can just fight the loneliness. To most this would seem as a pleasant break in the day's routine, a nice tranquil vacation

away from the push, push, pushes of the daily hustle. To most, but not all, there be many out there who think this kind of punishment is unnecessarily cruel, letting a man die of loneliness. I feel as if, as if I'm in the middle of a nightmare I can't wake up from. And you're part of it. You and this bench and that black box, the one with the peg leg, and this whole bloody room, wherever I am. Whatever this is. Some kind of tiny room I manufactured in a dream. It's an odd dream, very odd dream.

[Stands and takes a firm stance]

But now I'd like to wake up, and if I can't wake up, at least I'd like to find somebody to talk to. All I want to know is where I am. Where is everybody? Is this how it's going to be? Sitting around, day after day, over and over, and over and over again? Who am I to talk to?



Figure 2. Intuitive Altar, Epoxy Putty, Poolside Recliner, Epoxy Resin, Corroded Aluminum, 27" x 54" x 29", 2017

[Sits down, lies on the bench, stares up into the cool fluorescent lights, and closes his eyes]

[Opens his eyes, turns on his side, and aimlessly stares at what appears to be a picture of some sort]



Figure 3. Pause to Catch Up, Thesis Installation, 2017

I'm sorry, old buddy. I can't recollect the name. The face is vaguely familiar, but the name escapes me. Have we met before? You look so familiar... I guess I'll have to keep my eye on you. With some of the odd things you've been doing.

[Raising his fists towards his face, aggressively rubs his eyes]

I just remembered something. Scrooge said it. You remember Scrooge, old buddy? Ebenezer Scrooge? It's what he said to that ghost, Jacob Marley. He said, "You may be an undigested bit of beef, a crumb of cheese, a blot of mustard, a fragment of an undone potato. But there's more gravy than of grave about you."¹

¹ Dickens, Charles, and Declan Kiely. "Stave I." *A Christmas Carol: The Original Manuscript*

See that's what you are. You're what I had for dinner last night. You must be.

[Sits up. Now staring intently at the screen]

Sometimes, I'd like to escape, too, you know? I certainly didn't have this in mind.

[Snickers]

Well, I must be a very imaginative guy. I don't think nobody could have a dream as complete as mine...right down to the last detail. It's so strange. When I was a kid we had a picture like this in our house. Not the same exactly, but pretty close. A landscape. My mother use to tell me to look at it, she said if I looked at it long enough, something would appear. All I had to do was keep looking at it. I didn't believe her, but the idea fascinated me. One night I spent a whole hour just staring at that picture. And you know what?



Figure 4. Involuntary Movement, Still from HD Video Installation, 13 min. Loop, 2017

Something moved.

[Laughs]

Now I understand there's nothing strange about that. It was an optical illusion of some sort or something. You know? Imagination is strong in a growing boy. And yeah, I realized that. I realized it even then. But now, while I look at this picture, I see you. I see the same head popping out. Every time I look, there you are, popping out. And this time, I can't control it. I just can't stop it. It's as if it is really happening. That something is really there, here, with me. And I created it.

[Stands up and walks towards the screen]

It concerns me, this thing. It's an entity. It's a think with a mind and a will of its own. It's inhuman. Not only in the way that it moves, but the way that it acts too. The way it lets you see a little and then takes it all back. It teases you. It's mocking you. Like it's holding out promises and wheedles you. It sucks you in and then...sucks you dry. Just when you think you've got a lick!



Figure 5: Involuntary Movement, Durham's Rock Hard, Polystyrene, 42" x 57" x 5",
HD Video Installation, 13 min Loop, 2017

[Places hand over mouth and cautiously steps backwards towards the bench]

That. That thing. It's trying to get me, it's trying to show me, tell me, something.

You got the crummy end of the stick, huh Bobby?

[Sniffles]

You can't do anything more for me, buddy. I'll tell you. I'll tell you what my problem is. Yeah, I think maybe everything might as well come out now.

[Sobbing]

Buddy, I'm sad. I'm sad, because I'm nothing. I'll always be nothing, because I'll live and die a crummy one-liner, in a crummy one-roomer with stained walls. Hell, I don't even know if the clock's going, that the hours are going by. I'll never be anybody. I'll never see anybody. There's nobody to talk to. All there is, is just plain ordinary nothing.

[Violently banging his head against the wall, slumping down to the floor]

Uhhh...man, I'm tired of hanging around. Why me?

[Sniffles]

The thing of it is, though, the thing of it is...I'm not all that sure that I want to be around, that I want to be alive.

[Lets out an exhausted raspy sigh as he lifts his head and gazes towards the screen]

You can't do anything more for me, buddy. I feel like I'm dead...or damned.

[Clears his throat and dries his eyes]

Well, I guess there are worse ways to go. At least this place, wherever it is, whatever it is, I can die peacefully. Peaceful. Restful, where a man can slow down a bit...

[Shakes his head in disgust]

Come one who are you kidding, Bobby. You're a fool, a religious fool and perhaps a mystic at that. Perhaps you are damned, then what? Perhaps there's a special kind of hell for people like you, for those who float, unable to connect desire to reality. There are days, or weeks, or months, or years of sad, exhausted emptiness. Where withdrawals, deprivation, sickness, and thoughts of suicide creep in. A place where all the days and the months and the years are all the same...days of peace or helpless despair, days that come unhinged at times. I feel as though I'm living in a rhythm of a struggle. A struggle to wrest a "something" out of a life saturated with dragging, isolating, and intensities of all kinds.

[Sighs]

Reality is what I need. Because what is left that I can believe it? Can I believe in myself anymore?

[Stands, stares blankly at the wooden floorboards, and shuffles his feet across the room]

Perhaps to be damned is to have a fate like you up there, buddy. To suffer as you suffer and to live as you live. You're a dreamy, hovering, not-quite-there thing. You move and live in a surprising, unexpected, at times involuntary matter. You're touchy, volatile, tuned in...

[Stops, turns towards the screen and stares in wonder with squinty, heavy eyes]

Or maybe you too suffer from boredom. Growing dull, buried in layers of habits like the walls of this place. Don't worry pal, we all get caught in these kind of repetitive cycles of ups and downs. I know. Oh I know. I'm just like you. I mimic you every night, or what's getting to be every night. One night I caught the top of your head peering out from behind that frame, staring out at me...but not long after you left. You were nowhere to be found. No waves good-bye or nothing, just there one minute and gone the next.



Figure 6. Involuntary Movement, Still from HD Video Installation, 13 min. Loop, 2017

[Lies down on the bench; curls his body into the fetal position, watching the blank landscape]

You're bound to turn up in a little while. Sooner or later, you'll be back.

[His voice softens and becomes quiet]

You just have to be patient, Bobby. You just have to stick with it long enough, that's all.

[Sits up and begins to stretch out the kinks that have accumulated]

This just doesn't seem right. This place holds an intoxicated confidence that surges between life and dream. Something comes into view and you find yourself participating in

the apparatus that made it. Anyone can find himself or herself caught in a little world. Sooner or later everyone does.

[Places his right hand over his eyes]

This is what they mean by paying the fiddler. This is a deserved fate awaiting every man when the ledger of his life is opened and examined, the tally made and then the penalty paid. The self is no match for this.

[Attempts to shake off the annoyance]

I wish I could shake the crazy feeling of being watched...listened to. It's as though I'm being stalked.

[Slowly turns his eyes towards the small, reflective black box upon the wall]



Figure 07: What's in the Box? Acrylic, Nails, Emergency Light System, 9" x 7" x .125". 2017

I know there is something there, someone. I know it...it just doesn't seem right, something keeping watch on me. There's something wrong with that kind of person. But these aren't normal circumstances. It's like going back into the dark ages or something. Why, this whole thing is some kind of madness. That's exactly what this is, some kind of madness. Currently time feels like an enemy.

Sometimes, I'd like to escape too, you know? I can't stand this loneliness one more day. Not one more day. Everyday I tell myself this is my last day of sanity. Deep down in my gut I get an ache that's just pulling everything out. Then I force myself to hold on for one more day. Just one more day! I can't do this any longer; I'll go right out of my mind. I feel like an animal in a cage.

[Peaks with frustration]

You're sick people, do you know that? You're sick people, all of you, and you don't even know what you're starting here because let me tell you, let me tell you, you're starting something that...that you should be frightened of. As God as my witness, you're letting something begin here that's...that's a nightmare.



Figure 08. Pause to Catch Up (detail), Thesis Installation, 2017

[A screeching noise echoes through the room like nails on a chalkboard]

Please, somebody, help me! Help me. Please, somebody, help me. Help me. Help me. Help me. Please, help me. Help me. Help me. Please, somebody, help me. Help me. Help me. Help me! Please, somebody, help me! Help me. Help me, please! Somebody's looking at me. Somebody's watching me! Help me! Please, help me! Help me, please! Somebody's looking at me! Somebody's watching me...tell them to stop! Tell them to stop it! Stop it before it's too late. I've got to get out! I've got to get out! Help me! Please, somebody help me...

General:

Clock him. Get him out of there, quick.

[A group of men race towards the steel bunker]

Sergeant:

Careful of his hand colonel, he's fingernails are completely gone. It looks like he tore the upholstery completely off.

Colonel:

I see that Sergeant.

[Men in deep blue uniforms pull Bobby Bemis from the steel bunker. The men restrain Bobby as they give him a sedative. Bobby passes out in a matter of seconds, his body is transferred to the nearest gurney. The Colonel pulls Bobby's eyelids back and examines his pupils. The General approaches the group of men]

General:

All right Colonel, go.

Colonel:

He's all right, Sir. Delusions, I think. He's coming out of it now.

General:

Fine. Did you get all the data recorded?

Colonel:

Yes, Sir

General:

Did anyone get a recorded timing on him?

Sergeant:

208 hours, 03 minutes.

General:

Good. Not great. I want to have a look at all the data as soon as it is compiled. And I want to speak with him as soon as he comes back.

Sergeant:

Oh, the press, Sir.

General:

Oh, yes. One the run, gentlemen, if you don't mind.

Reporter 1:

General, do you consider this test a success?

General:

Very much so, the man was confined alone in a box for something in the neighborhood of 200 hours. That's roughly equivalent to a one-way trip to the moon with no return.

Reporter 2:

What happened to him toward the end, General? Before he...well whatever that was that happened to him.

General:

What happened to him is he cracked. His mind had gone. Delusions of some kind, assumed. But let it be made clear, gentlemen. If any of you were confined in a small steel box the size of a dressing room for 1 ½ weeks all by your lonesome without hearing another human voice other than your own, I'd bet that your imagination would run away with you too, such as his obviously did. Excuse me.

[General removes himself from the press and walks towards the group of men tending to Bobby Bevis]

General:

Detail.

[The group splits, revealing Bobby Bevis to the General]

General:

Bevis, how do you feel, son?

Bobby:

I've felt much better, Sir. I'm sorry about what happened toward the end.

General:

It's all right. What was it like, Bevis? Where did you think you were?

Bobby:

It's hard to describe, Sir. A place I don't want to visit again, Sir, a room...a place without people, without anybody, Sir.

[Jerks his head from the General towards to Doctor]

Bobby:

What was the matter with me doc? Just went off the deep end, huh?

Doctor:

Just the kind of nightmare that your mind manufactured for you, Bobby. We have the ability to feed your stomach with all kind of concentrates. We can supply microfilms of information for recreation. We supply oxygen to you and pull waste material from you. But there is one thing that we have not been able to simulate, that we see to be a very basic need to mankind, the desire for companionship. What you witnessed was what we refer to as the barrier of loneliness.

Bobby:

Next time, it won't be just a week in a steel box, will it, Doc?

Doctor:

No, I'm afraid not Bobby. Next time it will be much longer and next time, you'll really be alone.

General:

Nice work, son. Go on, get some rest; you're going to need it.

[Bobby is rolled away to rest for his next journey]

[Take away their friends, companions, and any recognizable signifiers they connect with. Throw them into a small claustrophobic room for hours, days, weeks...with few variations, and watch the pattern reveal itself. They're always the same, with minor adjustments. They single out the most dangerous enemy they come in contact with, and they find themselves. All the lingering enemies of his life have bombarded the subject; his deep-rooted angst about his own account has pinpointed him, pricked, and bled him out, in a reckless and frantic search for continuation. The self is no match for this.]

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