



Zoë Jaremus * Terence Koh * Deirdre Logue * Elizabeth Milton
* Ryan Park * Jon Sasaki * Rebekka Unrau

"Boredom becomes the only proper occupation, since it provides a kind of guarantee that one is, so to speak, still in control of one's existence... Shrouded in tristezza, one flirts with ideas that even become quite respectable in the process, and one considers various projects that, for no reason, pretend to be serious."

- Siegfried Kracauer, *Boredom* (1924)

THIS IS A STORY... ONE WE ALL KNOW ALL TOO WELL. THIS IS A STORY THAT GOES NOWHERE, OR IN TRUTH IS ACTUALLY A STORY OF GOING NOWHERE, OF NOT GOING; A STORY OF TRYING TO LEAVE, AND OF FAILING. I'VE GOT THESE SEVEN OTHERS HERE WITH ME, AND TOGETHER THE EIGHT OF US (ALONG WITH YOU TOO, WE SUPPOSE) HAVE FELT THE SAME WAY FOR SOME TIME NOW, TRAPPED. OR MAYBE IT'S A FEELING OF BOREDOM MORE SO THAN OF BEING TRAPPED. IT'S A FAST-PACED WORLD OUT THERE, BUT HOW IS IT WE ALL STILL FEEL SO SLUGGISH? SO UNWILLING TO ADAPT? SO EAGER FOR SOMETHING; FOR ANYTHING BUT THIS. NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY, THIS FEELING PERSISTS. THIS NEED TO BE ANYWHERE BUT HERE.

The premise of this exhibition is to explore how artists can offer insight into the universal condition of cabin fever. Are these artists reveling in its throes, or are they fighting boredom with seemingly inane gestures? The work presented here provide hints into the psyche of boredom, and the resultant attempts at ever-possible yet seemingly elusive fulfillment. Is it feasible to satiate such undulating hunger derived from being nowhere by creating your own somewhere? Can the varying symptoms of cabin fever be diagnosed? How do you pinpoint ennui? The seven artists whose work is included in this exhibition offer suggestions and further problems in creating their own antidotes to cabin fever -- this unquantifiable ailment from which have all felt beleaguered by at some time or another.

"On a sunny afternoon when everyone is outside, one would do best to hang about in the train station or, better yet, to stay at home, draw the curtains, and surrender oneself to one's boredom on the sofa." - Kracauer

SO WE SPEND TIME INSIDE. WE IGNORE THE BUSY-BODY MEANDERING OF 'OUT THERE' AND PREFER TO OCCUPY OURSELVES WITH EVERYTHING GOING ON 'IN HERE.' AND SO WE GO INWARD. WE COUNT ON OURSELVES, ALONE, AND ALONE WE BEGIN COUNTING EVERYTHING ... LITTLE PIECES OF PAPER, BOOKS AND CONSTELLATIONS, SAD SONGS AND DANCE STEPS, DAREDEVIL ROUTINES AND PHYSICAL (IM)POSSIBILITIES, ABOVE ALL WE COUNT EXIT STRATEGIES.

Rough Count (2006 - ongoing), a video installation by **Deirdre Logue**, takes the form of multiple monitors in a grid all displaying the same thing: the artist counting confetti. There's likely some joke in here about there never being anything on TV, as usual. But really, at the heart of this work is the passing of time, and the truth that doing nothing is certainly just as complicated as any other activity; that it can be just as fulfilling as doing something.

Whereas **Terence Koh's** video that is simply titled after the length of his performance, *4'27"* (2007), acts as a desperate incantation perhaps brought about by being bored. The black and white video of the artist, prancing and sashaying nude, yet adorned with long black freight wig and thigh-high black vinyl boots, redirects the viewer's understanding that to be with ennui one must be without, while in fact in this video performance Koh most certainly is in possession of: his own lyrical gestures; an environment informed by the void, but in a reversal of received wisdom can also act as a space plagued with endless possibilities; and of course he has our attention.

A counter point to Koh's single video work is the collection of four titles by **Jon Sasaki**, *24 lbs* (2006), *Fireworks* (2006), *The Destination and the Journey* (2007), and *Ladder Climb* (2006). Individually these videos offer minute glimpses into the acts of a man on the brink. Together they tell a short story full of attempts at subverting urban despair. The artist steals from Looney Tunes iconography (the ever-present anvil waiting to be dropped on the unsuspecting character), but is further informed by conceptual strategies that in fact could read formally: the flare of a firework, the lines in a ladder attempting the vertical without structural support, and intersecting markers of a crosshatched roadmap.

What Kracauer and his fellow theorist Walter Benjamin have pinpointed as the weary world of mass consumption is echoed in **Elizabeth Milton's** video installation, *The Actor Cries* (2005). The artist presents a solitary figure emoting in response to the various melodramatic trappings of a life of modernity. A trained actor performs her routine while the musical scores from so many TV shows and Hollywood movies we've all reacted to at some time in our voracious and inconspicuous devouring of media (past, present, and future!) rings out; her affected anguish hilariously resonating in our collective sighs.

A frustration of a different sort is personified in the photographic series, *Variations on incomplete firsts* (2008) by **Ryan Park**, which documents the sixty different permutations possible while attempting to close his hands. In this time of advanced communication and undeniable as well as inalienable access to information like never before, we begin to understand such rudimentary gestures in terms of a perplexing semaphore. If we don't leave our homes, perhaps the only way to communicate may be digitally ... the new digitally that is, think monkeys in space not the opposable thumbs which separate us from them ... (think: text message, email, blog, and so on and so forth), and if our thumbs are all a jumble, then how will our concerns and thoughts sprouted from boredom ever be shared? Underlining this imposed disconnect is the fact that Park has impeded his own attempts at the closed fist, forcibly contorting his fingers and thumbs with the help of string and elastic bands so that he can't actually carry out his own directive.

Once we spend enough time inside, wittingly and not, our domestic environments begin to dictate our actions. In her series *InnerSpace (Bedroom)* **Rebekka Unrau** creates a multitude of perspectives derived from the confines of her home. This series of images calls attention to ideas of micro and macro -- what we so often seek outside of our immediate environment we can actually find closer to home. Her forts made from textbooks and CD cases, or her planetary orbs and constellations along with cocoons and nests out of tinfoil and yarn offer different interpretations of safety, of sanctuary, but also of imaginarily roaming.

The final stage in the exhibit / the story, the punctuation at the end of this journey to nowhere, is the untitled photograph by Zoë Jarmus from her series, *Strange and Awkward Conversations*. In this series the artist inserts herself into helpless situations where she (in character) is so overwhelmed by the modern world that collapse is the only possible recourse. This fuzzy image of the artist crawling into a suitcase on the living room floor positions the argument around boredom in terms of escapism. Though, not unlike boredom, this manifestation of refusal can also be seen as a strategy against a society with overbearing expectations.

"If one were never bored, one would presumably not really be present at all and would thus be merely one more object of boredom ..." - Kracauer

IT'S THIS FEELING I CAN'T SHAKE. I KNOW THERE IS SO MUCH TO DO AND SO MANY PLACES TO GO; I CAN'T HELP BUT KNOW. THAT KNOWLEDGE STILL ISN'T ENOUGH FOR ME TO ACTUALLY LEAVE THE HOUSE THOUGH.

Given the emphasis society now places on digital social networks, instant access to information via email, twitter, and Google, as well as socially-accepted and medically-endorsed dependencies on mood elevators and other anxiety-squelching antidotes, it is important to consider alternative methods in dealing with feelings of isolation ... perhaps the key is absurdity after all. However, if we consider the theories around boredom as a derivative of modern life, we can begin to understand and appreciate that these artists, in their own ways, are in fact rebelling against the mainstream.

The ways in which these artists choose to embrace cabin fever vary: some take pleasure in the smaller things, as is the case with Logue who counts confetti. While other artists create a world of their own where what was mundane is transformed into the fantastic as seen in the photographic tableaux by Unrau who uses her bedroom and all of its holdings as her source material. Some try daring themselves into excitement, like Sasaki with his would-be terrifying exercises in performance captured on video. Sometimes it boils down to the physical rejection of accepted expectations, which is apparent in Park's photo project categorizing the manipulations of his fists. This may lead to conversations with yourself as is the case with both Koh's evocative and privately staged performance video and Milton's over the top video portrait of celluloid despair. What we all want to do once the cabin fever sets in is escape, and this is made apparent in Jaremus' poignant self-portrait.

"Eventually one becomes content to do nothing more than be with oneself, without knowing what one actually should be doing... And in ecstasy you name what you have always lacked: the great passion." - Kracauer

Or maybe the solution requires activity and making do with your surroundings. The exhibited artists create situations within their environments and they perform tasks far more ridiculous and seemingly meaningless than anything that could ever be manifest out of the mind-bending neuroses of cabin fever. Performance, whether the body is center-stage or even absent, is the primary vehicle for curing cabin fever. These artistic investigations through mobility, sex, architecture, and even unabashed optimism may just be what we've all been looking for ... the results of cabin fever may just be the cure!

J.J. Kegan McFadden
Director / Curator

EXHIBITION

Saturday 30 October – Saturday 11 December 2010

OPENING RECEPTION

Saturday 30 September * 7PM

STIR CRAZY PANEL DISCUSSION

3PM Sunday 31 October

CURATOR'S TOURS

Thursday 18 November ☀ 6PM

Saturday 11 December * 3PM

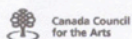
PLATFORM

J.J. Kegan McFadden, Director / Curator
Larry Glawson, Administrative Coordinator
Natasha Peterson, Outreach Coordinator
Robert Taite, Technician
Alexis Lagimodière-Grisé, Intern

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- J.J.K.McF



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