

The Talking Cure

Presented by Artists Space
Friday and Saturday
May 8th & 9th, 8 p.m.
Organized by Jason Simon

My sense of Four Walls, the artist-run exhibition event begun in Hoboken and continuing in Williamsburg, is as a place where, in the face of a market driven culture, artists announce that they will exhibit and, more importantly, speak for themselves. A deceptively simple premise has the exhibiting artists obliged to deliver something more than their work, for purposes of discussion, on the occasion of a one-day show. In this way, I have thought Four Walls to be always about finding voice, in a manner that breaks down distinctions between artist and audience, precisely on the issue of *voice*.

Translating Four Walls' unique model of artist and audience to video is a more difficult and less practical proposition. Yet video has managed to drag the issues along behind it whenever it manages to cohabitate with the other arts. On the one hand, video's captive audience is just that, while on the other hand, the medium eschews institutional authority. If this seems obvious, for me the distinction took on a renewed significance when encountering the recent videos shown here tonight—videos which are steadfast in presenting singular, idiosyncratic voices in their own monologues to the world.

The third and final Four Walls show of the current series at Artists Space, *The Neurotic Art Show II: The Return of the Repressed*, adds another angle to thoughts on the singular voice and the captive audience. If healing is the goal of psychoanalysis, then being listened to is the collective goal of the mass of work assembled on these walls (and televisions) to engage it. At risk of over-generalizing, the videos in *The Talking Cure* are concerned with articulating crises of meaning, in nature and culture, in death and in religion.

Not as serious as this sounds, and bringing with them a profound appreciation of the light touch, the video makers conduct us to our world, without assurances.

—Jason Simon

Sabotaging Spring, 1991, 10 minutes, USA

"A confrontation between man and nature, with a dog caught in the middle. Man, threatened by Spring growth, attempts sabotage. Outnumbered and overwhelmed, he turns on his dog, taunting him for not having evolved enough. Which side is he on, he wants to know: the side of man or the side of nature?"

—Joe Gibbons

May I Help You, 1991, 20 minutes, USA

"*May I Help You* is a video tape based on a performance presented at American Fine Arts, Co. in January 1991. The performance, staged in cooperation with Allan McCollum who provided plaster surrogate paintings for the exhibition, was conducted by three performers posing as gallery personnel. From 10 AM to 6 PM for the three week duration of the exhibition, the performers approached everyone who entered the gallery to look at the show, attempting, with varying degrees of success, to deliver the same fifteen minute monologue. The videotape is a presentation of that monologue, rather than a documentation of the process of the performance. It was recorded while the gallery was closed."

—Andrea Fraser

(over)

*Stories for the Garden:
Evolution, 26 minutes, 1991,
USA*

"*Stories for the Garden: Evolution* is one in a series of pieces (both single channel video tapes and gallery installations) that explore the interaction between human beings and "nature". Originally intended as a catalogue, or index, of natural phenomena, and based on the rhythm of my breathing during editing, the tape evolved into a piece about the play between language and images and the relationship between experience and representation.

"Borrowing its structure from Roget's Thesaurus, the tape is really about the impossibility of equivalents. Things that are supposedly concrete seem abstract. Names and pictures appear reductive, both in relationship to each other, and to the experience itself. Things are not so simple, and sometimes representation extends beyond what was there. Gaps exist between words and images, between image/word and the viewer, and there are events that occur outside of the frame. Some things are simply inexpressible. Concepts become about interpretation. In the end, it seems to me, language and other forms of representation, like the things themselves, are constantly in a state of flux."

—Wendy Geller

*ex-voto, 1990, 7 minutes,
Brazil/USA*

"The *ex-voto* is the task or object that results from the promise made by the devotee. It can have different formats, many times in sculpture or in painting. The devotional process that leads into *ex-voto* is initiated when a person begins a dialogue with a holy figure (in Brazil, the most common ones are Virgin Mary, Jesus and a number of saints, some canonized only by popular practice). The devotee requests the

divine intercession, and promises to carry out a duty if the grace is granted.'

"*ex-voto*, in video, is an offering to Nossa Senhora da Aparecida - the National Patron of Brazil, in gratitude for saving the artist from a fire accident when she was 10 years old."

—Tania Cypriano

Elegy, 1992, 11.5 minutes, USA

"*Elegy* is a tape made for my dog to watch when he is older and ready to confront the elemental questions of existence. I sometimes try to share with Woody some of these concerns as he romps blissfully ignorant of the brevity of his lifespan. How I envy him. He has no use for religion, doesn't care a damn about beauty, and since he was neutered, isn't even troubled by the drive to reproduce. I would try to emulate him but I know too much already.

"*Elegy* was shot in a cemetery in Boston where I hope to be buried. The tape was recorded on 1/8" audiotape with a toy camera manufactured by Fisher-Price."

—Joe Gibbons