

Seven

1. The grass was deep green
2. There was a brook
3. You took a walk
4. And as you were sitting there
5. ~~The door opened slowly~~
6. ~~She was standing there~~
7. The band was playing
8. On the other side of the glen
9. When you think about it now
10. ~~You should have told her~~
11. ~~Why didn't they ever drop by?~~
12. ~~There was a swimming pool~~
13. ~~Your mind was racing~~
14. ~~Why didn't you say it?~~
15. ~~You should have said something~~
16. ~~On the other side of the glen~~
17. ~~They stopped calling~~
18. On the other side of the glen
19. You were sitting beside the brook
20. The grass was deep green
21. There was a bandstand
22. There was a bandstand
23. There was a swimming pool
24. There was a glen
25. The sky was grey
26. The music was soft
27. And as you were sitting there
28. Happiness came upon you
29. In the form of a song
30. It was soft
31. Everything blended in
32. The universe was connected
33. And you were a part of it
34. You always thought
35. *I'd like to go back to that glen*
36. Then you thought
37. *I could never go back*

All that you remember

Candice Hopkins on the collaborative work of Marilou Lemmens and Richard Ibghy

Marilou Lemmens and Richard Ibghy have a long-standing interest in narrative, particularly the way experiences are recounted and attain a level of coherency through the form of autobiographies, confessions, memories, or re-enactments. They are equally attuned to the idea that the act of telling stories (particularly those recounted from experience) inevitably embodies a paradox: experience can never be fully translated in its new form as narrative, there is always a slippage, things that can't be accounted for, that are lost, residual, and left behind. It is in their carefully considered re-presentations of these narrative forms — their quite literal “re-instatements” — where the significance of their work lies.

Autobiographical stories the artists collected from personal interviews comprise the source material for the split screen video installation *All that you*



remember (2007). As is apparent in this and other works, they are interested in recountings of everyday life. At the beginning of the twelve-minute loop both screens appear briefly paused, on the wall one blue and one pink monochrome subtly flicker through the light of the projector. Then the voice starts. On the right screen words appear on each new text panel as they are spoken verbatim by a male narrator:

It wasn't anything that they did / Your grandparents found fulfillment / As something that would fulfill you / Maybe it's the thing that you are holding onto / Maybe guitar building isn't part of it at all / You may not / You may not ...

The background of each text panel changes colour and intensity with each new line and over time it becomes clear that the words are tracking, albeit in a non-sensical manner, backwards to ever-earlier points in time. Often it is at the moment when two lines come together in a seemingly linear fashion that any sense of coherence falls away and the narrative that unfolds becomes illogical once again. Meaning is found in the continued oscillation between clarity and temporary confusion, the imperfect and the non-linear.

Walter Benjamin expressed concern for what he saw as the demise of storytelling in an essay aptly titled “The Storyteller” from 1936. Benjamin, observing the first effects on narrative in a fully formed capitalist society, observed the rise of a new kind of communication enabled through early forms of global media, one that was supplanting traditional narrative forms: information. The

central difference between “information” and “story” is that the former comes to us “already ... shot through with explanation.” “It is half the art of storytelling,” he writes, “to keep a story free from explanation as one produces it.”¹ Narrative is able to achieve amplitude that information lacks through the very potential for interpretation. Later, for Roland Barthes, it was this potential for interpretation applied to text through the active role of the reader that would account for his thinking around “Death of the Author,” an essay that proposed a radical reversal of hierarchies between the author and the reader in text, and through this, society.

The artists liken what they do to the tradition of storytelling: the process whereby “experiences — our own or those reported to us—get fictionalized through the very process of their telling.”² In their works, memories, first individual then made collective through their re-presentation in text, voice, and image, create a shifting and cyclical space, which calls attention to how self-knowledge informs the construction of worldviews. In their re-presentation of seemingly ordinary individual stories (whether real or fictional) and those drawn from everyday experiences, their work emphasizes the potential collective and shared dimension of personal narratives.

images Richard Ibgby and Marilou Lemmens, *There was a bandstand*, draft notes (previous) and two-channel video projection (left), 2007.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (NY: Schocken, 1968), 83-110.
2. From a statement by the artists, 2007.

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