

TEST Extra: Tele-li(f/v)e

Walking through the sliding doors of Nut Huis, climbing the stairs, removing my hat, I am met by a steward who asks me if I here for *Test Extra*. After replying 'yes', I am handed a piece of paper – a press release – and am told that I can either follow the arrow sign to my left and go up some stairs, or cross the room ahead of me and follow another arrow, that will lead me down some stairs.

I ignore both these statements and walk forward towards a projection screen where there are four individual videos being screened, each stacked two by two so as to make a square. I fold the paper into four and place it in my pocket. Are the videos live? I have been told they are but I doubt it, you know what these artists are like, flexible with the truth. Apologies reader but I have forgotten which order the videos were in, but from memory I would hazard to guess that I saw in the top hand left corner: Gaby Felten, top hand right corner: Trickster, bottom left hand corner: Ji Young Kang and bottom right hand corner: Ronald Shelfhout.

GABY FELTEN	TRICKSTER
Ji YOUNG KANG	RONALD SHELFHOUT

IMAGE 1

It is clear to see what is happening in each video, apart from Ji Young Kang's, where I am really not sure at what I am looking - some circular, golden thing with a textured surface. My thoughts are disrupted by a 'Bloop Bloop' noise coming from a speaker, followed by a sound of a human voice counting in German. 'Bloop Bloop'; the sound of random conversations; 'Bloop Bloop'... it suddenly dawns on me that the sounds I can here are coming from each individual performance being projected onto the screen. The 'Bloop Bloop' sound indicates a change in which performance's audio can be heard live. With this mystery solved I decide that it is time to see these performances in the flesh.

My next move is to turn around and go up the stairs situated close to where I had entered the building. As I climb the stairs I see the person in front of me is wearing the same coat as me! 'Oh God', I think to myself, well that is globalisation for you. What makes the situation slightly more annoying is that they are a friend of mine. I tap her on the shoulder and say hello, then we both laugh at the awkwardness of the coat situation, and walk into Gaby Felten's room.

Felten offers us a drink, on the proviso that we take it from the table ourselves: a very long wooden table in an equally long thin rectangular room. At each end of the table, there is a square marked out with white tape. Hanging over each square is a camera attached to a tripod. These white squares clearly indicate that this is where the action happens, and also

function as guides for Felten when she is performing.

Mounds is a live performance, in which Felten seems to take on the role of bartender come artist. Her dynamic manner in which she plays her dual roles is fascinating to watch. The other visitors in the room are unsure as to what her performance actually is: have they missed it, should they come back, and are they allowed a drink? Felten's attention to detail adds to the intrigue: a bright red washing up bowl, red dust pan and brush matches her outfit red lipstick, bright blue and red striped playsuit and a pair of red tights set the tone; Felten is the performer and everything in the room is part of the performance. After the drinking, salt is poured from a bag onto the table, where it is played with and manipulated. After which it is swept up with the dustpan and brush and poured – once again – into the bag. After a short interlude the salt is re-poured onto the table, and rolled out like pastry with a bottle of alcohol. Now, words are written out in mirror writing, for the audience who may or may not be watching downstairs. Felten spotted the fact that two of the audience members had the same phone as herself, and asked them to arrange the phones next to her own phone on the table, for the camera to record this moment of non flukiness.

At this point, the work struck me as a social comment on the mundane coincidences of life. It takes an artist such as Felten to point it out to us the pleasure one can experience from having a drink, participating in some art, and the simplistic fact that salt can create beautiful images if one takes the time to look at it with fresh eyes.

I walk next door to see Ronald Shelfhout's performance. Inside a dimly lit room, I immediately see a square taped to the floor. It frames a pile of twigs. Another space on the floor is again enclosed by a similarly shaped square, this time containing a big wheel of string, that actually breaks free from the square. In front of a fireplace, twigs are bundled into a red fabric holder: the holder has straps, and it looks like it can be worn on the back in order to facilitate easy transportation. I can easily picture Shelfhout using this to transport his twigs and tools from his home to Nut Huis: practicality with the hint of eccentricity.

The twigs, arranged so precisely, they remind me of Pieter Bruegel's trees: another man who seems to be obsessed with these spindly things. But the lighting and the whole atmosphere in the room remind me more of a painting by Samuel Palmer: the colours are warm and familiar and there is something romantic about the whole work. The final setup in the room is a camera, and some kind of construction which projects a video onto a screen. However, it is as if a caveman constructed this projector and screen, made as they are from twigs and cloth. Here, Shelfhout is projected sitting crossed legged, facing downwards and looking at his hands, tying twigs together to make a spindly structure. The result is very hypnotic. I am surprised to realise that the camera is filming the video projection, and that this is then being streamed live downstairs. My next surprise, which I experience as I decide to go to the next location, comes when the actual Shelfhout returns to his work, sits in front on his projected self, and begins to imitate the video. They have a dialogue with themselves in silence. Working on the task at hand.

Now, I cross the room and follow the arrow down the stairs. It is very quiet and there is no one around. I wonder if there is a nasty surprise waiting for me. At the bottom of the stairs I see lots of newspaper cones scattered around, and they seem to be pointing towards a mini safe built into the staircase, with its door a little bit open. I decide to open it, just to see if there is anything in there. Cobwebs. I leave the door open. A larger vault door is open in front of me, but a red rope blocks the entry. Another arrow signs directs me where I should go.

Trickster *ON:OFF*. I enter through a vault door. I hear a sound that reminds me of the pink panther theme tune – the part with the triangle. But over this, a voice randomly counts numbers in various languages. The room is bright yellow. The walls are in fact safety deposit boxes. All numbered. I sit in the middle of the room. To my left I see a performer dressed in high-heeled shoes, all in black and wearing a glitzy gold wig that covers her face, moving slowly, side stepping around the perimeter of the room. In her hands she holds a wooden block with a small round hole in the middle. Grasping the block with both hands she carries on stepping and then, in an almost childlike impulse, one of her fingers pokes through the whole, and moves it round in a circular motion.

A plot for a Kafkaesque novel springs to mind. Three office workers have to stay and work late for some company. Unfortunately, the company goes into liquidation over night and the owners run away. The workers are stuck in the building, unable to leave. Over time have gone rogue. Left to play – with only the remaining office equipment – and dress up – with only the clothes they were wearing and a left over gym kit that they would have changed into after work. They are bored trying to entertain themselves, and so it is time to perform for an audience, via a video camera. As the performer walks, the camera that they pass records their image: this is then projected live into the room, on a screen directly in front of me. Two more performers follow her, in a clockwise motion round the room. As the next passes the camera, their image is interrupted by a live performer passing in front of the screen. A layer of live performance on top of real time capturing and projecting. The performers play with this device: the performer being recorded by the camera interacts with another standing in front of the projected image, or sometimes with a third, walking behind the projector screen and hiding from the audience. *ON:OFF* likes to play with objects. But this is not a chaotic performance: its actors are in control of what is happening: we are watching them become free in this institutionalised environment.

I leave the vault and head towards a new sound. It sounds like it is coming from a door that is locked, then I see that on the other side of the corridor there is an open door, and that is where the sound is coming from. Ji Young Kang is standing behind a table that is full of equipment. She is concentrating hard, placing her hand on a solid, circular, brass shape, which is moving up and down very fast on top of a big black box. At one point, a silver metal rod is placed on top of it. Technically I have no idea what is happening. But the sound is incredible.

Her hands seem to be vibrating from the force of the golden object on the box, or is she moving them up and down tapping it with her fingers? I wonder why I decided to sit so far away from the performer. As I stare and listen it reminds me of a bongo type drum being played, rhythmic with a metal echo. The sound is soft but it is building, increasing in speed. The image of a bongo transforms into a plane propeller, one that is spinning faster and faster it reminds me of the sound one would hear when the blades cut through the air. Now the sound becomes slower, slower and slower. Then it builds up again, with the sound of a knife being sharpened with a sharpener, this sound and image take over. These sounds are physical: they conjured up strong images in my imagination. The sound is hypnotic and meditative, yet highly industrial.

‘Bloop Bloop’

Back in the projection / bar area.

I try to think of the event a whole. Streaming the performances live is an interesting idea: it enables the audience to catch glimpses of what is happening as they move through the transitional space of building which was the bar. The movement created though this choice is an endless loop.

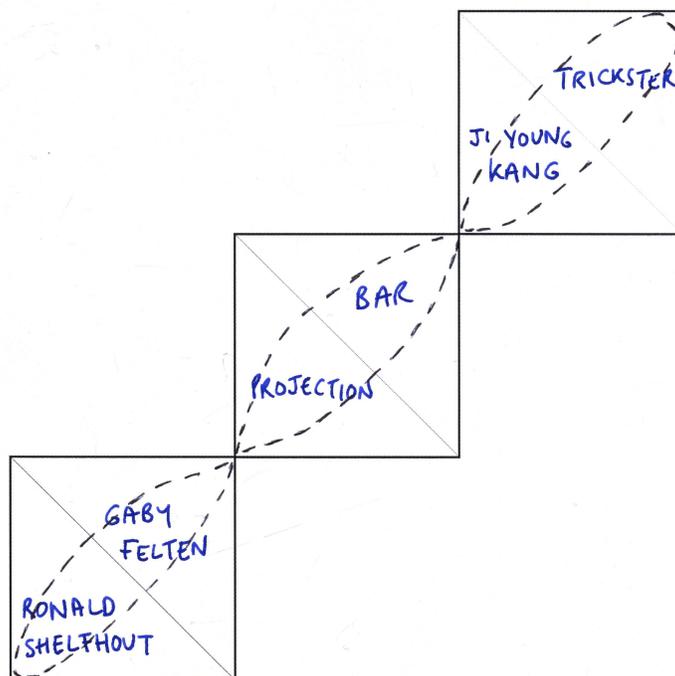


IMAGE 2

As the cameras are directed only towards the performances, they do not leave the audience feeling that we, as visitors, are being monitored or spied upon. Instead, they produce a new perspective, where the audience can reflect on how these pieces might connect as a whole, or not at all.