

SEPARATION ANXIETIES



Lyla Rye

SEPARATION ANXIETIES

Not long ago I had the pleasure of hearing Lyla Rye describe a number of her recent installation pieces. I was struck by her sensitive and witty interactions with the specifics of each space that she worked in, by her ability to transform ordinary materials and objects into extraordinary visions and by the dynamic connections that she created between the forms of spare contemporary installation and some of the most fundamental human experiences.

Separation Anxieties contemplates a crucial stage in one of our most profound life dramas, the early years of a parent/child relationship. The young child, though wholly dependant on the parent, is simultaneously establishing the parameters of the self as an individual; taking the first few difficult steps towards independence. The exhibition concentrates on new video works, which, in addition to physical structures, use audio and video elements to guide the viewer's interaction with the pieces. Sound and moving images are used to draw the viewer towards each piece, their placement within the space determines the specific approach and manner of encountering the piece.

The way in which Rye has subtly altered the physical space of the gallery has an effect not unlike the arrival of an infant in an established relationship: everything is the same, yet also intensified and completely different. The gallery, and our experience of it, has been turned inside out. In **Subdue** a deep closet has become an installation site, drawing the viewer into what was previously off limits; a storage space for gallery furnishings and supplies. A computer monitor dominates the main space, forcing the viewer to confront **Noodge** and Western

society's persistent ambivalence to breastfeeding. Two temporary walls have been constructed. The first turns a small gallery into a corridor, completely altering the visitor's initial experience of the gallery space. The second wall is part of a double-sided piece, **Separation Anxiety**. Two video projections are visible on opposite sides of the wall; a large image of a child demanding maternal attention and a smaller, quiet image of the same child walking away. The viewer is forced to move around the wall through a narrow gap at one end to see the entire piece, establishing a disjointed experience that reflects the unevenness inherent in the maturing process.

Space, including Rye's manipulations of it and of the viewer through it, is extremely important in each of these works. By altering the way that the viewer experiences the gallery spaces Rye has introduced an element of discomfort into each piece. To actually experience the works, one is forced to enter the normally inaccessible space of the closet; to walk around a wall; to accept in a gallery the multiple T.V. images that are more commonly encountered in a commercial space. These spatial modifications are not simply about shocking the visitor through an enhanced discomfort level. By challenging expectations Rye forces an increased level of perception and sensitivity; the viewer is more alert to the type of subtle messages that Rye presents and better prepared to understand the early childhood years not as the joyful romp through a sun-drenched field that the nostalgic glass of society would often have us believe, but as an intensely complex mix of the emotions and dynamics that exist in every human relationship.

Rhona Wenger, Curator



Separation Anxiety

2002, video installation

On one side of a wall is projected a large and loud video of a young child demanding her mother's attention. A small projector on a tripod interrupts this image and projects through rear screen projection glass to the opposite side of the same wall. From the other side of the wall is seen a small, slow and silent image of the reflection of a child walking away into darkness. The constant, daily needs of a child are contrasted with the mournful aspect of slowly watching your child grow away from you.



Subdue

2002, video installation

The sound of a lullaby draws you into a long narrow closet, revealing the image of a mouth singing. From a distance it seems to be overlaid with a black censor block. Closer inspection reveals an image within the block: that of a woman talking animatedly. She is effectively silenced by having her mouth cropped outside the frame. On either side of this image is an LCD screen with the image of a child. One covers her ears while the other covers his eyes. A second sound track, only audible from a close distance betrays the frustration of a mother trying to cajole the children into helping her.

Noodge

2000, Internet project

Byte

2002, video installation

Byte deals with the potential for hurt, in both directions, in a mother-child relationship. The piece focuses on a 12 second section of video where I attempt to sing into my daughter's open mouth. Although our game is actually quite goofy, the image of it is disturbing. My daughter's protestations suggest an imbalance of power but when she bites me on the lip it brings into question who has the upper hand. The video repeatedly zooms in on, isolates and reframes different moments within this very short take. Displayed on a variety of TV monitors stacked as if in a electronics store window it makes reference to how the media recontextualizes events and how perception and reality can differ.



SEPARATION ANXIETIES



Lyla Rye

The artist would like to thank Lorna Mills, Colette Laliberté and Toronto School of Art for the loan of equipment. Thanks to Adam Thacker from the Town of Grimsby for equipment and assistance. Many thanks for technical knowledge and endless patience to Kartz Ucci and John Dickson. And of course thanks to the children in my life for their inspiration and hopefully their forgiveness.

June 7 - July 14, 2002

sponsored by:
Ricenberg Developments
MacGirr Home Hardware



THE GRIMSBY
PUBLIC ART GALLERY
25 ADELAIDE ST., GRIMSBY, ON, L3M 1X2
905-945-3246