



Video Art in a Historic Tunnel Combines Disparities at Moving Image Art Fair

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There's something about viewing contemporary art in unusual historic settings that makes the experience even more interesting. Moving Image Art Fair takes this premise and runs with it. The fair is presented in the Waterfront New York Tunnel in Chelsea, a brick building with curves that formerly housed a historic railroad freight tunnel and, later, a famous nightclub (Tunnel) in the late eighties.

Now in its fourth year, Moving Image art fair presents works made with single-channel videos and projections plus video sculptures and video installation—some of the newest mediums to be embraced by art fairs, museums and galleries. Pairing opposing time periods of past and present is an apt setup for art channeling disparities.

The art fair was presented inside a single wide corridor, tucked beneath a high ceiling flanked by brick walls accentuated with curved details. On either side of the corridor could be found a single row of suspended video screens presenting most of the 34 works exhibited at the fair. In addition, installations—both large and small—could be found in the start and finish of the exhibition space. A chair or two positioned in front of each screen was encouraging, promising a front-row seat for every video work with a comfortable place to watch, sometimes listen, and linger.

The almost sparse presentation of work meant there was plenty of room to preview the art from afar before deciding whether to pony up and watch the entire piece. During the opening, there seemed to be subtle dance taking place where steps were taken towards screens and their moving images then a subtle pause before a sidestep or beeline completed the decision to watch the artwork or continue on to the next piece.



Video art displayed during the Opening Reception of the Moving Image Art Fair.
Photo by Pat Rogers.



The crowd at the Opening Reception of Moving Image Art Fair. Photo by Pat Rogers.

Opening Receptions aren't the best time for concentrated art viewing but a few works jumped out and compelled forgoing the festivities. One of these works was *Frequency*, 2012, by Daniel Canogar (presented by bitforms gallery in Chelsea).

Set in near darkness, the patchwork of dark yet translucent sections that make up the 34-panel installation twinkled into illumination through projected video loops. Each of the projections were contained within distinct sections yet tightly bound together in a quilt-like fashion to form a single surface.

The contrast between dark and light, stillness and motion, horizontal and vertical image alignment, made a riveting cocktail and gave the illusion that the artwork was being constructed before your eyes. At first, it seemed as if the entire installation would become completely animated by projections. Doubt set in as sections were activated and deactivated in a pattern that seemed random.

I began to wonder if the shimmering images were meant to occupy the entire surface or if the installation intended to create a build a single crescendo to deliver a crystallizing conclusion (or realization) in the way television sitcoms do. Even though the images were mostly abstract (television static, circular screen tests from the early days of television, and snatches of images from news broadcasts), *Frequency* had a narrative feel and suggested there may be a conclusion to its implied story.

Frequency's ultimate trajectory felt cloaked as the mostly abstract images multiplied, contracted and multiplied again. Instead of building toward a concerted comprehension, the attempts and efforts of these quivering visual snatches seemed thwarted by an unseen force: They would probably never fully form into an understandable narrative for a TV-audience.

Frequency combined hope, striving, frustration and acceptance into a piece that was compelling and difficult to forget. The persistence of recurring images representing television's earliest days kept me watching and hoping the disjointed images might find a way to rejoin into an integrated whole and fulfill the purpose it once served, despite the obsolescence of the technology it needs to do so.

A solo show by Daniel Canogar titled "Small Data" will be held from March 27 - April 26 at bitforms gallery.



Installation of "Frequency" by Daniel Canogar, 2012. 33 analog television

screens, projector, multimedia hard drive, 4 min 30 sec animation loop, edition of 3, 118.11 x 78.74 inches. Exhibited by bitforms gallery (NYC). Photo by Pat Rogers.



Installation of "Frequency" by Danile Canogar, 2012. 33 analog television screens, projector, multimedia hard drive, 4 min 30 sec animation loop, edition of 3, 118.11 x 78.74 inches. Exhibited by bitforms gallery (NYC). Photo by Pat Rogers.

Another work combining hope, intrigue and history was *Champagne Room*, 2013, by Nicole Cohen. A decidedly lighter piece, the video animation created a party of bubbles in a sedate and formal room from the past. The room in possession of this bubble-making magic conjured memories of visiting Newport mansions where grandeur and opulence was the rage of the oceanside community of wealthy Americans.

Watching bubbles float upward from furniture and furnishings in *Champagne Room* seemed a contemporary (and fun) way to celebrate good fortune and live it up. The backdrop to Cohen's *Champagne Room* is actually the French Rococo period room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. By borrowing history and mixing it with an unexpected current twist, Cohen mashes both time periods to forge what could be a happy future.

Cohen's work was recently the subject of a solo show at Morgan Lehman (Chelsea). "Domestic Concerns" was presented there from Dec. 12, 2013 to Jan. 25, 2014.



"Champagne Room" by Nicole Cohen, 2013. Single-Channel Video Animation. 3 minute loop. Exhibited with Morgan Lehman Gallery. Photo by Pat Rogers.

Another work combining unexpected motion in a fun and unusual way was *Space Drawing No. 7* by Chen Sai Hua Kuan (Singapore, b. 1978). The one-minute digital film took viewers through a lightening-quick journey that passed through an abandon building, a construction site, and over a myriad of object surfaces. The minute jumps between were tied together through by the retraction of a thin rope being pulled by an unseen force.

Whipping through spaces and across the surfaces of objects at a steady yet frantic piece made it

compelling to watch and channeled the board game Mouse Trap or the living equivalent of a Rube Goldberg Machine cartoon. The sound of the whipping rope accompanied the piece (audible through headsets), leading viewers on a journey through an unusual landscape.

Video works in Chen Sai Hua Kuan Sei's "Space Drawing" series are his intuitive reflection on a specific time and place by deconstructing typical perceptions of ordinary items, found objects and existing situations in a playful way, according to [Osage Gallery](#).



"Space Drawing No. 7" by Chen Sai Huan Kuan, 2010. Digital film. Exhibited Osage Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo by Pat Rogers.



"Space Drawing No. 7" by Chen Sai Huan Kuan, 2010. Digital film. Exhibited Osage Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo by Pat Rogers.

If Nam June Paik's exhibited artwork, set in an antique television carcass, represents a piece of moving image history—placed strategically to welcome visitors to the video art fair—then perhaps Patty Chang represents a part of the medium's future. Positioned at the very end of the art fair, Chang's HD Video *Invocation for a Wandering Lake, part 1* combines her performance art with moving image technology. The piece features the artist washing a dead, decaying whale with a small sponge with a picturesque seascape in the background.

The 11-minute video seemed to be a mediation on futility, environmental caretaking and remembrance. Methodical and slow, it was alternatively meditative and maddening.

Chang (American, b. 1972) was trained as a painter but turned to art performance after moving to New York City in the mid-nineties, according to an artist bio posted at [The Guggenheim](#), where Chang has exhibited. "Her performances, recorded in short films, became notorious for testing the limits of endurance and taste," according to [The Guggenheim](#). In recent years, Chang is incorporating photography and video with her art performance. *Invocation for a Wandering Lake, part 1* is presented at Moving Image Art Fair by Creative Capital and Moving Image.



"Invocation for a Wandering Lake, part 1" by Patty Chang, 2014. HD video, 11 minutes. Presented by Creative Capital and Moving Image. Installation photo by Pat Rogers.

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BASIC FACTS: Moving Image Art Fair presents its fourth edition from March 6 - 9, 2014 at the Waterfront New York Tunnel in Chelsea, located at 269 11th Avenue, New York, NY 10001. Fair hours are March 6 - 8 from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on March 9 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. www.moving-image.info.