

track **2** ART WORK

A Portrait of a Rape



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Description: A bedroom in an Art Fair.

Idea date: March 2001, Place: New York

Exhibition date: February 2002. Place: ARCO Madrid

A room is furnished with a bed (55" x 79") dressed in white linen, two side tables and two lamps. Its walls are covered in wallpaper. The repetitive pattern in the wallpaper is an enlarged photo of a wound in my body. The wound has a vaginal shape.

The dimensions of the room are 14' x 12' and 12' high. The ceiling is open. The entry is 26" wide and cut into the corner of the cube. The corner entry serves two functions: to make access of more than one person at the time into the room impossible, and to offer a complete view of the room from the hallway. The entry height is 5'3". The two corner walls are joined on the upper part for 6'9". In perspective, the entry looks tiny. The entry height allows a view, but at the same time makes access difficult, and people must bow their heads to enter.

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Things happen in a moment and in a place. Our memories are linked to the what, the when and the where. Spaces became scenarios. Spaces are loaded with our presence and with what has occurred in them. There is a process of appropriation of space by the person and of the person by the space. A blurred line exists between our body and our space. Experiences are personal and so are spaces. We are alone at home; we lie down on the bed or the sofa. In front of us is a wall, the same one we see each day; the same, even if what happens everyday is different, even if we rearrange the furniture in the room. Experiences that impact our lives stay with us and inhabit our rooms.

Several layers of wallpaper and paint overlap on the walls, like the traces of what happens in our memory. Some layers cover others, but transparency is selective. Wallpaper is the paper on which we write our history. Wallpaper is the most external layer on a wall. The paper might be covered with paint, but if its memory is still fresh, we would see even through the white opacity of the paint. The wallpaper in Rape Room, composed of a vaginal shaped wound, could be how a woman feels. This wallpaper might also be what she sees after being raped, while lying down in the bed, when she closes her eyes.

RAPE ROOM, a wounded room through which our experience navigates.

New York
November 16, 2001

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S.I.C. Survival is a Crime

Rape survival is a crime penalized by silence. Silence is a consequence of shame. There is an implicit social agreement in which a woman has to protect her honor. Returning alive from a rape or without visible wounds, implies her collaboration or complicity. Perversely, the victim of a crime is punished twice, first by the criminal and then by society. She is expected to oppose the rapist in some way even when this may increase the risk of losing her life.

6 S.I.C. Survival is a Crime is a photographic sequence that draws a trajectory through an apartment building: the staircase and the hallways; the inside of an apartment; the furniture and some objects, a comforter; and the inhabitant, a woman. Pictures, aesthetically uninteresting, glamour-less projected above the NYPD headquarters. The image of the woman's face with the text: Survival is a Crime repeats every five pictures, for two seconds. The sequence of 16 pictures run for twenty one seconds every fifteen minutes. Images will be projected on public screens near precincts, like the Times Square screen above the NYPD. In the case of Times Square pictures will run, as an ad does in the middle of a television program in between the screen commercial program. They will run twenty-four hours a day.

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Rape is not private. Private can be defined as the space or situation that is under individual control. The boundaries of a rape victim are trespassed. As a result, the private space, and her control over her space and herself is lost. She becomes an alien, another person.

S.I.C. Survival is a Crime is part of my series, The Other Around, strange presences close to familiar and domestic spaces. The private space in the S.I.C. images has been disrupted by the presence of a stranger. Inversely, Times Square is disrupted by a private and violent story. S.I.C. on a public screen becomes a dissident ad, interrupting the advertising program normally on that screen. The images may produce feelings of discomfort or uncertainty in visitors looking for entertainment. A face plus a written statement is a publicity strategy used in politics and fashion to relate viewers to a subject. But in this case it is not the face of a model. Hollywood portrays raped women as heroic figures who fight for their dignity and end up in the cemetery (as in the movie, The Grandfather). In pornography, bloody rapes are constructed to nourish masculine imagination and are a source of sexual excitement.

In S.I.C. we follow the trajectory of a stranger entering into a building, an apartment, and the body of the woman. Missing parts of the story create questions for the viewer and the viewer becomes a detective. The crime is a true crime committed in New York with a criminal investigation running simultaneously. The criminal, the stranger, is the only person, besides the victim, who can connect the images. Perhaps he will pass by Times Square and see the

pictures on the screen. What will he make of them?

S.I.C. does not show the face of the criminal as a wanted person but the face of his victim. Will he be possessed by the power of the images to turn himself in to the NYPD and confess his crime? Or will he try to find the woman and kill her to erase from his memory what happened?

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A video installation. A block of nine monitors, three by three, run three-minute loops of a person's daily activities. The loops show him following his usual path, going from the subway, through the street, to his apartment, living, sleeping, watching TV, reading etc... However the image is of an intruder with a covered face, a ghostly presence, moves randomly through the inhabitant's path, breaking the rhythms of action and space. Familiar sounds are suddenly interrupted by the intrusive sound of an alarm each time the intruder appears.

"I was walking without thinking. And suddenly I saw myself on a floor with different strata. Going, at the same time, through successive streets that live in the same street. It wasn't one, but all the cities in the world. I knew by remembering. I was walking through the scars of time"
Jose Jimenez <Memory>

Idea and direction: Jana Leo;
Editing: Celina Alvarado

Inhabitant: Angel Borrego Cubero;
Intruder: Sony Devabhaktuni

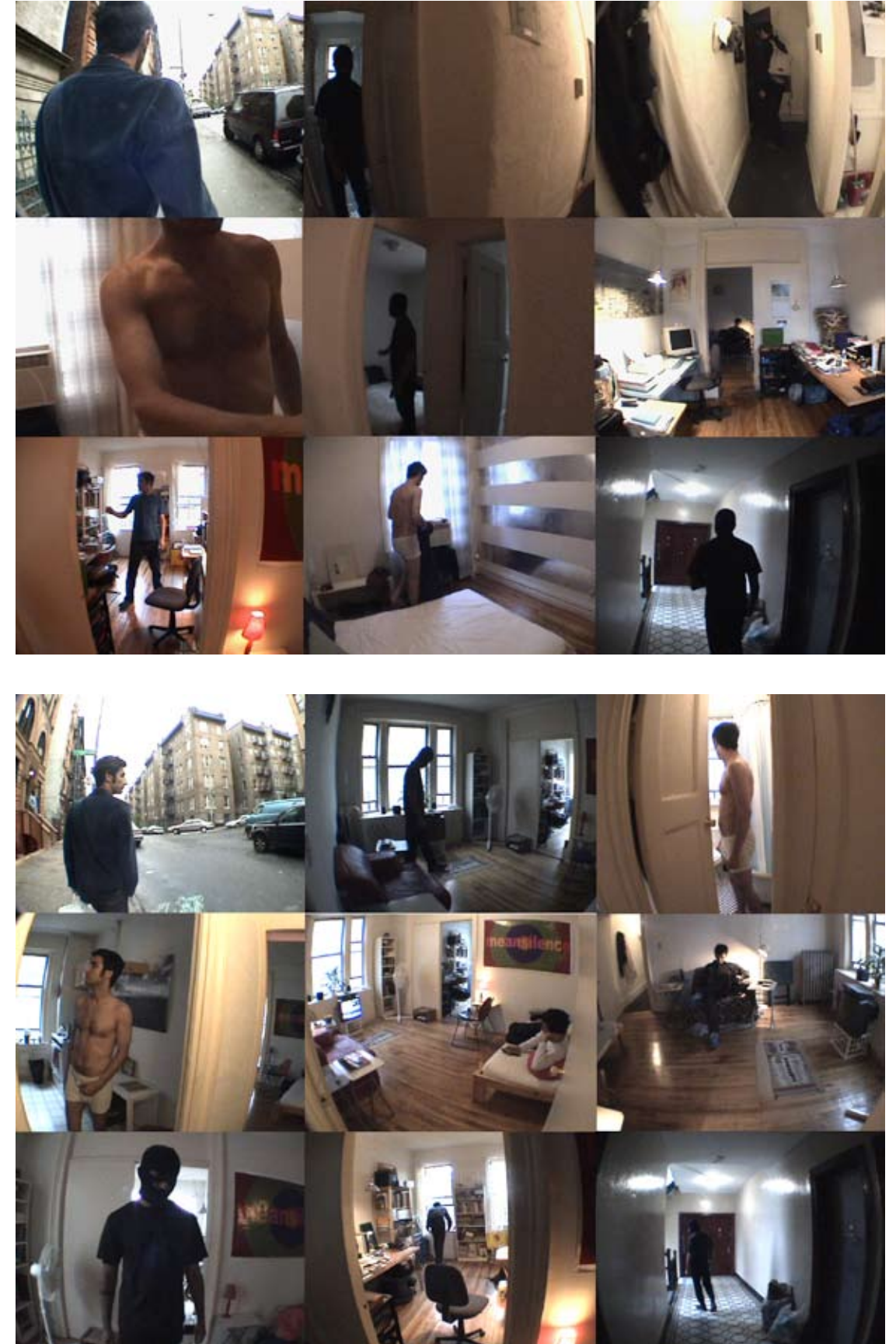
Special thanks to Corbin Frame,
Henry Jackson.

My gratitude to: Angel, Celina y
Sony.

Recorded on 408 West 129th St. #2,
New York.

November 2002

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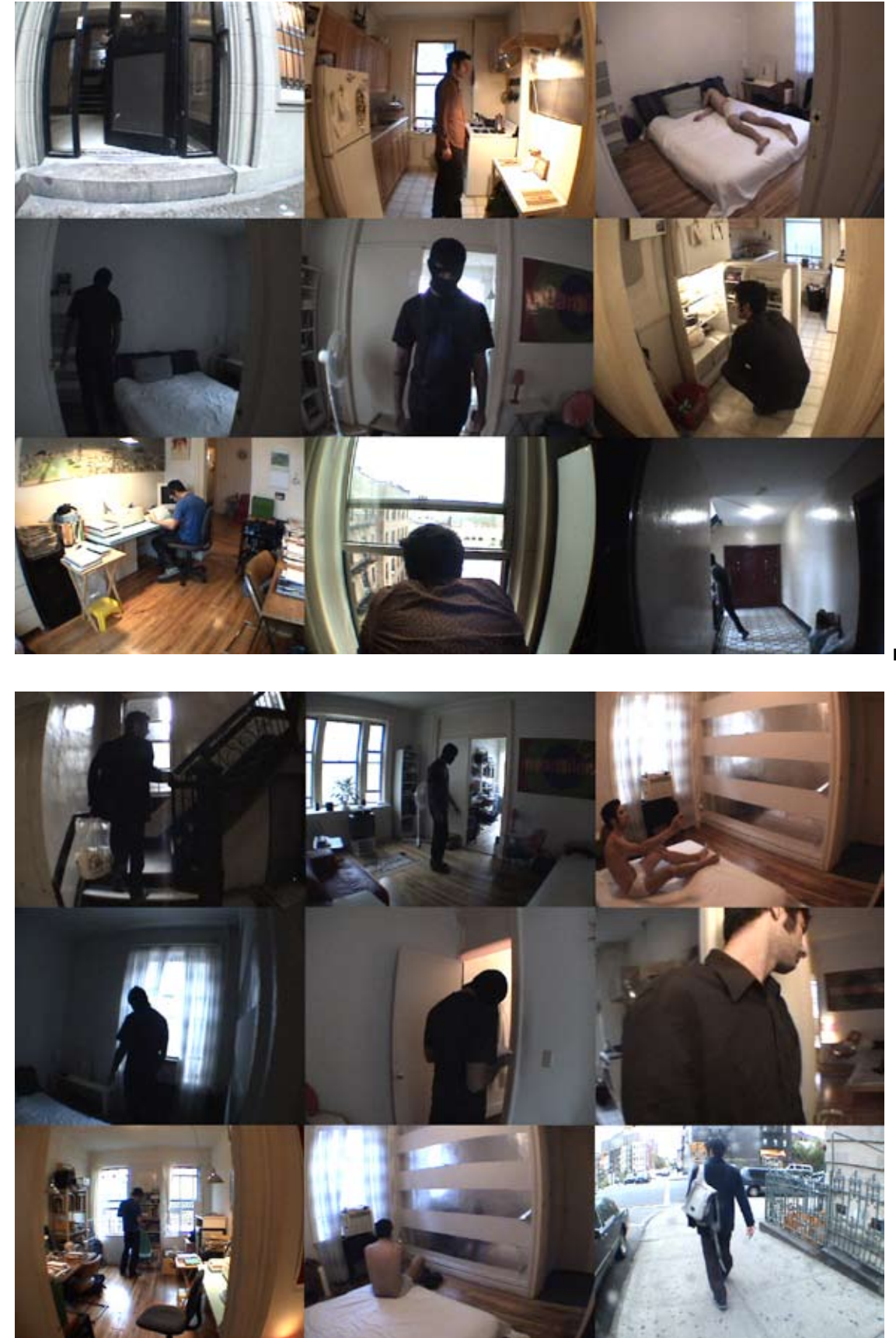
Space is not a void and time is not lineal. Space is a thick mass, etched with the repetition of life. Space is an accumulation of trajectories, a volume created by the history of bodies and days that have moved through the same space. The present is a heavy net woven by moments, individuals and time. It is protected by the net and, at the same time, is trapped by it: movements are blocked; the future is blocked. The inhabitant and the intruder are both in the space, even when they are absented. More than remembrances, they create a reality. The present is an accumulation of the past.

The intruder is someone that we know but have never met: a threat. He is the radical other, someone so far from us that he has no face, like death. He is something that happens without reason. The

intruder alters our space, appears in it unexpectedly and takes us by surprise. The intruder's strange presence crosses and penetrates space violently. The trace is thick, a rope. His steps destroy the net when moving through the space. The space is "raped," its quietness, its internal equilibrium and minimalism are gone and it becomes unfamiliar. The inhabitant becomes homeless, timeless, without past.

The man's everyday life is documented in each monitor, but his action in each monitor is different according to the day. Each action in this movie happens in real time. Time is not compressed but recreated. Nobody can be in a different space and moment at the same time, except in memory. Life is experienced as it occurs and is viewed in memory. However, this man goes through daily activities in a

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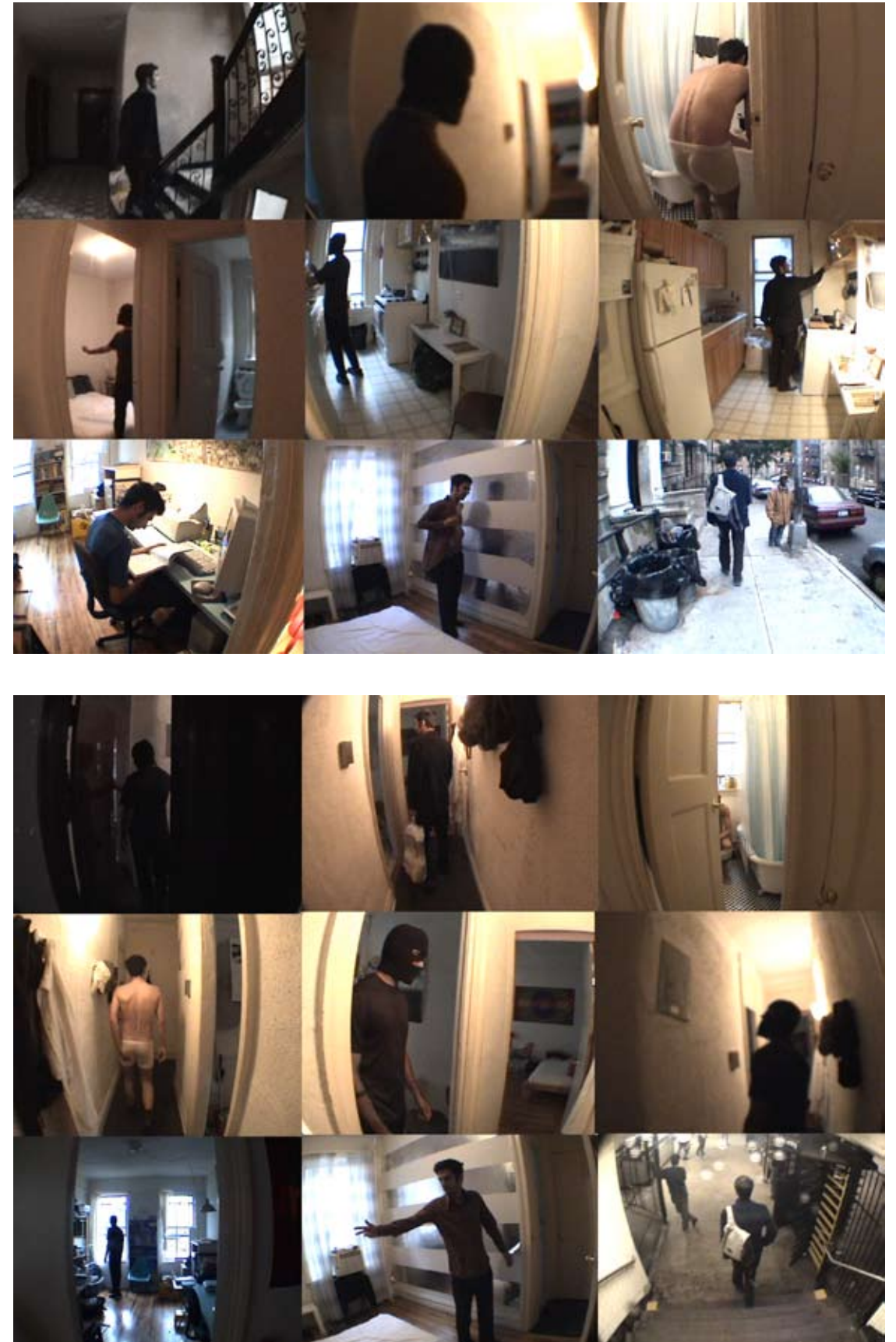
state of distraction, his actions lack intensity, as if he were watching his life, as a memory, instead of living it.

The action in each monitor is minimal, and the viewer can watch several screens simultaneously, like a security guard watching

a bank of monitors connected to surveillance cameras. However, the random appearance of the intruder, accompanied by an alarm, demands the viewer's heightened attention, and puts him in a state of alert.

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RAPE: To force someone to be part of you.

Jean Baudrillard (1) defines rape as “forcing someone to have pleasure.” Even more perverse, rape is “to force someone to be part of you”.

There is simply no way to forget the experience of a rape (2). The rapist is as alive, if not more so, than the memory of your most memorable lover, the one that you loved the most, the best time you made love.

(1) “But the temptation is all the stronger to violate the inalienable form, to take by force, in its entrenchment, that which can give itself only in amorous collusion (Lacan: love is giving what you do not have- that is to say, what you are, which no one has at their disposal). Thus, genuine rape is not forcibly “enjoying” someone, bur forcing someone to have pleasure. p.123

Baudrillard, Jean. *Impossible Exchange*. London, New York: Verso, 2001
Translated by Chris Turner

(2) “Humiliation, I believe, is not just another experience in our life, like, say, embarrassment. It is a formative experience. It forms the way we view ourselves as humiliated person.. Humiliation, in the strong sense, in being a fundamental assault on us as human beings, becomes constitutive of one sense of who we are. We may try to shrug it off and avoid living it on a daily basis. But if and when we remember it, and still recognize it as humiliation, then in the usual course of events we are more likely than not to relive it”. p.130

Avishai, Margalit. *The Ethics of Memory*. Cambridge, Mass : Harvard University Press. 2002

RAPE NEW YORK Works of Philosophy

RAPE AND SEX

The essence of sex in rape is perverted in two ways. One, by separating sex from libido; sex is detached from romance and from pleasurable experience, and the positive element associated with Eros is destroyed. Two, by overwriting choice with force, the idea of carnal union, the deepest and most delightful union is eliminated from the idea of sexual intercourse. A union happens by agreement and not by force. Other forms of sex such as prostitution, while not being unions, are made by mutual accord; however, in rape there is no exchange of any kind. Rape is depredation.

active torture. Passive torture is experienced in violent rapes; active torture, in non-violent rapes. In a violent rape there is a higher degree of raw violence and in a non-violent rape, a higher degree of coercion. In passive torture (violent rape), which is more common, the victim is violently made to accept sex she does not want. She is passive, the rapist is active. In active torture (non-violent rape), the rapist uses coercion rather than force. The victim must force herself to do something that is radically against her nature. She is active, the rapist is passive-aggressive. While passive torture involves physical damage, active torture involves latent and long-lasting humiliation.

Active torture is an inverted form of torture, in which the figure of the tormentor is passed onto the victim. It releases the tormentor from guilt and imposes feelings of self-betrayal and humiliation onto the victim. Active torture is perverse because it creates the illusion that nothing is actually happening against the victim’s will. There is a gap between the coercion and the fulfillment of the request. Humiliation is created in the gap between being asked to perform sex and being directly forced into having sex. The victim must force herself to be raped, to dominate her own body for the rapist.

RAPE, TORTURE AND HUMILIATION

*Jana Leo
New York, November 2006*

Rape is a form of torture. A victim is forced to satisfy someone else’s sexual wishes in a situation in which there are no rules, only total vulnerability.

There are two forms of torture in rape: passive torture and

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THE MEMORY FREEZER

Exercise to lose or to recover memory; a double freezing process. Moments of life are frozen in a photograph; the photograph contains one instant and erases others. Memory is similarly composed of certain moments in life. To defreeze life, revert the process and freeze the photograph.

In your own freezer:

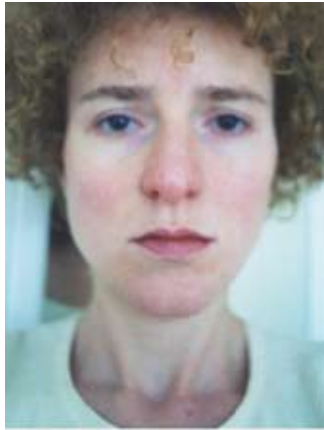
1. Take a picture that contains the frozen emotions of a painful moment.
2. Place the picture (on a platter to collect the drips) into the freezer, pour water onto the picture, wait for it to freeze.
3. When the water has frozen, add more water and let freeze.
4. Continue until the image has disappeared.

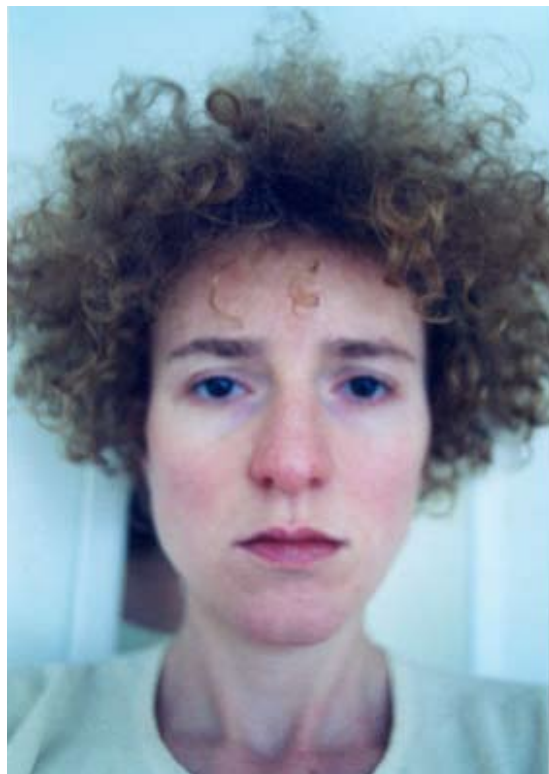
To make a statement about photography for instance in an art show:

1. Purchase a freezer.
2. Install the freezer at eye level.
3. Substitute the freezer door with a glass door.
4. Build an open-sided box that is just smaller than the inside of the freezer.
5. Print a photograph to fix in the box.
6. Place the picture in the box. Add water to the box.
7. Wait for the picture to be encased in ice.
8. Watch as the image vanishes.

Opposite page:

Memory of the state of mind captured in a picture
 Technical Information: Photograph on ice block (14x21 inches) inside an industrial freezer (16x24 inches); the freezer is embedded in the wall. Date of photograph: January 26, 2001. Date of icebox: October 10, 2006.





what I went through: a document of emotions. If emotions construct an image of a person, then a photograph makes those emotions visible. The photograph tries to produce neither effects nor affects but to register a state of mind. As an emotional and ethical recording, it has none of the aesthetics of an artistic photograph. As an affective document, it communicates emotions without being emotional.

The self-portrait was taken with two intentions: to record an emotional state, to eliminate that state from my memory. In other words, the photograph was taken to record and to forget, to register a reality and to release its burden by transferring the memory from my mind to a photographic print. The photograph helps me maintain my sanity by acknowledging that an extremely distressful event occurred, which still causes me distress. As a record, the photograph also imposes the burden of harm onto the assailant, the person who caused my face to look the way it did. In this sense it is an ethical photograph.

An assailant wants his act of atrocity erased. Not only does he want his act erased from his victim's memory—often the victim is either forced to remain silent by threat of death or killed to ensure silence—but even more, the assailant wants his act erased from his own memory. One reason an assailant takes pictures might be to erase a violent act. To transfer the horror into a picture, even at the risk of being incriminated, offers the illusion of deleting the act from the mind. Memory is transferred from the mind to the camera, and in this process erased. Photographs are objects of oblivion.

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A photograph, to record and to forget

When I look at this picture, I remember where and when I took it. This picture brings to mind the emotions I felt. It reminds me of what happened the day before the picture was taken and what caused me to look the way I did. This photograph acts as a reference to facts, but it is not a record of facts and does not provide information; there is no way to know what happened by looking at it. This self-portrait is not a documentary photograph. It is neither witness nor proof of the event. Rather, it is a record of the event's emotional effect, of



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The kinds of pictures an assailant takes are not emotional; they are pictures, but pictures that constitute an archive. Archives deal with records; memories deal with remembrances. Archives are about keeping and erasing; memories about remembering and forgetting. An archive is objective, something outside. Memory is subjective, something inside, "There is no archive without a place of consignment, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside."(1). An archive can be accessed by choice, but memory has its own life beyond a person's control. Memory is not what happened. What happened is facts. Memory is composed of the emotions, obsession and guilt that come when remembering facts. Memory is always random, accidental, and over or under-dimensional but always real for the one remembering.

The assailant wants to erase the memory of the facts. The victim seeks to forget the emotions but remember the facts. The victim needs a record for the sake of sanity (the wound that establishes the reality of the injury) and to incriminate the tormentor. If memory were about facts the victim would have less trouble, but the feeling of humiliation attached to the trauma and the reliving of the discomfort of the experience prevent it. "My main claim is that it is hard to remember a past humiliation without reliving it... humiliation, I believe, is not just another experience in our life, like say, an embarrassment. It is a formative experience. It forms the way we view ourselves as humiliated person...becomes constitutive of the one sense of who we are" (2). For the victim the task is not to forget but to separate facts from feelings and values, to detach the records from the memory. For the victim the task is to remove the emotion and to value the fact. It is not about forgetting but about losing memory. For the tormentor it is about erasing the facts, even to the paradoxical extreme of producing records and thereby achieving oblivion. At the time of the assault the victim deals with pain and fear; retrospectively, the victim deals with humiliation. In torture or rape the victim's only weapon is her memory. Memory, however forces the victim to relive the past, thereby turning the weapon against herself. Remembering is the power of the victim but memory is her greatest torture.

When the assailant uses photography, he not only devastates his victim but uses the photos to protect himself from the devastation that he produces. By transferring the images in his mind

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into pictures, he uses the pictures to establish a distance from the atrocity he committed. The taking of pictures for his own needs is a predatory action. The vision of horror is never as intense as the experience of horror. The damage is extended even to survive the victim's death. The viewer, looking at an image of the crime, will feel the horror but not the humiliation that the victim continues to revive long after the crime.

Sleeping Beauty

The face in this photograph appears as a mask, a dehumanized, alien image. A person is always a mask (person-perseo-mask). After a violent trauma, however, she becomes only a mask. Having lost her individuality, she has no memories, just as masks have no memories. One of the effects on a victim of intentionally imposed violence or terror is that the victim freezes, and memory is blocked. Life goes on automatically, but it doesn't produce memories; it feeds itself on past memories. The intensity of the negative emotions and memories of the violence outweigh positive experiences. The victim functions

but is separated from life by numbness and paralysis.

Senses dull in order to prevent the feelings elicited by intensely negative stimuli. To be emotionally numb is automatic but also a defense. Animals freeze to disappear in the field. There is a tradition in relating "coma," extreme stillness or incapacity to act, with beauty. This tradition is deeply rooted in popular knowledge. One example of this tradition is the fairytale Sleeping Beauty. In some versions of Sleeping Beauty she wakes up then when the prince kisses her, in other versions, she is in an ice block and awakens when the prince rapes her. Perhaps Sleeping Beauty is in an ice block because she had been raped already.

To defreeze her, freeze her photograph.

(1) Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever, a Freudian impression*. P.11 Translated by Eric Prenowitz. 1995 The Johns Hopkins University Press. Chicago & London.

(2) p130 (Margalit, Avishai. *The Ethics of Memory*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts. London, England. 2002)

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I WAS WHITE
AND HE WAS BLACK

I WAS OLD
AND HE WAS YOUNG

IT WAS MY HOME
HE WORE A GUN

BANG, BANG....
MY BABY IS NOT HERE
BANG, BANG

HE MOVED AWAY THREE WEEKS BEFORE
THE SAME BED
WHERE WE MADE LOVE

I CHOSE TO LIVE
HE DID BY FORCE

I WAS AFRAID
HE WILL SHOOT ME DOWN

I DID RESIST
I DID SAY NO

I DID CONTAIN
STAY STILL

I DO NOT HATE
BUT I JUST WISH...HE HADN'T DONE
WHAT HE DID

BANG, BANG....
BANG, BANG

HE WAS HAPPY
AND I WAS SAD

I DID CRY
AND HE DID RUN

HE IS GONE
BUT I CAN FEEL
YET THE FEAR OF NOT BEING

HE IS IN JAIL
I AM FREE
BUT HE TOOK SOMETHING FROM ME
BANG, BANG....

MY BABY IS NOT HERE
HE WILL NOT BE BACK
BANG, BANG
MY BABY IS NOT HERE
I WILL NOT HAVE ONE
BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG

RAPE NEW YORK A Narrative of a Rape with Comments on a Culture of Predation

“ Bang, Bang, my baby shot me down”,
music by music from Nancy Sinatra, in
Kill Bill Vol.1 by Quentin Tarantino.

Lyrics and song by © Jana Leo April
2005