

Art Star 3 Video Art Biennial  
Biennale de vidéo d'art

### The Anxious Images of Deirdre Logue

*Despite our closeness, I feel the camera can sometimes be very quick to judge. In fact, I've recorded lots of things that I felt the camera simply didn't like.*

- Deirdre Logue

Deirdre Logue's *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* series of twelve videos forms a self-portrait of excruciating obsessions, anxieties, and reluctant self-revelations. The series, made over a two year period from 2003-2005, follows *Enlightened Nonsense* (2000), a suite of ten films in which Logue situates her body within/against nature. Utilizing a hand-processed, filmic aesthetic, the films of *Enlightened Nonsense* are quirky, endearing, and at times humorous. *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* is markedly different, adopting a more hard-edged video aesthetic in keeping with the series' disconcertingly obsessive tone.

Set primarily within the domestic space of Logue's home, the videos form a series of small, intimate, and guarded confessions. Logue feels compelled to confess, but just how much should she say? The first video in the series, *Per Se*, reveals the artist's conflicted position:

*What I really wanna say is private, so what makes it so hard to say is that I don't really understand it, Per Se. And so what I really wanna know is how I can say it even though it's still private and you can know it without me telling you, Per Se.* (from *Per Se* by Deirdre Logue)

Her face close to the camera, Logue speaks slowly and carefully, her words disjointed and out of sync. The intimate act of confession is magnified and made strange, becoming a carefully constructed act of self-portraiture that undermines the supposed truth of subjectivity.

*Beyond the Usual Limits Parts I, II, and III* reveal Logue engaged in small feats of daring. In *Part I*, Logue crawls under her mattress, slowly making her way between the mattress and the box-spring towards the other side. Logue's journey is uncomfortable and calculated. The video ends, not with Logue reaching the other side, but at the point when she completely disappears under the mattress. It appears that her objective is not to crawl to the other side, but to hide from the camera's insistent gaze.

As if in respite from her subjective stance before the camera, Logue seeks other ways to render herself invisible. In *Beyond the Usual Limits Part II*, Logue bandages her hand with dozens of bandages. The metaphorical wound being covered requires many, many bandages and will, it seems, never be satisfactorily covered. In *Part III*, the final video of the series, Logue painstakingly paints her ears black. After the paint is applied, we see

the image in reverse. With sleight of hand, the black paint miraculously disappears, revealing the artist as whole once more.

There is much that's hard to watch in this series – the murky, obscured finger-sucking in *Suckling* is literally difficult to see – but a clearer image would not make the action easier to watch. Through murky darkness Logue is glimpsed sucking her finger. As she pushes her finger deep down into her throat, time after time, sensuously, then too deeply, the viewer's gag reflexes rise. The video is compelling in its intimacy, yet too physical to watch.

*Eclipse* is perhaps the hardest video to watch. In a nocturnal session before the camera, Logue obsessively cracks her jaw. Sharply illuminated in the night-time light, Logue looks demonic, possessed by her compulsive, furtive habit. After each crack of her jaw, Logue asks "Did you hear that?", implicating the viewer in her secretive, obsessive act. The viewer is asked to share Logue's anxiety, which seems to be present always, not just sometimes.

In *That Beauty*, anxiety runs beneath even moments of unself-conscious joy. Shot in Super 8 film, Logue dances in her kitchen, headphones on as a man's voice repetitiously says "that beauty right there". Answers in text flicker in response on the screen: that beauty feels helpless, afraid, embarrassed, insignificant, ashamed. Logue dances on, lost in the music, as over her shimmers a superimposition of sparkling lights and water.

*Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* has been exhibited both as multi-channel installations and as a theatrical screening on several occasions. The installation of the work during the 2006 Images Festival featured 6 monitors situated in a small gallery. The 12 videos played off each other in varying sequenced loops, allowing the viewer's attention to be drawn from one piece to another. In this conception of the work, the works retain an intimate, close-up quality. A theatre screening of *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes* creates a different relationship with the viewer. In *Per Se* and *Eclipse*, Deirdre's contorted face appears massive, freakish and grotesque, and in *Beyond the Usual Limits II*, her bandaged hands are the hands of a Frankenstein. Before the camera, Logue is transformed into a freakish spectacle, compelled to reveal intimate inadequacies, anxieties and obsessions. In these revelations, the artist herself disappears, leaving a replica to persist on the screen, long after the camera has turned off.

- Penny McCann, curator

**Deirdre Logue** has spent the past fifteen years working on behalf of media artist by organizing independent film, video, and new media festivals, by founding collectives and by participating in forums and symposiums on the future of independent artistic practice. She was the Executive Director of the Images Festival of Independent Film and Video from 1995 to 1999, and the Executive Director of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre from 2001 to 2006 series *Why Always Instead of Just Sometimes*, which has screened at the Canadian Embassy in Berlin as part of the 2007 Berlin International Film Festival, and at the 2006 Images Festival, where it won two awards, the Best Installation / New Media Award and the Images Prize. Logue's individual films and videos have been exhibited nationally at YYZ Artist's Outlet in Toronto, Neutral Ground in Regina, the Agnes Etherington Art Gallery in Kingston, Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery in Halifax as well as internationally at the Centre d'art contemporain in Basse-Normandie, France, the Museo Nacional in Buenos Aires, the San Francisco Cinematheque, Video Ex Festival in Switzerland and Carnegie Mellon in Pennsylvania, to name a few. Her work is distributed by V tape in Toronto.

SAW Video Director and media artist **Penny McCann** has curated several media art programs over the years, including several for the Available Light Screening Collective, of which she was a member from 1999 to 2006. Her curatorial credits include: *Despair and Other Anxious Moments: Video Work from Ontario* for the Centre of Art Tapes, Halifax (1999); *Gaining Equilibrium*, presented at Struts Gallery in Sackville, New Brunswick (2000); *(B)raised on Religion* (2000), *Accelerated Landscapes* (2000) and *Enchanted Chaos: The Work of James MacSwain* (2001) for Available Light; and *The Pleasure Program* (2000) and *The Teleculture of Chris Mullington* (2006) for SAW Video.