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THE NEW SLEEP: STASIS AND THE IMAGE-BOUND ENVIRONMENT

by Tricia Collins and Richard Milazzo

Sara Hornbacher: The Torque Habit

Sara Hornbacher is a media artist represented by New Math Gallery. She was recently Guest Editor for the *College Art Association Art Journal* issue on Video. Her video works have been extensively exhibited at screenings and installations throughout the USA and in Europe.

—In order for an image to bracket its existence within an image-bound environment, it must display an abstract torque in facts.

—It is like trying to find an effective way to curse in the culture.

Otherwise, you just lean back, and swallow the Happy Language.

—Obviously, you must project the abstract decisions involved in constructing those “displays.”

—It's like trying to measure a sphere with a straight-edge.

—In Sara Hornbacher's work, you experience the rational mediation of images optically as a kind of static disfiguration of light. It becomes a kind of trap door to perception.

—Hornbacher's work—and the most effective video in general—is like the stuff between the TV stations.

–In this situation, facts sort of become the reified actuality of the categories you construct. An American Sequence (1984) literally brackets the narrative charge of these facts.

–The images are really acute, even as they are placed at the behest of a kind of systematic break within their semantic value. They function like the “silverware” of temporality itself, and when you arrive at the center of this vast articulation, you get the feeling that you have been finally stopped.

–You begin to feel this optical “guilt,” and you become convinced that gravity is something like a static emergency.

–You mean it is as if Hornbacher has located your habit, and then broken it.

–And you come up with the idea—onto-technocratic delusion—that maybe meaning asserts the secret charm of that negation.

–The “op” breakdown is not about anything that is weak or deliberate in the image.

–In Hornbacher, the crisis in negation circulates within the economy of assertion.

–I suppose we’re talking about optical habits.

–Style is the religion of the super-incomprehensible.

–I was also thinking about the moral habits endemic to video, and the strange neo-humanistic formalism to which it has always ultimately succumbed.

–A kind of technological “Right” which is categorically expelled from Hornbacher’s work.

–It is the formalism of “correct” positions, inhabited by the fauna and flora of technology, which must bear the pressure of an intentionally artificial dialectic in her work.

–Scrutiny is the optical style implicit in a disparate instrumentality.

–So what you get in Hornbacher is the generic deprivation of images, and, at the same time, the feeling that the Overload has been articulated by the negations effected through this instrumentality.

–In Hornbacher, Concept is catching up to content, and this prevents the instrumentality from becoming an empty formalism.

—So Habit is replaced by Hypothesis—hypothesis construed by the senses as the electric(al) spirituality of a New kitchen appliance.

—Hornbacher's work summarizes the visual tautology involved in perception. It's something like the need to wear sunglasses while you run as fast as you can in the dark.

Joseph Nechvatal: Grace Under Pressure

Joseph Nechvatal exhibits work at Gallery Nature Morte and Brooke Alexander Gallery in New York. He is the Co-publisher of *Tellus: The Audio Cassette Magazine*. Recently, he executed the "opera opus," XS, in collaboration with Rhys Chatham at the Pyramid Club and the Dannheiser Foundation in New York. More recently, Machine Language Books published a monograph on his work.

In the pressure and splendor of its negations, Joseph Nechvatal's work quietly proposes that the act of scrutiny, implied by the gray Renaissance tattoo-like field or environment of super-statically charged images, and rendered in the graceful and intricate guise of signic entertainment, must be equal in its power to the spectacle of commercialized Sleep, the menace of disengaged History, and, ultimately, to the actuality of biological terrorism.

While Nechvatal's pictures—drawings, photographic works, and video images—are stimulated by the excess distantiations of the body, which are driven mentally into micro-negations (or signic negations) in the weak temporality of existence, the pictures also build a dark, hallucinatory techno-anterior synthetic (or a willfully obsolete or archaic anti-structure) that drives the onslaught of psychic references and sensations in their binary mode into a dense network of intentionality, desublimation and scrutiny, a kind of Biosubjectivity which can surmount (or appropriate) the fast interiors of the New Sleep, and overwhelm the world of Naturalized Perceptions.

Ultimately, Nechvatal is constructing in his work an abstract history, a disparate instrumentality, which can accommodate the images of the Subtended Psyche in pictures which categorically exhaust standardized consciousness and institutionalized perceptions.