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Breathe... Keep Breathing.

Shaun C. Kiel

University of Nebraska at Lincoln, artrobot@artrobot.org

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BREATHE... KEEP BREATHING

by

Shaun Kiel

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Aaron Holz

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2010

Breathe... keep breathing.

Shaun Kiel, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Adviser: Aaron Holz

I work with short-duration seamless video loops. My work simultaneously depicts and emulates the material composition of time, specifically how action composes time and how time can compose or construct objects.

My work is self-reflexive. Self-reflexive means that a product actively considers or examines its own production. In video this means breaking either the illusion of depicted time as real time or the illusion of the depicted image as real space. Video loops are self-reflexive by function. Their periodic recurrence points out the artifact of the medium.

The periodic recurrence of video loops also changes the narrative quality of the moving image. Eliminating the beginning and end of videos, making them indefinite, calls the viewer into a suspended narrative. By making that narrative about the material composition of time, I add another layer of reflexivity. A study of the material composition of time also raises the question of the relative metaphysical position of the moment “now” within time.

By building this system of inter-connected reflexive relationships around time, I am attempting to create an atmosphere for meditation on and consideration of the self-reflexive nature of our own self-awareness, which philosopher Johann Fichte describes as such:

“The self’s own positing of itself is thus its own pure activity. The self posits itself, and by virtue of this mere self-assertion it exists; and conversely, the self exists and posits its own existence by virtue of merely existing. It is at once the agent and the product of action; the active, and what the activity brings about; action and deed are one and the same.” (97)

This relationship of our self-awareness to time and to the systems constructed to examine time within time is what fascinates me. I am trying to construct pieces and places that encourage contemplative meditation on that relationship.

As a constructed and immersive environment, these video loops are combined and contrasted to add one more layer, one more circle manifest in the physical space of the gallery, to the constructed system. This series of loops and circuits continues when the viewer plugs into the environment and becomes one more dimension of the piece, namely the dimension that defines the piece within the “now”. That definition is locational within time, and the circuit is complete for as long as the viewer’s attention persists.

Time is the breath of video. Meditation is an awareness of breath. Breathe... keep breathing.