



FIRE & THEFT

A video installation by Tasman Richardson / Curated by Scott McGovern
ED Video Grand Opening, January 16 2009



Are artists starting to think about the 'actual space' of video today, especially as it pertains to web-based video? Is this the ultimate example of breaking the frame?

I'm interested in video as a replacement for memory and because of its power to transport people. The most interesting thing to me is telepresence - that video can shift people to any time any place, beyond your personal space as an extension of your vision and your memory. The

fact that the webcam signals in my installation gives it an added sense of power. The power of the gaze is amplified.

Your piece plays to the desires of the viewer's ego, feeling that one must prove their presence or have the presence of other places proved to them, in order to feel like they are at the centre of this place that is actually very difficult to measure.

Yes, and quite literally at the centre too. The structure of the installation is based on the omni-view, or the panoptoscope. The viewer can have absolute vision, which is a reference to the monad symbol. The decisions that can be made from the centre are ideal and infinite, and the importance of the viewer's position is increased because they are in the centre. This is like a super-ego, and the power of the gaze is judged not just on how far it goes, but on how complete and panoramic it is.

Usually video is concerned with content. For you, is it more important to think about the physicality or just plain existence of the video signal?

For a long time, people have been using video as a poor substitute for film, and ignoring the fact that video as a medium has all sorts of interesting nuances. The content should be partly dictated by the fact that it is a video signal. If one ignores the



properties of video, then there is no reason to be using video, and the content shouldn't be squeezed into the medium.

Live video broadcast is not new, and in fact is the basis of broadcast (as in the first days of TV). Is it the choice, prevalence and continual nature of webcams that is interesting to you? The viewer doesn't set up the camera, but feels in control when watching the feed.

The format is designed for the individual viewer. The 'small screen' (internet video) is very similar to the telephone. One usually uses it in soli-

tude. What is interesting about webcams to me is that it is the opposite of broadcast television. Instead of masses of people all watching the same signal at the same time and thus having a shared experience, webcams are always on and competing for your interest. They are catering to you, and you are free to move between them at will.

It is like the tree falling in the forest metaphor. Does the webcam signal exist if nobody is watching?

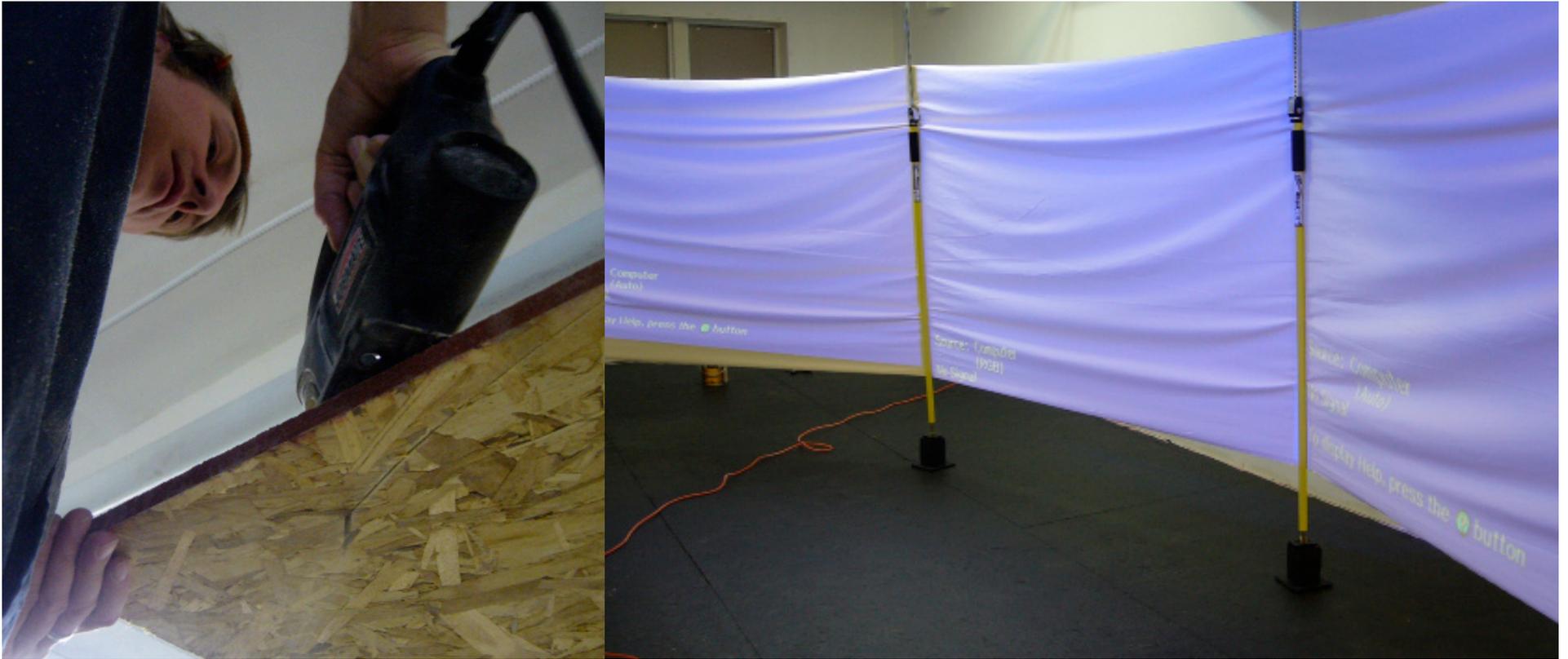
That is exactly it, and that is exactly why people want to be on TV. You don't see me, I'm not here, I don't see you so you are not there.

What happens in your installation when the sun is trapped in the gallery?

Well, art is artifice. The artificialness of it, and the craftsmanship of it to take what is invisible and make it visible, or take the unreal and give it life, or ultimately taking death and turning it into life - that is the whole idea. In this case, we are taking the luminosity of the sun, which is worshiped and inherently has many life-giving qualities, and stripping it of these qualities. The only thing we are preserving is the illusion of it, and replacing our own internal sense of time by having it rotate around the room. Everything about it is against nature, really, and I like that. It turns the original or classical intentions of art inside out, but we are turning the entire geography of the earth and our cosmology inside out.

Maybe in essence sunlight is really the true content of any video because it is what illuminates and gives form to the subject, creating an illusion of light and shadow that the viewer feels emotion towards.

It is funny because the projections are of sunlight on the canvas screen. As it moves across, instead of becoming real, because of the aesthetic of the webcams with the compression and slow frame rate, it takes a very real thing and creates a very unnatural experience, and an impressionist and painterly way. When I'm looking at it, I have to remind myself that the images I'm seeing are real. It doesn't seem to be alive even though it is, which is another abstraction for us.



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