

PARALLEL PARK
CAN YOU KEEP ME
OCCUPIED
14.1.18

In Time

We are in an old garagey type space. Brick and concrete, long and narrow. Cold to the eye, and cold to the touch, the space is a reprieve however from the winds outside. There's an old industrial elevator that rumbles down to our level. Pushing the manual doors apart, Parallel Park enter the space. The two artists are wearing dark green coveralls with sleeves rolled three quarters up the forearm and pant legs cuffed just above the boots. The material looks new and starchy and stiff and says *work*. In unflorished movements, Holly lifts flat screen tvs from where they hang on butcher hooks on a wire fence. One at a time the artists help clip each other into their tv backpacks. Red fabric webbing, black plastic buckles, red extension cords. Everything seems practical with an undercurrent of care, and just a little style.

Strapped in, tvs on backs, cords trailing, unhurried but deliberately, they walk towards a wall each, and stand facing it. The tvs, synced, play a still image - blue background, and a glowing orb in the centre - the sun. After a time a drop sounds. It must be a cue, for the performers move again, and in the same steady fashion, walk, and take up another still position. Now on the tvs we see footage of rose petals, their movement stunted and fragmented as they are blown around a rough surface. After a time the drop sounds again.

Tethered but not restricted, the performers continue in rough unison, walking, and taking up positions for a time all around the space, trailing the electrical cords behind, showing only a little regard, now and again, to give them a slackening tug. Like professional cleaners, with those vac-bac-pacs, I think, *work*.

Some of the poses are separate, some are together. Strong poses, leaning poses, free standing, against infrastructure. There's one pose where they both face us, so as audience we must make a decision in the stillness and quiet to walk around them to see the tv screens. Then, the drop sounds and, on the spot, they turn about and our efforts are nullified. We are refused the view. A few shuffle to see the screens again.

What's this relationship between the tvs, the performers, and our looking? I can't help but find it a little funny. They're toying with us, making us chose. But it's also like one of those jokes where your laugh slows as meaning dawns on you. Seems almost like an experiment in the internal logic of the work. Authority, information hierarchies - what do we pay attention to? And how does this effect meaning making? The tvs offer us symbols, a kind of soft information. I try to make connections between this and the performers' poses. Authorship feels de-centred. I weave metaphors, and begin to build a narrative.

I enjoy the "A-frame" pose - its functional entrance, its form and poetics. The artists come together, facing, they hold their hands up and press palms. In wide arcs the hands come down by the sides and dangle as the body weights are leant against each other, propped at the shoulders and neck.¹ The artists are both support and supporter, leaner and leant upon, to the extent that a distinction between

these words (roles) is irrelevant - throw out your dichotomies! The load of the tv backpacks becomes stark now, and the metaphor thickens. It's a sign.

They lie face down, side by side, heads rested on arms they look at each other. The drop sounds and they look away. Their movements and stillness seem to oscillate between emptiness, and a deep solemn. Sometimes, it's as if under a directive they could care less about. Sometimes, full of a dampened sincerity. Crestfallen. Bowed to a certain necessity. This vibe conflation, the timing of it all - with the tvs dripping between the sun and blowed roses, and the positions held and released in accordance, suggests some cyclical time. And it's delineated by the tv backpacks. Now is the time to sleep. Now is the time to work. Now is the time. Now is the time. Now is the time work is over. Come home, and in the meantime, rest and reprieve.² And throughout there is this crushing external weight.

I begin to see the tvs as a burden. They are the boss of time, directing the performance. They act as billboards (A-frame pose), and like billboards, their imagery is representation - the sun is light, warmth, hope, the day, the good times, it has a forward momentum - promise of futurity. The rose petals, renowned symbol for romance, passion, love - are blown about, robbed of grace, subject to the gales and blows of an unrelenting wind (we're in the middle of this plebiscite bullshit). So we've got these screens with this billboard-esk publicness about them, favoured in an information hierarchy, representing alternatively, the promise (pressure) of queer futurity and love (life) in the face of a public shitstorm, and they're literally mounted on people who are hard at work, sleepin', and livin' life, as dictated by the on screen time cycle. The tvs constitute the weight (crushing, external) of living with these representations, expectations, assumptions. Private life as public

business - right there on your back. This is the metaphoric weight of being in the world as a queer person and it is *work* to bear it.

We are now dispersed by their movements. Tayla has gone outside, I follow, the sunlight is too much for the tv and I can't make out the sun. "Good", I think. Their separation seems tearing although they remain a kind of nonchalant, that tears at me too. They come together and look at each other, I imagine the words set in my narrative, "How was your day?". Hands in flesh pockets³, standing tall. A-frame position again, rest and reprieve. Understanding, care. Knowing what it's like. The sun - queer futurity - what is it for us? Rose petals at the whim of ignorant gusts. If only we could hang our tvs up.

Kinly Grey

¹ After the performance I remarked on this pose specifically, and was informed that during it, the artists can hear/feel each other's hearts beating.

² See poem 'And' by Robert Fernandez

³ Another detail I found out after the performance - there are two pockets on each side of the coveralls, the outer one is a regular pocket, but the inner one goes through the garment so that one may access underneath.