



### D’Ette Nogle in Conversation with Jesse Benson and Becky Koblick

B&J: Your installation in Room Gallery relies heavily on a period of non-productivity in your art practice. An aspect of the project is the installation of objects you have characterized as previously unrealized works.

D: With the exception of my participation in a few group exhibitions, the last time I made an installation that reflected my ambitions as an artist was in mid-2001. From that period until shortly before my invitation to do a project for Room Gallery, I was a sort of non-practicing artist in the sense that I was not pursuing my art practice in the way I had before. I was still writing and keeping notes about potential projects, which are now brought to light under specific parameters within the context of *Suspended Projection*. Titles of the pieces represent an effort to refer both to the time in which I was considering an idea as well as the present time. They employ the phrases “partially realized” and “somewhat realized.”

B&J: Given that your last “full” realizations of artworks were made in mid-2001, it seems relevant that within the context of our current global economic recovery and American political resuscitation, you are making a project that focuses on reemergence, with work that appears to reflect an insular world devoid of overtly political content.

D: Many of the previously unrealized works are specific to the site of the non-practicing artist, the non-producing person, and perhaps the inactive citizen. As you said, an insular world is presented reflecting a period of the last eight years, which coincides with a period of alienation and political disenfranchisement felt by many over the same span of time. The climate was stifling for me. I remember hearing a rumor that artist Paul McCarthy was placed on a no-fly list because he had burned money for a performance in the 70s. I remember my husband being concerned about having written an email containing a joke about “hijacking” a map that he had borrowed and not returned to a friend. Additionally, I had a difficult time reconciling the nature of my practice within that climate. My practice had been concerned with considering the institution of family as well as using my body and voice in an autobiographical and performative manner. I was asking myself if my practice was relevant. Rather than becoming active and directly addressing that question by way of my practice, I recoiled.



B&J: And some of the previously unrealized works reflect this notion of receding...

D: The graphite rubbing of my parents' roof as a partial realization of the latex mold of the roof certainly may serve as a symbol of a barrier to movement or progress. Others directly reference obstacles to production whether internal or external. The photograph titled *The Moment I Realized my Hair Was Getting in the Way of My Art Practice* utilizes the incidental stand-in of hair to imply everything was getting in the way of my practice. In the case of *Pick-A-Project*, a filing system contains items that would have supplied ample content for projects, representing both the seclusion of the practice as well as a type of duping myself about the ease of production.

B&J: Your image and voice are major elements in *Suspended Projection*, but the only people that appear besides yourself are a couple of friends delivering donuts to an exercise mat in one video, and the bizarre presence of Matthew McConaughey in another. You choose to give a voice to the latter by way of subtitles.

D: McConaughey is someone I've only encountered at a distance through entertainment media. He's a type of surfing cowboy movie star who has traveled the country in his Airstream trailer and advertised steak as “what's for dinner” on the radio. He's a figure that is not necessarily political. I link him to me by casting him as someone cheering me on while surfing, as if I'm looking to him as a guru who might offer guidance and support. However, the recurrence of the wipe-outs despite all of the subtitled support may imply the figure is actually rooting for failure, as if the stifling political and cultural climate of the time was embodied within McConaughey cheering me on in my lack of mobility and agency.

B&J: Unlike works that resemble a political period wallowing in stagnation, a project like *2007 Posters (Unrealized 2007)*, *Somewhat Realized (Lighter and Unsent) 2009* seem to suggest a glimmer of hope. It is implied that you were going to send two different posters...

D: The year 2007 carried both a sense of desperation and an opportunity for change, and the posters were going to be produced within that context of a potentially shifting climate. At the bottom of the hole on the first poster there were going to be arrows pointing in various directions representing previous fits and starts. The second



poster was not going to have the climbing image. “2007” was going to be printed in the top third of both posters. The absence of the climbing image on the second poster would have provided blank space representing an opportunity to be used or projected upon by the recipient. The posters, in their unsent, somewhat realized form, could be perceived as an opportunity as well as a reticent SOS message.

B&J: In contrast to the partially realized works we've been discussing, another major aspect of *Suspended Projection* is your fully realized large-scale video-projection. In this video, filmed inside your bed, you explicitly describe what you were “going to” do. Here we get our best opportunity to discuss the performative autobiography. You intentionally cast yourself and, by default, the viewer, into the role of the lover. Of course the practice of characterizing the viewer in such a specific way dramatically affects the aesthetics of the objects produced, but it also functions, as in Derrida's post-structuralist performative model, to invite viewers to question the authority you've granted yourself to cast us as lovers. Can you address your use of the autobiographical performative? And more specifically, can you discuss how this current project might be considered in terms of the subjective behavior of the lover as presented by Roland Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse*?

D: I find Barthes to be an appropriate reference, especially given both the performative aspect of that text as well as the structure, which he characterized as being left in an “incompleted state.” The video projection presents a constant stream of incomplete actions expressed in the past progressive tense (e.g., “I was going to make this photograph where I stood in the backyard of a neighbor's house looking at the camera. I was going to be standing in front of a tree, garden or planter.”). The statements are a reflection of many fits and starts that do not transcend but rather habitually refer to things not there. Although there is no exchange and the presentation is that of a system of solitude, the statements and their presentation provide an opportunity for criticism on behalf of the viewer of these spasmodic actions (as in “D’Ette was always making big plans”) in potentially the same way that Barthes' lover's behavior is rewritten by the receiver. Viewers should draw their own conclusions – potentially moving

Left: *The McConaughey Effect, (Unrealized 2007), Partially Realized (less McConaughey), 2009*  
Center: *2007 Posters (Unrealized 2007), Somewhat Realized (Lighter and Unsent) 2009*  
Right: *Do Nots, (Unrealized 2007), Somewhat Realized (silent, shorter, lack of live audience, fewer donuts, substitute catering staff, alternative location), 2009*  
Cover: *I Dont Want No Retrospective (Unrealized 2007-2008), Somewhat Realized (Lighter and Smaller), 2009*

through the space to make inferences, being in the position to seek, accept, identify with, deny, dismantle or reject the artist/lover.

B&J: In previous discussions, you indicated that the exhibition title – *Suspended Projection* – was determined in reference to the suspension of your art practice as well as the psychoanalytic meaning of the term projection: “a function to relieve one’s ego of an intolerable feeling.”

D: Yes, and I am interested in the psychoanalytic concept of melancholia, the looking back and projecting onto objects in search of oneself. As a return to, say, 2007 is not possible, the partially realized objects are selections of the past that cannot be fully realized. This is reflected in the titles and the standards of production that have been set. All works are made lighter, smaller or are not completely articulated.

B&J: This notion of melancholia brings to mind *Commemorative Attraction Posters for Past Works* where you were going to design a poster to commemorate each of your past projects. The title could concurrently represent a celebratory nod and a mournful tone.

D: Right, I ask myself: where do these posters exist? Is it possible that both celebration and mourning are conflated in a place of longing for something? This makes me think again of your question about Barthes, as well as psychoanalysis, which would propose that the object is always absent and desire stays the same regardless of our perception of presence or absence. So, here we have the projections onto these objects in this space and also the idea of how we project onto the past, as in melancholia, rather than seeing the loss of the ego.

B&J: We recognize an apparent desire on your part to revisit conceptual practices of the 60s and 70s. This desire seems to connect to what we had been discussing before: a recoiling into the space of non-production and isolation, and, in this case, even receding from contemporary forms of communication, as well as a melancholic feeling about early conceptual practices. We are thinking of your use of video, especially the projection in which your body and voice are present, and wondering how you see this work in relation to early video work such as *Boomerang* (in which Nancy Holt says, “I’m throwing things out in the world and they are boomeranging back...boomeranging...eranginging...”) and Rosalind Krauss’ assertion that Holt’s video is but one example of self-encapsulation, a condition present in much video work at the time where the artist in the video is stuck in the present or cut off from history. Do you see this as a condition of your video?

D: I find the characterizations of video put forth by Krauss to be still relevant to video work today and there are aspects of her arguments that I don’t want to take for granted, which is why I wanted to theoretically as well as literally refer to the show as *Suspended Projection* – I’d like the decision of using a video projection for the purposes of this project to be acknowledged. It should be considered in relation to Krauss’ notion of time and self-encapsulation because that condition is present in that there exists an effort to continually renew the self-image by way of the language spoken (“I was going to...”). At the same time, as we’ve discussed, the use of language also positions my image in a perpetual past-progressive state of lack.

B&J: Since you want to point to the medium itself, can you also talk about how this work might be considered based on Krauss’ assertion that the real medium of video is a psychological situation, specifically that of narcissism?

D: This project and the employment of video is another performative instance of how we are constituted as subjects, engaging in a narcissistic endeavor to regain something of ourselves that is lost.

B&J: Does this connect to your practice as one that, at present, specifically considers the institution of the artist? Might you also find a connection to other artists who choose this mode of production?

D: I think it can definitely be connected. I thought it particularly important to think about my practice after a period of years in which I did not exhibit projects. I have found it to be an opportunity to consider how a self-generated retrospective could be placed within the psychoanalytic postulation that I mentioned before – the subject’s projection upon objects of the past in an effort to strive for that which is lost. I am very interested in Andrea Fraser’s practice of being self-reflexive – now taking up the position of the artist as part of her institutional critique after doing such extensive work on the performed ritual of sites as in *Museum Highlights* and *Inaugural Speech*. Of course, there is also a difference in that Fraser has concerned herself with the commodification of the artist. This project provides a more internal dialogue that considers internal and external obstacles to production, the presentation of objects as part of an imagined history, and the artist as subject.

B&J: It’s worth noting that your project will be shown in Room Gallery while the work of Roberto Jacoby is being shown in the University Art Gallery. In addition to staging Happenings in Argentina that did not necessarily happen, Jacoby developed an art catalog about a non-existent exhibition with his contemporaries in the 1960s. Your project of presenting previously unrealized works seems to catalog the lack of an artistic practice.

D: This coincidence is nice because it opens space for a dialogue about where and in what form artworks exist. Does it need to be fully realized in order to exist? Where do we place these staged or partially realized works and does the thinking around the idea or staging constitute some existence?

## ROOM GALLERY

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Juli Carson | Gallery Director  
Robert Plogman | Associate Director  
Lindi Emoungu | Brochure Design



## D’Ette Nogle SUSPENDED PROJECTION

Oct 1 - Nov 21, 2009

