



ALIX PEARLSTEIN  
STILL/PAUSE

SCHOOL OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS  
GROSSMAN GALLERY  
230 THE FENWAY, BOSTON, MA 02115-5596  
FEBRUARY 12-27, 1998

ALL WORKS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND  
POSTMASTERS GALLERY, NEW YORK

•  
*PAUSE*, 8:00 MINUTES

*STILL*, 8:30 MINUTES

COLOR VIDEO, CONTINUOUS PLAY; 1997

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*STILL (MEDITATE)*

*STILL (DISCOVER)*

*STILL (POSE)*

*STILL (CONCENTRATE)*

*STILL (EMBRACE)*

*STILL (REST)*

*STILL (CONFRONT)*

*STILL (PLAY)*

PENCIL, COLLAGE ON PAPER;  
25 INCHES HIGH X 21 INCHES WIDE; 1997



## ALIX PEARLSTEIN: SPECULATIVE NARRATIVES

VIDEO AS A MEDIUM HAS NOT NECESSARILY BEEN HOMOGENEOUS. FROM THE HOME TELEVISION TO THE PERSONAL USE CAMERA, VIDEO, BY DEFAULT, REFERENCES THE BROAD SPECTRUM OF POPULAR CULTURE. FROM ADVERTISING AND ENTERTAINMENT, TO EDUCATION AND PERSONAL RECORDS. IT IS A MEDIUM OF TRANSITIVE VERBS. VIDEO ENGAGES, WE WATCH. WE HAVE BEEN TRAINED, OVER THE PAST FORTY YEARS, TO READ THE SUBTITLES OF THE MEDIUM. WE RECOGNIZE ITS POTENTIAL TO REVEAL THE TRUTH AND ITS ABILITY TO ALTER IT. IT IS A CORE ELEMENT IN OUR CURRENT CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT, A KEY TO HOW WE ENVISION THE WORLD, IN BOTH ITS BROADEST AND SMALLEST DEFINITIONS. ALIX PEARLSTEIN, BORN IN 1962, IS AT HOME WITH THE MEDIUM, IN ALL ITS FACETS, PARTICULARLY IN ITS INFINITIVE FORM.

ALIX PEARLSTEIN COMES TO VIDEO, QUITE NATURALLY, AS AN EXTENSION OF HER WORK IN SCULPTURE. MINIMALIST IN RESPECT TO THEIR FORMAL CONCERNS—GRAVITY, TENSION, MASS, LINE—AS WELL AS TO THE MATERIALS THEMSELVES—PLASTIC BAGS, FAKE FLIES, STRING, HOUSEHOLD FUZZ—PEARLSTEIN'S WORKS REVEAL IN THEIR OWN TEMPORAL FRAGILITY AND POINT TO THE ABSURDITY OF CULTURAL BEHAVIOR. VIDEO ALLOWS PEARLSTEIN TO EXPAND THESE SAME CONCERNS INTO INHABITED SPACE, IT ENGAGES REAL TIME AND REALIZES THE POTENTIAL TO ANIMATE. IT IS THE ELEMENT OF TIME, IN PEARLSTEIN'S CASE, THE PRESENT TENSE, THAT IS CRITICAL IN TRANSFORMING THE ACT INTO GESTURE, GESTURE INTO SUSPENDED MOMENT, AND THE MOMENT INTO A CONTINUING PRESENT.

IN HER MOST RECENT WORKS, *PAUSE* AND *STILL*, PEARLSTEIN FOCUSES NOT ON THE CHARACTER BUT RATHER ON THE GESTURE THAT DEFINES THE CHARACTER. IN BOTH VIDEOS, AS IN HER PAST WORKS, REFERENCES ARE CONSTRUCTED FROM MASS MEDIA IMAGES. PEARLSTEIN UTILIZES THE COMMON EVENTS AND VISUAL

LANGUAGE OF DAILY LIFE AS CONSTRUCTED BY ADVERTISING AND THE POPULAR MEDIA TO EXPLORE PERCEPTION AND ORIENTATION, SIMULTANEOUSLY RECONSTRUCTING THEIR MEANINGS. THE COLLAGES THAT ACCOMPANY *STILL* ACT AS STORY BOARDS AND PROVIDE THE ARMATURE ON WHICH PEARLSTEIN CONSTRUCTS THE IMAGES IN THE VIDEO. THEY SUGGEST THE ACTION AND THE VIDEOS PROCEED WHERE THE ACTION STOPS. BOTH VIDEOS COMMENT ON AND INFORM EACH OTHER: *PAUSE* RECORDS THE POSTURE AND *STILL* FOCUSES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF ACCENTUATING AND ELEVATING THE NUANCE OF THE ACTION. TOGETHER THEY CONFRONT THE LITERALNESS AND OBJECTIVENESS OF THE GESTURE FROZEN IN TIME. REMINISCENT OF THE FICTION OF ALAIN ROBBE-GRIFFET, THE NARRATIVE IS REVEALED AS A SPECULATIVE EVENT BASED ON HOW WE READ THE MOMENT AND HOW WE READ THE GESTURE WITHIN THAT MOMENT.

PEARLSTEIN OBJECTIFIES THE SELF AND REMINDS US THAT ACTUALIZATION PROCEEDS CONTEXTUALIZATION. QUESTIONING HOW VALUE SYSTEMS ARE CONSTRUCTED AND SUBSEQUENT DESIRES ARE FORMED, *PAUSE* AND *STILL* REDEFINE CULTURAL IDENTITY BASED ON THE FUNCTION AND LOCATION OF THE BODY WITHIN THE GENRE OF POPULAR ADVERTISING.

LELIA AMALFITANO

DIRECTOR OF EXHIBITIONS & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

THE SCHOOL AND THE OFFICE OF EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALIX PEARLSTEIN FOR HER ENTHUSIASM AND VALUABLE INPUT AS WELL AS THE FRIENDS OF EXHIBITIONS AND MARTIN AND DEBORAH HALE. THEIR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR OUR PUBLIC PROGRAMS PROVIDES A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR NOT ONLY OUR STUDENTS BUT ALSO THE GREATER BOSTON COMMUNITY TO VIEW INNOVATIVE AND CHALLENGING WORK IN ALL MEDIA.

