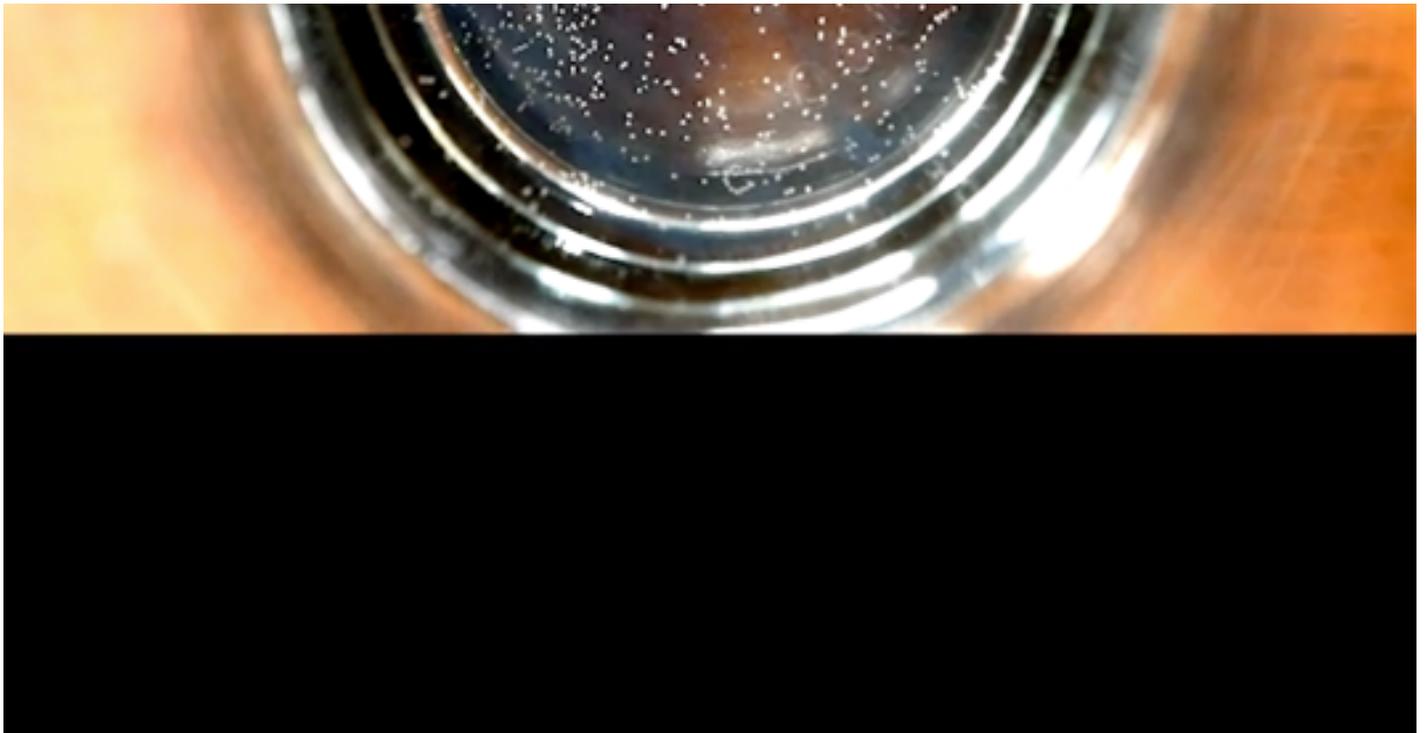


ANTIPHON  
*by Big Window*

*on Kara Rooney's*  
CURRENTS (2020)

March 1 – March 31, 2022



Kara Rooney, *Currents*, 2020 (still).

Image description: An image is split in half horizontally, on the top there is a vessel of water sitting on a brown surface, on the bottom there is a black screen.

BIG WINDOW

*Currents* (2020) is a collaborative video work by Kara Rooney and musician Fausto Palma that incorporates visual, sonic, and spoken word elements in response to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Made about – and from within – the enduring global pandemic, *Currents* grapples with the complex physical, emotional, and psychological realities of a collective experience, revealing how, during times of dilemma, the personal is inextricably part of the universal. This is most acute when Rooney comments “Made a cup of coffee, stared out the window, and got to work listening to the news” and continues, “The only thing that makes me feel human.”

Using a split-screen and abstracted imagery of various clear liquids and inks, *Currents* incorporates visual and auditory components that tend towards the figurative, even while the spoken elements evolve into the intelligible. Take for instance the syncopated breathing that appears in the first half of the work: evocative of feelings both exasperated and meditative, the staccato inhalations can be sinister and calming in equal measure, a fitting metaphor for the emotional oscillations one goes through while attempting to enact routine in the face of alarming change. The sources for Rooney’s words further this notion. With the script comprising the artist’s own writing woven together with excerpts from philosophical texts by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Luc Nancy, and Plato, one’s intimate thoughts are given the same billing as historical theorem, eliminating distinction between the particular and the general.

The second portion of *Currents* crescendos in a climactic ending in which indications of a numeric binary fall apart. The echoing chant of “one to one to one” transitions into a relational anomaly in which “one and one” is simultaneously “one” and “two” as the speaker’s voice compounds upon itself. Sidestepping outdated notions of resolution, Rooney’s work instead offers solace through its relatability: poetic words maneuver in and out of musical accompaniment and composed images to create an encompassing sensation that is familiar, even while pointing to the unknowable.

## Transcript

What if I lit things up  
In a fit of fire?  
Sliding, tumbling,  
A movement towards the inevitable  
Who'd be left standing?

[Series of exhalations in background]

Seeing is a reflexivity of the body  
Which is experienced by means of touch.

[Multi-tonal humming]

Contagion, collapse, release.  
The body is that which spaces space.

I woke up this morning like always since I've been here.  
Made a cup of coffee, stared out the window, and got to work listening to the news.  
Nothing new, nothing profound, just routine:  
The only thing that makes me feel human.

[Distant music starts playing]

Records of war, flashbacks. Soft, safe.  
Up is down, without logic or anchor.  
I wonder how long I've been here.

[Coupling, couple, couple, couple, couple, couple...]

Presence is as perception is.

[-ing, -ing, -ing, -ing...]

They argue that in late-stage democracy there is no kowtowing to authority, let alone to political experience or expertise.  
The very rich come under attack as inequality becomes increasingly intolerable.  
Patriarchy is also dismantled, along with family hierarchies.  
Animals are regarded as equal to humans.  
The rich mingle freely with the poor in the streets, and try to blend in.  
The foreigner is equal to the citizen.  
And it is when a democracy has ripened as fully as this, Plato argues, that a would-be tyrant will often seize his moment.

[Humming and distant music]

They say that smell is the strongest trigger of memory.  
What does your history smell like?

[Echoed] What we are looking for in the photographs is not an image, it is an access.

Collective spaces touch, refrain from marginal risk.  
Jurisdiction, control, borderlands.  
I hear them everywhere.  
One to one to one.  
One is one [echo: one].

[One and...two ands...one to one ands...two is...and one was...]