

After Hours

We pause for a moment to situate ourselves, to plot out the coordinates of our subject positions.¹

As I consider the slow progression of sunbeams that will see themselves into the exhibition space and drown out the digital light of Jarrod Van Der Ryken's video work, I find myself also thinking of the subject within a sea of subjects. I, here, now, live out a kind of shared life with the person I trace on the screen, with a level of familiarity that enables me to empathise, to extrapolate.

The self on display here is the self in space and in time.

Such a presentation of self offers up different readings that tangle together; does the artist seek to apply some form of autoethnographic method to a contextual self-exploration? Is it he or I that I'm seeing reflected in this late night hedonism and early morning reverie? Or are we simply connected, plugged into the same cyborgian networks,² both of us other and existing in close proximity; embodied bodies that run unseen and under the radar until we force our image onto the world.

But is the artist's image in the world, if the viewer is the same as the viewed?

In true feminist form, Van Der Ryken's embodiment extends to site and becomes a politics of location or positionality, linking geopolitics to an understanding of how subjects are produced.³ Parks, in speaking of her version of plotting the personal, sees new ways of imagining and visualizing social difference that are based on human movement rather than physiognomy or pigmentation.⁴

In this way I can locate myself in location; I view my own creation by tracing my trajectory backward from this exhibition space, through routes I've taken and encounters, social and material, they've facilitated. I have been assembled and contribute to greater assemblage.

In seeking true otherness, therefore, this embodied self (the artist or I?) must find alternative modes of travel through space and time.

This fringe time, night seeping into day, has formed the artist and is now formed by the artist. A temporal representation of a conscious exit from normative cultural frameworks; the pulse of the working week, the self-enforced bedtimes inherited from sensible parents. 4-6am is a desolate interval, outside propriety. The viewing of its occupation conjures a slow burn of thoughts from decadent grotesquery to melancholic introspection. Perhaps this transmutation is the cyclically waning legitimacy of the other, edging back into conventional time spans and once again losing primacy, like giants confined to the witching hour.

As the video works its way into daylight, I slip between scenes and see a contrast also between spatiality. Both exuding domestic subtropics, one is rich in immediacy, with the free-form improvisations of social interactivity, and the other carefully constructed and static, tasting of intentionality.

Within each, however, I observe the signifiers of class and culture, the trappings of the now, contradicting or affirming claims of otherness while also locating the work geographically and temporally.

The objects and architectures allow me to see, once more, the process of past and ongoing assemblage, and expose the partial, situated nature of the individual experience borne of its socio-material context. The singular other is only one partial experience within an infinitely inclusive and complex whole that can and will only ever exist in this exact moment and place.

As Van Der Ryken's body of work explores, contemporary life is guided by and housed within the positioned histories that have come before this one. These are the space-times of the recent past that we intuitively understand although we cannot reach back and touch them, interactions restricted to voyeurism through object encounters.

The act of refocusing from near past to near present continues this thematic journey by highlighting the inevitable, cryonic isolation of our current, situated state of socio-material assemblage. As we pause for that moment to situate ourselves, we find not a self, but a place and a time and a way of being, and we wait for when the next configuration draws it, too, beyond easy reach.

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1. Naomi Stead (2009) *If On a Winter's Day a Tourist*, *Architectural Theory Review*, 14:2, 108-118.
2. Donna Haraway (1988) *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, *Feminist Studies*, 14:3, 575-599.
3. Lisa Parks (2001) *Cultural geographies in practice: Plotting the personal*. *Global Positioning Satellites and interactive media*. *Cultural Geographies* 8:209-22.
4. *Ibid.*