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JESSIE SCOTT

Timepiece – Simone Hine at Kings

Posted on October 25, 2011 by JESSIE SCOTT

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By **Jessie Scott**



Simone Hine's recent [2-day only performance at Kings ARI](#) was a surreal and mesmerising surprise. Taking up all three gallery spaces, the first thing encountered was a large video projection of a blue sky with fluffy clouds, angled against the rear left corner of the gallery, so that it greeted you square-on as you entered from the front right corner. The stillness of this image was only occasionally broken by projectiles tracing small arcs across the

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screen. Moving to the central gallery, the penny dropped and you realised what and where those projectiles were emanating from.

Hine had built a fully enclosed antechamber in the centre of Kings, inside of which she performed. Costumed and made up in immaculate '50s style, Hine sat at a desk tapping unseen words on an old typewriter. A tall stack of loose leaf paper sat oppressively to the right of her. A window with a view to what, it was now clear, was the same blue sky image being relayed to the front gallery, was visible behind her. Occasionally her rhythmic typing was interrupted; she would furrow her brow at some perceived error or dissatisfaction, pull out the page, screw it into a ball, turn to her right, and throw it out the window.

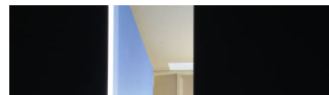
Light spilled out into the dark gallery from vertical cutaway sections at the rear of the installation. Through these you could view the void between the back of the constructed 'room' and the painted-on blue sky. The whole was enclosed, and over the course of the performance, a pile of screwed up pages amassed in the gap.

In the small 'black box' space at the back of Kings, Hine had installed a weathered, institutional-looking clock. Hung high on the wall, it was picked out of the darkness by a single, strong spot light: a gloomy beacon.



Installation Details, Timepiece by Simone Hine 2010

Hine describes her work as an exploration "of the construction of cinematic time", and the motifs and trappings of cinema certainly abound—from the 16:9 frame through which you viewed her performance (Hine herself placed perfectly on the golden mean)—to the brooding, Hitchcock-ian set-dressing. The three separate installations, as images, could also be understood as mise-en-scene. Each sub-installation formed a separate edit in a sequence: effectively a re-inflation of the space and time compressed in film editing. The clock in the back gallery was a very literal presence of time, but it's what you might call an unreliable narrator. It's a film deceit—continually marking time, but in a realm untethered to ours or hers—it will only tell time when the film sequence is reconstructed. The accumulation of the paper in the hidden void space was the only reliable evidence of actual time – the only thing outside the illusion.

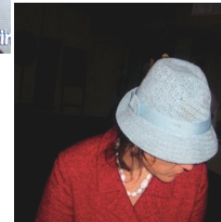
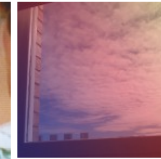
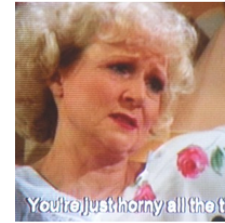


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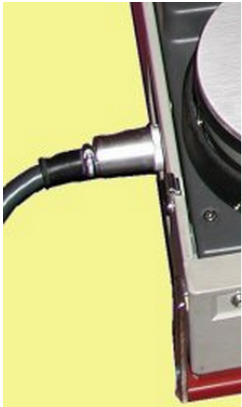
Installation Detail, *Timepiece* by Simone Hine 2010

There was a very photographic sensibility to the manner in which Hine had created this permanent film moment, and the elaborate construction of a frame inherently points to an interest in what happens outside of it, what happens when the camera moves away. Like Julian Rosefeldt's recent *American Night* at ACMI, *Timepiece* posited cinema as a parallel dimension. Indirectly echoing concepts of the 'dreaming', or of Ancient Greek epic poetry, it configures cinema as a realm where people, actions, stories exist independently: where the narrative precedes and continues beyond what is captured in our frames; as realms activated through various acts of storytelling.

It also brought to mind the genre of feminist, and other 're-imaginings' (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Mists of Avalon*), whereby lesser (or just female, and therefore neglected) characters of famous literature or history are fleshed out and given starring roles in new stories. A friend commented after viewing the piece that it made her think of all the women on *Mad Men* whose careers were locked in stasis between their fledgling ambition, and society's limits and expectations of them. And it is hard to avoid a feminist reading of the work, viewed through this lens – regardless of the artist's intentions. The evocation of the frustrated, proto-feminist, professional woman—trapped in a repetitive performance, moving but going nowhere, whether she be secretary, writer, or boss—is highly loaded.

The performance, although simple and repetitive in one sense, must be recognised for its stamina, nuance, and Hine's ability to create a hypnotic rhythm, without making the action seem completely rote. In fact, her performance, while subtle, was charged with emotion – was it tension? Self-consciousness? Concentration? Frustration? The emotions of the durational performer and the emotions of the performance subtly bled together in disconcerting but effective ways.

Although evoking all the concentrated detail of a film still, both the illusion and the construction of the illusion were in evidence in *Time Piece*. The 'room' at the centre was like a Tardis, or like Mary Poppins' carpet bag. It was a portal to an infinite world, one nonetheless bound by the prosaic, real-world constraints of wood and plaster, whose outside bore no relationship to its inside. Hine's performance itself danced close to the edge of breaking character – occasionally she would look up and peer out of the viewing frame, but it was unclear whether she was "seeing" us, the audience. A tension was thus established between concealing and revealing, also demonstrated in *Rooms*



ce, the audience's attention was also established between concealing and revealing, also demonstrated in *Rooms*, a collection of Hines' work shown at 45 downstairs in June 2010, which featured multiple built installations, quasi-film sets, and multiple layers of quasi-film narrative. But it has to be said, every aspect of this show felt like it had been refined and extended from that point.



*Installation details from **No Use Crying**, exhibited as part of **Rooms** by Simone Hine 2010*

Video practitioners who make work about cinema are in a tricky situation: how to adequately express cinematic experiences with a medium which, in counterpoint to film, is inherently un-seductive and non-illusionistic. The logistical challenges of trying to approach cinema as a one-man band can lead to work that either looks flimsy by comparison, or, overly infatuated – unable to get beyond replication to critique. Hine's achievement is in re-engaging the multi-disciplinary nature of cinema, which takes in performance, photography, lighting, costume, narrative—and indeed, mise en scene—without getting in over her head (although she may disagree with me on that!) And without falling into the trap of a perfunctory, theory-driven intellectual exercise, every part of the show seemed focused and clear. Hine created a very full experience with *Time Piece*, which stimulated intellect, emotion, curiosity and wonder, and it will be exciting to see where her work goes from what seems like a very high water mark.

All images supplied by [Simone Hine](#).

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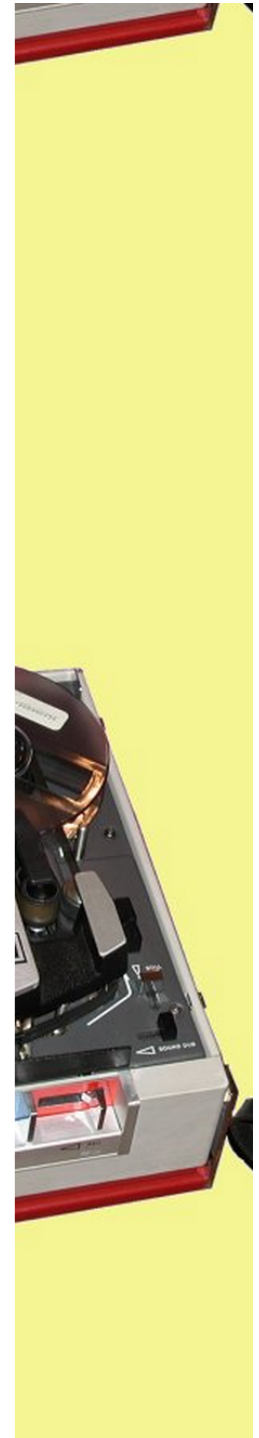
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3 thoughts on “Timepiece – Simone Hine at Kings”



EUGENIA LIM says:
October 25, 2011 at 10:13 am

Hear hear. A thorough and thoughtful piece on an engaging work. I was mesmerised by Simone's work which was so beautifully realised. The dialogue across rooms and darkness between her performance and the 'timepiece' and the projected video was very poetic. I felt like I had journeyed back in time, even though the I knew I was in the hands of an artist/installation that felt very assured and contemporary.

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JESSIE SCOTT says:
October 25, 2011 at 8:59 pm

Was a pleasure to write it 😊 and, I totally agree with your description.

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