



Amanda Ross-Ho

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BY

ERIK FRYDENBORG

WOOD KUSAKA STUDIOS
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

As we approach the limit of our vision, we pause to start back home. This emptiness is normal – the richness of our own neighborhood is the exception. Notice the alternation between great activity and relative inactivity, a rhythm that will continue all the way until our next goal. 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Now we reduce the distance to our final destination by 90 percent every ten seconds. In a few seconds we'll be entering the skin, crossing layer after layer, from the outermost dead cells into a tiny blood vessel within.

But wait – stop here. We pan slightly to our right, noticing the dappled radiance of a gold ring just visible at the lower left-hand quadrant of the frame. Curving around the trunk of the third finger, its burnished surface reflects the midday brilliance of the sun, that nearby star from which we have so recently returned. Just as light's line in that one second crossed the tilted orbit of the moon, now it lingers on the outstretched digits of this gently lazing hand.

As the Moog gurgles out a limpid waltz, we rove across this crenelated meter – a network of beige grooves, overlaid with craters near its creased perimeter at the West. Why? This is a scale that we understand. We manipulate things at this scale, interrogate them with our touch, and then, from this touchstone, we apply our learning and our metaphors to other scales. We gaze from the balloon's gondola at the unbroken mile of these salt flats – full of wine, electric comfort, a spell of dizzy closeness.

Maintaining our position, we pan again, now down and to the left. Surveying the corner of an unfurled bandana, wildflower filigrees of paisley circumscribed within a rumpled line. A diffusion of glass-rimmed circles in red and black is dispersed across the fabric, interpolated here and there with larger discs and rectangles,



INSTALLATION VIEW.
MOCA, LOS ANGELES. 2011

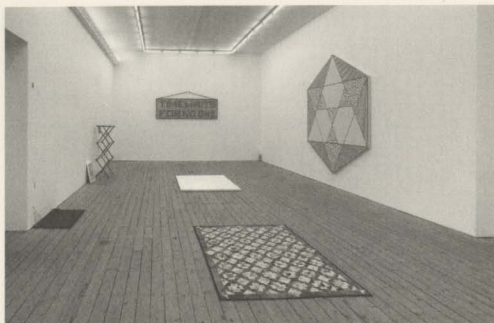


INSTALLATION VIEW.
WHITNEY BIENNIAL . 2008

vessels, and patterned surfaces of varying complexity. In this Malevich composition, note the grossly expanded features of more or less familiar shapes.

An inventory of incipient correspondence: the stained basin of a ceramic teacup, balanced on the white peak of a sloping three-ring binder. A neon cat toy's tassel, draped across the upturned photo of a young girl dressed in black. The mottled inverse of a harlequin's face – a costume jewel – staring sphinxlike from a nest of torn t-shirt. At the edge of the array, the grimy mouth of an empty canvas sack, frowning at its former contents.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Eyes adjust to meet the depth of field, phasing in above the quarry of a dizzying collection—physical compounds of continu-



INSTALLATION VIEW.
THE APPROACH, LONDON. 2011

ously expanding detail, increasing with no loss of resolution. A superabundance, undithered monuments, each possessed of an impeccable complexion.

Edging close to the bandana's border. Linger on the ivory figure of a smiling ghost, lolling like an octopus in calm repose. Sculpted folds of sheet present an upturned palm, eternal pose of offering or asking. Notice that the body of the spirit is a solid mass. Its illusions of a crude grin and perforated eye-holes are only surface decoration on a bed of porcelain smoothness, graphic renderings of absence. Moving ever closer to this face, the twin black holes float, motionless, on a seemingly impermeable wall of white.

But now we squeeze through the mouse hole of one sightless socket, the event horizon,

and here we are awash in symmetries and fluctuations. And look, so close to us now, how what they said is true – helical order, the spiral staircase plus reflection in a perfect mirror, a 23-rung climb into another cluttered attic of a life.

Take note that sentient traces still reside. The particles are dancing bears, circling each other with unlikely grace, crazed Kabuki in a flawless blur of constancy. Here we are again, again, in the domain of universal modules. Every inert fiber of the ghost dreams a ceaseless dream of movement, of change, of exponentially expanding and contracting. As too did the pale fibers of your untouched pages, vis-à-vis unending multitudes that they anticipated.

I remember one such page, much later in



INSTALLATION VIEW.
POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART. 2010

its life, once it had acquired scars of language (was it there next to you and the ghost, bathing in the sun beside the lake?) Its words scrolled slowly, deliberately... stalling for time, closing credits of an aging film. At the top it read "ABSTRACT," and then what followed seemed a paradox:

It spoke of how you looked at things.

There are plainer methods of description, and this was of that kind. The text made declarations. Size, it said, was just one metric for the calculus of Distance, and by extension, Time. Time itself, it further read, was just a cumulus of Intimacy – that process of eternal aggregation, a word so often incorrectly interchanged with Kindness.

It asked questions: What does knowing something mean? First, decide on the rhetorical device. What about your shirt? There's the familiarity of wearing, the fit, the skin's instinctive adaptation or rejection of the weave. The ease or else the difficulty of the putting on and taking off, drowsy wrestling in morning and the thoughtless separation and undoing in the night. The compliments, the coveting, the whispered hissing comments under muzzles made of hands. Who wore it better? A soft cartography, with gradual discoveries of stains, of factory defects, unraveling stitches drifting out of cuffs in spidery quiet.

When exactly does this shirt expire? You watch it, on the dresser, surveying for clues.



INSTALLATION VIEW.
CHERRY AND MARTIN, LOS ANGELES. 2010

One day contorted in a martial rectangle, all missionary stiffness, then pooled the next day in a tangled pile of itself, just like a melting witch. What is to be done?

In triage, on your dressing table, smoothing creases with a moistened fingertip, you proceed to tear out every seam. Pattern pieces, cathedral floor plan or an algebraic murmur, and again your hands are working on the dial of a wheel. Labors of some several types. A Figure 8, drawn out and then projected to be drawn another time, multiplied to suit the changes.

Days of fever pass and then you blink, and you can see its knit once more intact, hanging on the wall, the thing again before you, as it was before. But you are smaller now, or it is larger, it's become a thing that never could be worn, never could be fit inside. A same but different

thing, a thing that's far more difficult to hold. It will be infinitely new. Weightless, you feel a loose mass hanging still about your shrunken shoulders.

2,1,0,1,2. We are now so far within that we have reached a unit which cannot be calculated, as per the terms of current understanding. This does not produce a stoppage. Analogies to astral bodies or to atoms have no occasion here for use, and no amount of words from me will tell the measure of the things you see in front of you.

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Fragments of this text are adapted from the narration of *Powers of Ten* by Charles and Ray Eames, 1977.