

SUNDAY SCHOOL #4
HELENA HUNTER:
REFERRAL

LENS



DAM PROJECTS

Sunday School #4

Helena Hunter: Referral

29 March 2015, A_SPACE, 38 Pentonville Road, 2 - 8pm

For the fourth exhibition in DAM PROJECTS' Sunday School series London-based artist Helena Hunter presents 'Referral'.

'Referral' is a fictional narrative created by Hunter in which performance artist, Kym Carson is referred to the 'Optical Institute' as she can no longer distinguish between what is objective and subjective in the world, and believes the 'institute' has rendered her body an object. Comprised of text, sculptural objects and video the exhibition documents and presents the tests and referrals that Carson is subjected to by the Institute.

The presentation of the work plays with museological and exhibition display methods, and is concerned with the nature of looking and seeing; continuing Hunter's ongoing interest in the ocular. At its core 'Referral' alludes to Hunter's own position and relationship to performance and the institute, and operates as a performed narrative of sorts.

DAM PROJECTS is a curatorial collective founded by Daniella Rose King, Amanprit Sandhu and Morgan Quaintance. Inclusive and anti-elitist, the collective use temporary exhibitions and events to support emerging, underexposed and unorthodox artists, art scenes, discourses and debates.

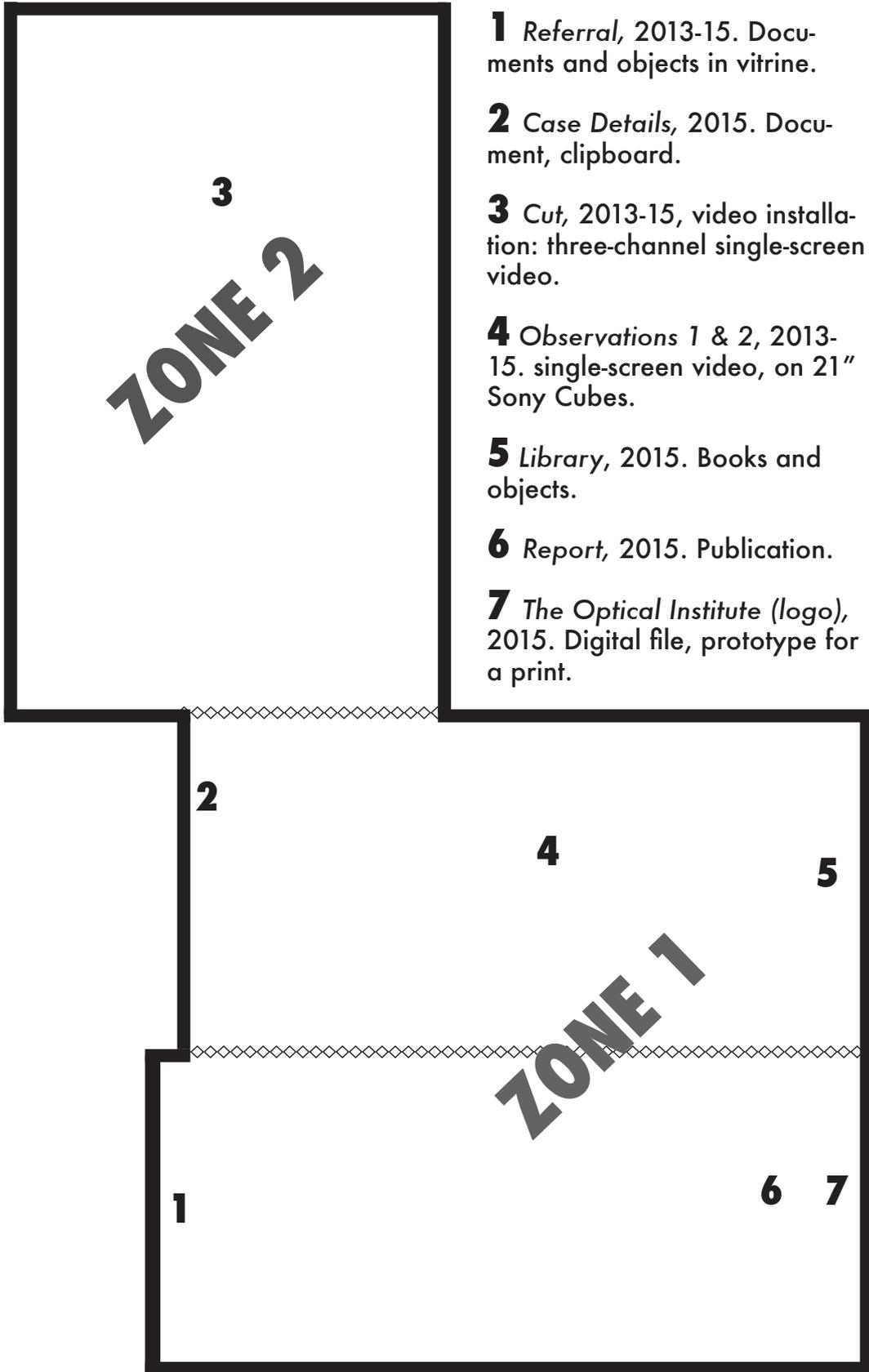
Sunday School consists of 12 one-day exhibitions running from Nov 2014 - Nov 2015. Featuring 6 solo shows from recent UK art school graduates and 6 exhibitions looking at emerging international art scenes.

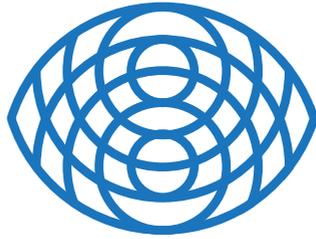
We would like to thank Metal, Queen Mary University of London and The British Optical Association Museum for their support.

A_SPACE



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**ARTS COUNCIL
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THE OPTICAL INSTITUTE

Pupil Name: Kym Carson
Pupil Number: 03643849385/KC

This report contains documentation for the assessment of the pupil Kym Carson and her progress on The Optical Institute Training Programme.

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9A Glower Street
London
N20 6PB

The Optical Institute
121 Matiasma Avenue
London
SE1 7PB

Dear Dr. Handley,

My name is Kym Carson and I am currently studying a Masters at The Institute of Fine Arts. I have developed a problem with my vision that I believe coincided with starting my studies. I am referring myself to The Optical Institute as I would like to correct this problem. I would like to start the Optical Institute training programme next week. Do let me know if this is possible.

Many Thanks Kym Carson.



THE OPTICAL INSTITUTE
121 Matiasma Avenue,
London, SE1 7PB
Tel: 020 7261 1196

Kym Carson
9A Glower Street
London
N20 6PB

Re: Referral
Reference Number: 03643849385/KC

Dear Ms. Carson,

Thank you for your recent letter. Prior to admission on the Optical Training Programme it is advised that you visit the institute for a preliminary interview.

I have booked you an appointment on Weds 28th August at 14.00. Please arrive promptly and bring with you the reference number detailed on this letter.

Following the interview you will be asked to participate in a number of tests over forthcoming coming months.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Handley
Bsc. MSc. HSST. PTP. STP. AHCS.

Interviewee	03643849385/KC	Date	28th August 2013	
Interviewer	DR. HANDLEY	Time	14.00	Location G.25

DR. H: In light of your recent referral to The Institute, can you recall the first instance that you noticed a problem with your eyes?

KC: Yes, I was at an art exhibition.

DR. H: Can you tell me about the exhibition?

KC: I can't remember the name of the artist, but there were structures made of metal and white spherical forms.

DR. H: What were you doing when you noticed the problem with your eyes?

KC: I was looking at a white spherical object, I stood facing it, the sunlight was shining in through the window and onto the surface of the sphere...

DR. H: Please continue, feel free to include any details you wish, even if they feel insignificant.

KC: The sculpture looked like a white eyeball staring back at me. As I observed it I felt faint and stumbled, there was nothing to hold onto. I dropped the bag I was carrying and my books fell out, I tried to cling onto them to hold myself together. I couldn't make sense of the situation.

DR. H: Can you remember what books you were carrying that day?

KC: I can't remember the authors or the titles but they were big historical and theoretical books about art.

DR. H: Tell me what happened after you picked up the books.

KC: I looked at the spherical object and the other things in the exhibition, I couldn't make sense of all the forms and shapes, they just moved in front of my eyes, I felt dizzy. I remember bumping into the public barrier around the object. I could hear people talking about how things looked, how they were mounted and arranged, I felt ill.

/cont.



DR. H: Can you describe how you 'felt ill'?

KC: I felt nauseous, a bit numb, kind of empty and tired, my body ached a bit.

DR. H: Was there anything else about your body that you noticed?

KC: I don't think so...

DR. H: Describe anything you recall.

KC: It's really embarrassing...

DR. H: Please continue

KC: I couldn't feel anything...down there.

Pupil points to pelvic area with left hand

DR. H: Please describe this in more detail.

KC: It was numb, all the blood had drained away like pins and needles. I felt the same in my chest here.

Pupil places right hand above left breast

DR. H: What did you do next?

KC: I went to the toilet and locked myself in a cubicle.

DR. H: Continue.

KC: I started rubbing my body on the walls of the toilet...the metal door handle and the toilet roll holder, I rubbed myself against them...

DR. H: What happened next?

KC: The feeling came back, I washed my hands and I left the toilet. I felt hot and returned to the white sphere and looked at it again. I noticed my left eye drifting, the image in my eyes separated, I started to see double.

DR. H: Thank you Kym, this will conclude our interview for today.





THE OPTICAL INSTITUTE
Case Details

Pupil's name KYM CARSON Male Female
 Pupil number 03643849385/KC Case number 20098190BINOP

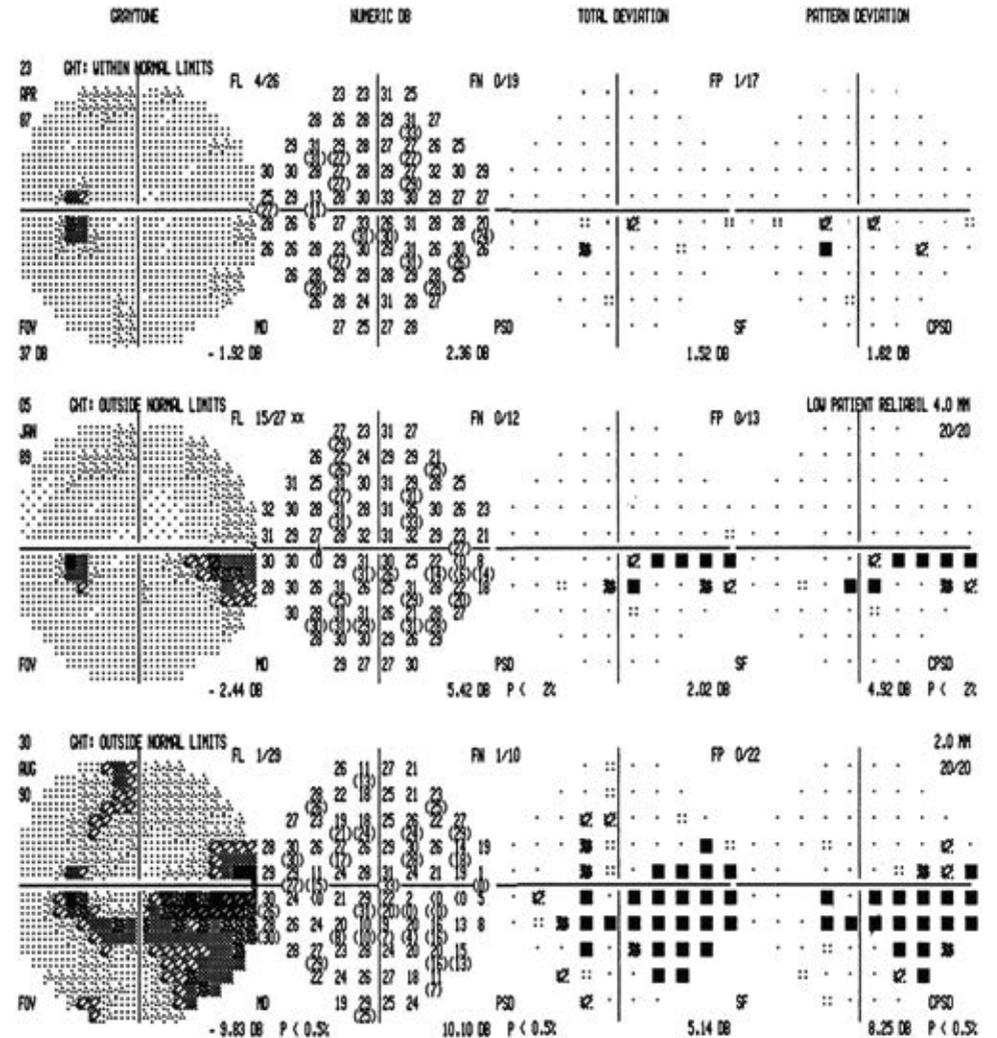
Diagnosis	Binoptic vision: - The left eye is significantly weaker than the right - Subjective and objective responses to stimuli are separated and cannot be considered in tandem
Background	- The pupil currently studies at the Institute of Fine Arts - Prior to her studies she was as a performance artist - Her condition was triggered by a visit to an art exhibition
Symptoms	The pupil perceives: - Invisible forces and frameworks acting upon her - Her body being rendered an object - Her physical presence in the institute as a perversion
Initial Tests	Visual Field: - The pupil was shown a film from the Optical Institute Archives. The film depicts the dissection of an eyeball - The images appearing in her left and right eye are monitored and visually reconstructed for observation Observational Unit: - The pupil was placed in solitary confinement within the observation unit - Her movements are recorded for examination purposes
Training requested:	The pupil will be admitted to the Optical Training Programme that will run alongside her studies at The Institute of Fine Arts. An examination will be conducted and documentation compiled in a report
Examiner	Examiner name <u>DR HANDLEY</u> Examiner signature <u><i>Dr. Handley</i></u>



The Optical Institute, 121 Matiasma Avenue, London, SE1 7PB Directors: Dr. N. Handley & Dr. C. Holden
 The Optical Institute is a registered charity number 780654

Visual Field

The pupil is shown a film from the Optical Institute Archives. The film depicts the dissection of an eyeball. The images appearing in her left and right eye are monitored and visually reconstructed for observation. Her visual field and emotional register are measured.



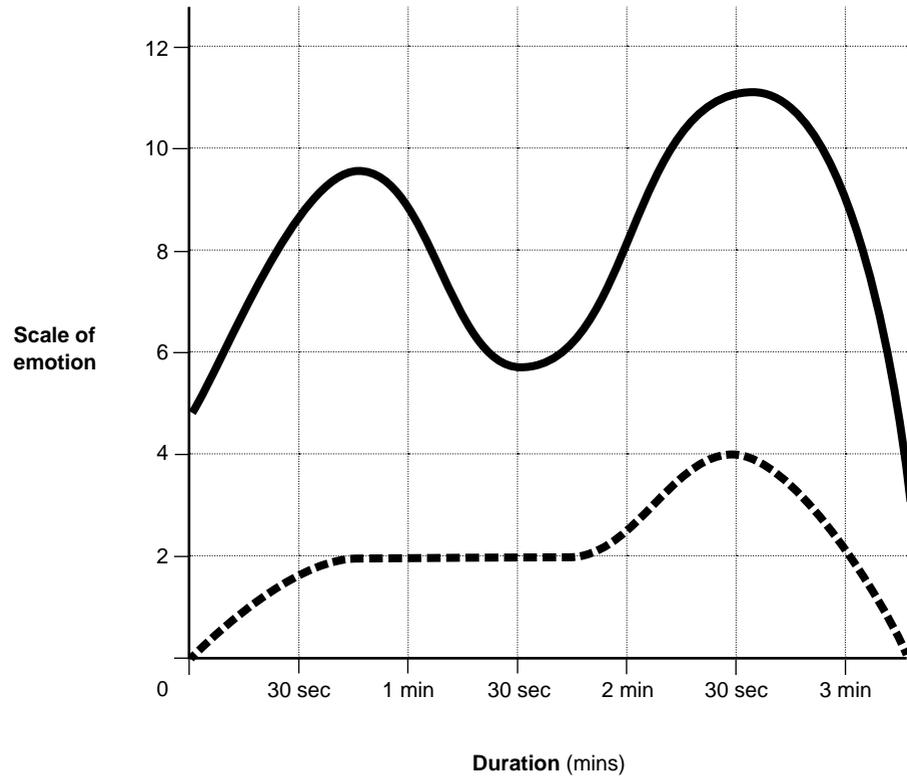
PROBABILITY SYMBOLS
 :: P < 5%
 1/2 P < 2%
 3/8 P < 1%
 ■ P < 0.5%



Observational Unit

*The pupil is placed in solitary confinement within the observation unit.
Her movements are recorded for examination purposes.*

Scale of Emotion



Kym Carson 

Optimal response 



Date: 2nd September 2013
Time: 10.00-18.00
Duration: 8hrs
Room: OB.265

The pupil wears a pair of droopy-eye glasses, a blue sequin dress and black high-heeled shoes. She plays popular music and dances to a compilation of songs that all contain the word 'eyes'. As she dances, the eyes bounce in and out of their sockets.



Date: 3rd September 2013
Time: 10.00-18.00
Duration: 8hrs
Room: OB.265

The pupil wears a red sequin dress and black high-heeled shoes. She dances, kisses, holds and rubs herself on the white wall. Finally she resorts to whipping the wall marking the white surface with black stripes.





Reading and writing

The pupil was asked to select two texts from the Optical Institute Library. Focusing on one chapter from each book, she was directed to critically read and write a short summary.

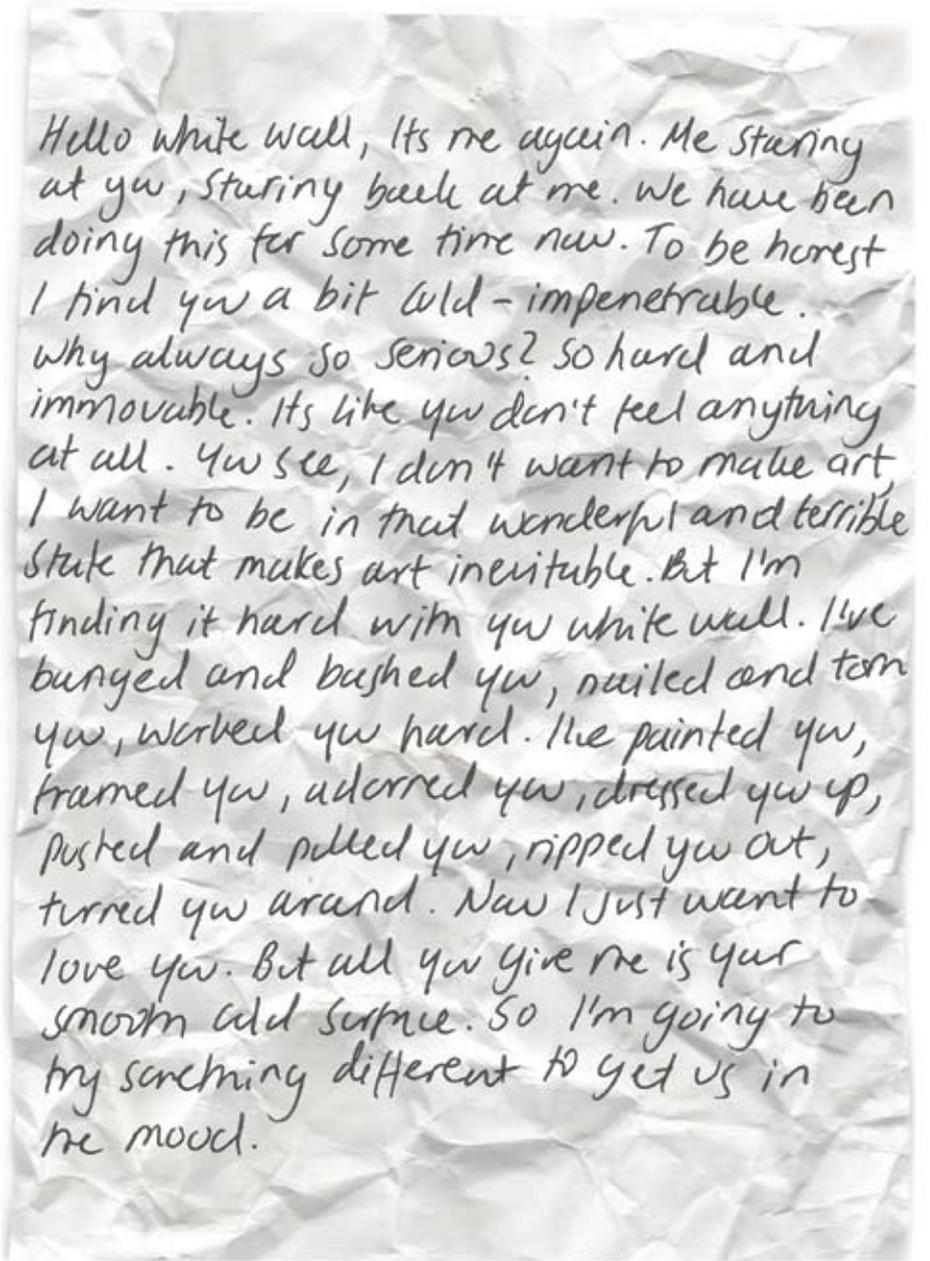
Text 1: James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back*, (Florida: Harvest, 1997) 17-46

Elkins contests the idea that looking can ever be objective or disinterested through analysis of his subjective reading of art works and photographs. He highlights how forms of medical or scientific looking can be violent and objectifying. He makes reference to a photograph of a eunuch in a medical journal from the 19th century that is accompanied by a doctor's report. In the report the doctor meticulously describes how orgasm can be stimulated in the eunuch by inserting the finger into the anus. Elkins explains how this kind of looking turns the 'human being into a naked, shivering example of a medical condition' and renders the person an object.

Elkins explains that looking is about seeing and being seen and proposes that the observer and the 'object' being observed are inextricably linked by a complex set of relations. He compares looking to a hall of mirrors, highlighting the multiple points of view that can exist within one person or that could be attributed the same object by different people. In conclusion he states that objects and observers are not fixed 'the beholder is many beholders and the object is many objects, meaning goes in both directions'. He proposes a new vocabulary for seeing describing 'observer objects' and 'object observers' where the subject and the object are fused together.

Text 2: Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer, On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001) 1-24

Crary insists that to understand vision and its historical construction we should not look at works of art or representation, but at the observing subject. He analyses observational devices in the 1850's such as the camera obscura and the stereoscope, and describes how these scientific and social practices initiated a 'transformation in the nature of visibility.' Crary explains how the camera obscura presented the observer with an 'objective and scientific truth'. When this was supplanted by the stereoscope it opened up alternative ways of scientifically presenting and understanding vision, bringing objective truth into question. This created a new subjectivity for the observer that he likens to the stereoscope, a device that people held close to their bodies to look into, that created an illusion of space, depth and physicality. Crary states that this new liberation of vision brought with it a host of empirical science that studied subjective vision in an attempt to understand and therefore control it.



Hello white wall, Its me again. Me staring at yw, Staring back at me. We have been doing this for some time now. To be honest I find yw a bit cold - impenetrable. Why always so serious? so hard and immovable. Its like yw don't feel anything at all. Yw see, I don't want to make art I want to be in that wonderful and terrible state that makes art inevitable. But I'm finding it hard with yw white wall. I've banged and bashed yw, nailed and torn yw, worked yw hard. I've painted yw, framed yw, adorned yw, dressed yw up, pushed and pulled yw, ripped yw out, turned yw around. Now I just want to love yw. But all yw give me is yur smooth cold surface. So I'm going to try something different to get us in the mood.



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