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You're Gonna Be Ok

A System to Control the Uncontrollable

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Director: Paul Thulin,
Graduate Director, Photography and Film

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Richmond, Virginia

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Abstract

Title of Dissertation YOU'RE GONNA BE OK: A SYSTEM TO CONTROL THE UNCONTROLLABLE

By John Edward Hendershot, M.F.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010.

Director: Paul Thulin, Graduate Director Photography and Film

This is a written defense to accompany the MFA Thesis Exhibition *You're Gonna Be Ok*, an installation encompassing video, and other sensory components. This defense provides background for the artist's motivation to make this work, along with a theoretical framework used to construct the installation. Accompanying photos, video, and PowerPoint are also included to give reference and documentation of the installation event.

Poetry gives the griever not release from grief but companionship in grief. Poetry embodies the complexities of feeling at their most intense and entangled, and therefore offers (over centuries, or over no time at all) the company of tears.

-Donald Hall, *The Best Day, The Worst day*

What is it that's going on here?

-Ervin Goffman, Introduction *Frame Analysis*

You're Gonna Be Ok

A System to Control the Uncontrollable

Introduction

This is a theoretical framework along with personal artistic process for the art installation *You're Gonna Be Ok*. In January of 2008, during my first year of graduate school, my wife was diagnosed with Leukemia. The following fifteen months saw constant treatments of chemotherapy, hospital visits, and a bone marrow transplant. My wife Claire died in June of 2009. I have attempted to understand my experience; how I processed this traumatic event. The culmination of this reflection is my thesis installation, *You're Gonna Be Ok*.

You're Gonna Be Ok is an art installation: a creation of a waiting room within a gallery environment. It is both a space for contemplation and a space activated by anxiety. A space with

provided hints at expected behaviors, and chaotic messages. It is filled with implied sterility and underscored by subtle, random manipulations of the viewer. As I became surrounded by situations that were chaotic and out of my control (daily blood counts and bone marrow biopsies) I yearned for a world of logic and control. I turned my attention to the world of video games to counteract my loss of control. For me, video games represented a perfect world, with absolute rules, absolute consequences, and a constant state of progression. The choice of game didn't matter: casual games on the Nintendo Wii, turn based strategy games on the PC, or violent first person shooter games on the Xbox all provided the same reassurance that defeating the enemies, clearing the levels, and saving the girl would bring achievement and reward. It became one way in which I coped.

To me, the waiting room represented the focused symbolic space of my energy from the previous two years. Beyond the researched theories I implemented in my installation, my ultimate goal was to create an immersive space; a space within the *white cube* of the gallery that would transport a viewer or participant into another world, frame, or space. In earlier works I had attempted this through long meditative video pieces. In *You're Gonna Be Ok* I used the assumed space's own rules, the slowed reflecting that occurs *in* a waiting room, to create potential reflection, in the participant. Unlike previous video-only works, I had the ability to create an overwhelming sense of immersion through the



Figure 1 *What You See (Still Frame)* 2007

creation of an installation space. One important framework for interpreting this work is through the lens of a gamespace. This focus reflects the importance and rise of gaming in recent years. The power of a game environment has proven to be an excellent replacement for societal change, but this perception presents a new challenge in distorting the way the real world operates. This artwork is many things: an experiment to support the theoretical framework of *Frame Analysis*, a



Figure 2 Overhead view of installation space

dialogue opposing contemporary game (Ludology) theory, as well as my visual recreation of the previous two years of my life. Ultimately *You're Gonna Be Ok* was created, at its core, to share my life experience with the world in the hope to provide connection and companionship

with other people. There is an inherent struggle between the two worlds of theory and practice in this work. Similarly, there is a struggle with the logical and rational rule based world of gamespace and the emotional world of a grieving husband. I find myself immersed in both of these worlds, walking between the two, balancing life and creating work.

Frame Analysis: Using Frame and Key to Understand Human Experience

Much of my research of game systems, discussed later, lead me to the sociological concepts of Ervin Goffman's *Frame Analysis*, a way to interpret the world, but from the perspective of an artist, an aid in helping to construct within an installation. The ability of people to form multiple perspectives on reality has been studied by sociologist and philosophers

for some time. It becomes difficult to imagine how a person can view something such as school as both “school” and also “game.” Sociologist Ervin Goffman presented a theory for this human behavior, something he defined as *framing*. His theory on the human experience is encapsulated in his work *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Goffman attempts to define how humans perceive reality:

When the individual in our Western society recognizes a particular event, he tends, whatever else he does, to imply in this response (and in effect employ) one or more frameworks or schemata of interpretation... (21)

This is the core idea behind *Frame Analysis* which Goffman builds out from the concept of viewing all events through frames, or filters, or lenses. What is important is that the person will not only view the event through a frame (imply) but that they will also respond through that same frame (employ). Multiple frames can exist in any one experience, but a person will often gravitate towards select frames when perceiving an event. Goffman asserts that people do this through a musical analogy he terms *keying* (44). Keys can be defined as the signifiers that a person can use to denote what frame they are currently in. The act of keying can be applied to many different, already meaningful, elements of an environment: physical objects, behaviors of other people, or even information outside the current event (45).

The art world provides an excellent example in its development of the institutionalized

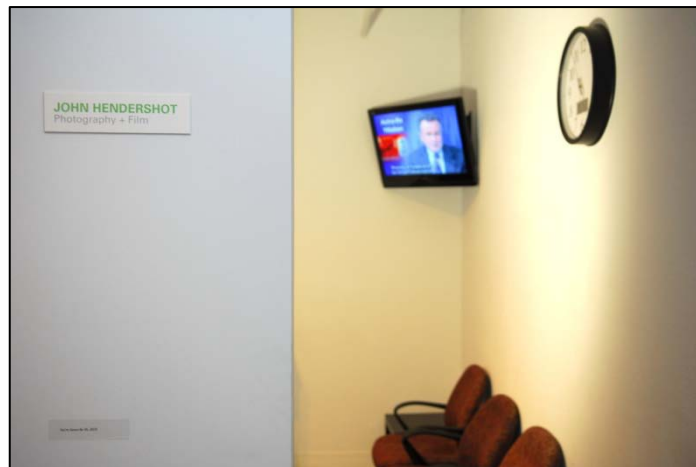


Figure 3 Exterior of Installation

viewing space the “white cube” or the gallery space. When a person enters a museum or gallery they are coerced by several different signifiers, the white paint of the walls, the often somber, quiet noise of the physical space, or the attitude of the fellow patrons. All of these objects/behaviors create a keying event in a person, the end result being the emergence of the “art” frame. From that point until new keys shift this frame (leaving the building as example), the person will imply and employ all information through the “art” frame. Objects may be viewed, but not touched, the level of interaction may drop to nonexistent (compare this to a “kids” museum).

Game has had a close relationship with *Frame Analysis*. Sociologist Gary Alan Fine spent several years documenting the actions of live action role-playing games (LARPS) looking at the social interactions that were occurring. The chapter “Frames and Games” from his book *Shared Fantasy* marks a connection between frame analysis and game:

Games seem particularly appropriate to the application of frame analysis because they represent a bounded set of social conventions, namely a social world. Goffman’s 1961 essay “Fun in Games,” with its concern for the boundaries of play, can be seen as the logical precursor to *Frame Analysis*...The choice of topic is significant because it reminds us that frames of experience may be conscious. Unlike dreams or madness, these worlds have a logical structure, recognizable as parallel to the mundane world. (182)

Fine continues by denoting three levels of frame that exist when a person participates in a fantasy role-playing game. The first framework is called the “primary framework.” This was initially discussed by Goffman in his text, but Fine uses it here as well. Fine’s definition of “primary framework” is that of a commonsense understanding of the way in which the world functions. It

exists without the necessity of other frameworks. All base knowledge can be categorized here. The second frame in the game is that of “players” with actions controlled by common rules and regulations, objectives and goals related to that game. The third frame Fine mentions is that of “characters” for not only do the players create these characters, but especially in a role-playing environment, they assume the role *of* the characters (Fine 186). These frames are distinct to the world of fantasy games, but what is universal is how a person oscillates between those frames through keying. Fine recalls Goffman’s keying concept and applies it to the world of game. While some frames will remain stable and constant, the “primary framework” for example, other frames may shift rapidly using what Fine refers to as “up-keying” or “down-keying” (196).

Mundane shifts of levels occur when the fantasy is interrupted by pressures of the real world—the ringing telephone, the ordering (and then eating) of a pizza, or the biological needs of participants. These activities generate breaks in the game—and down-key the interaction to the “real world.” The “real world” will always intrude, for the gaming structure is not impermeable to outside events. (Fine 197)

This *oscillation* of frames in game is the main point of Fine’s chapter. The argument being the world of game is not a closed system. Ultimately as Fine’s demonstrates in his writing, following Goffman, is that all perceived events can be polluted with intermingling frames of reference. While Fine was interested in demonstrating that the “real world” was a part of the “game world,” through frame analysis, the use of frame analysis allows for the opposite to occur; the “game world” can become part of (or perceived) in the “real world.”

A Series of Unrelated Events: My Journey to Graduate Thesis: *You're Gonna Be Ok*

The seeds of what would become my final graduate work were planted before I even entered my first semester at VCU. I still vividly remember the conversation my wife and I had with her doctor:

It could have been anything in the last five years that caused her leukemia. Frankly, you will never know what caused it, there are so many variables.

My life changed drastically after my first semester as a graduate student. My wife, fiancée at the time, Claire, had been diagnosed with an acute form of leukemia, Acute Myeloid Leukemia, or AML for short. It was one month before her twenty-third birthday and a complete shock to everyone involved with our lives.

It was a struggle to maintain any interest in my artwork, especially to the degree required of a graduate student. Days passed as Claire's treatment continued. The standard treatment for AML is one week of intense chemotherapy, followed by three weeks of recovery in a hospital room. By the grace of the chemical interactions between the chemotherapy and her leukemia she entered remission six weeks after diagnosis. What followed her remission was a long, exhausting struggle to cure her of the disease.

Claire undertook a bone marrow transplant in June of 2008 as a final curative therapy. Throughout the remainder of 2008 we spent our days following a large assortment of different

guidelines, protective protocols, and dates of achievement. Much like the invasion of Normandy, a bone marrow transplant has its own “D-Day.” For us, Claire’s D-Day was June 3rd, 2008. The next important date of achievement was D-Day +100, for it’s by this day that the transplant patient’s immune system has recovered enough to ease certain restrictions on daily activity. It’s also a signifier that the patient might just survive. The vast majority of patients who relapse before Day +100 will never be cured of the disease. We were fortunate; Claire received good results on her repeated lab reports. Day +100 became Day +101, which tuned into Day +102 and the march towards our goal continued.

You’re gonna be ok.

It was Day +375, just over one year from her transplant, when Claire told me this. It was in April of 2009 that we learned not everything had worked the way it was supposed to. Her leukemia had returned. The doctors tried to return her to a state of remission, but the disease had learned how to survive, become adept at avoiding the poison of the chemotherapy. There was nothing more that medicine could do.

This was also at the same time in which Claire and I discovered the random occasional tingling sensations up and down my arm were not so random. I had brushed off these strange sensations as stress; a combination of graduate school and fiancée with cancer. It was never something to worry about, certainly not in addition to everything else. It was only when I suffered a case of optic neuritis, the inflammation of the optic nerve which causes temporary blindness in the effected eye, did I seek medical counsel. After several tests, including an MRI, I was given the cause of my seemingly random problems; Relapsing-Remitting Multiple Sclerosis. By this time we had grown used to catastrophic medical diagnosis. I was not hit with the same

sense of shock that I had felt during Claire's diagnosis. For me, being diagnosed with MS was merely unfortunate news. After fourteen months of immediate, serious medical treatment my perspective had evolved.

It was an enlightening experience to go from caregiver to patient so suddenly. My frame shifted and I began to perceive the hospital world differently. The waiting room was no longer filled with uncertain anxiety concerning my wife, I had become the patient. I was fascinated with how I saw these similar places shift from one day to the next. I began to notice how our wonderful, friendly transplant doctor filled me with immense stress and anxiety, while the cold professional neurologist I met with hardly registered any emotional feeling at all. The waiting rooms of *my illness* didn't concern me. The waiting rooms of my wife's illness did.

You're gonna be ok.

My world became critical in early June of 2009. After we received the final reports, the final timelines, we had an absolute view of Claire's remaining life. The guidelines that we had followed for so long suddenly vanished. Claire was allowed to eat anything or drink anything that she wanted. Washing hands, while still habit upon entering her room was no longer necessary. The rules were gone and so were the objectives. There was no reason to play a game that we had already lost. I was amazed to see how quickly we shifted from one game to the next. Claire and I, engaged throughout her illness, always had an unstated contingency plan. At several points during her treatment we almost began to enact it, but were saved at the last minute by the remission of her cancer. June of 2009 was different, there wasn't going to be a remission, everyone was aware of this, so we began to implement our contingency plan, marry each other before she died.

This new game, a literal race against the clock, for on Tuesday we knew she would be dead by Sunday, immediately gave friends and family new rules, and new objectives. There were flowers to be bought, a cake to be made, a location to be found. It was calming to see everyone hurrying from completed objective to completed objective. A sense of control had been restored to us; we could almost make Claire live longer by winning this new game.

We did win this last game; we were married on Thursday of that week. It was an amazing event to see, in the space of two days a group of nurses, doctors, friends, and family had transformed the transplant floor into a reception hall, along with all the important keys of a wedding. Everyone was happy, an amazing mission accomplished, but soon the wedding had to end and everyone went back to their own lives. Thursday night was when we stopped playing our final game. Claire acknowledged this wonderful achievement.

“We’re married!”

It was a bittersweet statement. We both rejoiced at the thought of achieving our marriage, but the reality of the situation soon came back to us. I thought of my own disease at the moment, the uncertainty of my own life. All at once I began to realize that the one person who would help me through all of this, who would not let my disease deter their love for me, that person was about to die. I began to cry at my wife’s bedside.

I told her all these things that I had been thinking, in a selfish moment; I explained how terrifying life was going to be without her around. It was an intense scene, but Claire had developed a very calm attitude towards the hardships of life, most likely because her life was about to end. I believe it was also because, for her, she saw past all the frames that I was putting

up: the frames of MS patient, widowed young man, and that very subtle but still influential game frame. She saw past these frames, she no longer had any interest in trying to give her life, or my own, any sense of meaning. It was the very simple, but very important fact that on Monday I would still be alive and she would be dead that I feel made her say this:

You're gonna be ok, you'll be fine. You'll go on and do things you want to do, you'll find someone else and fall in love again. You'll handle your MS fine. Don't worry about those things, you're gonna do just fine. Everything will be just fine.

She was dead the next evening. Her words constantly reappear in my mind whenever I face a new challenge in my life. At first I held an almost prophetic lens to her last guidance, but after further reflection I see that the dying aren't prophetic, they're just keenly aware of reality:

Until you're dead you're doing just fine.



Game: A Definition

For centuries the concept of game has been relegated to a thing of childhood. Game consisted of simple systems involving play. The twentieth century saw the rise of the study of

game as a social construct as well as a perceived space. Early game scholars came about from many social science disciplines, namely anthropology and sociology. These early scholars of game like, Elliot Avedon, Brian Sutton-Smith, and Johan Huizinga found special interest in determining what made game unique as forms of entertainment. In Huizinga's ground breaking study of game and play *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* he attempted a definition of an integral part of game: play.

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious", but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (Huizinga 13)

While this earlier definition of play set a framework for other theorist to follow, it carries with it some particular issues as addressed by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman in *Rules of Play*.

One of the strengths of this definition is that Huizinga manages to identify some of the more elusive and abstract qualities of play. The idea that play is both utterly absorbing but also not serious...On the other hand, it is not clear that these experiential qualities will help define a game: just because a poorly designed game fails to be absorbing doesn't mean that it is not a game. Other aspects of his definition, such as his emphasis on play's separation from ordinary life and the fact that play takes place within special boundaries of time and space, point to the intrinsic artificiality of games...Huizinga's

definition includes many important ideas, but on the whole it has some problems. Several of the components, such as the fact that play creates social groups, address the effects of play and games rather than games themselves. Other elements, such as the disavowal of material gain from play, are too closely linked to the ideological agenda of *Homo Ludens*. In the end, the inclusive generality of Huizinga's definition is its greatest weakness. It does not, for example, ultimately differentiate between "play" and "game." (Salen and Zimmerman 75)

As Salen and Zimmerman analyze scholars and their definitions of game, many differing concepts arise: rules, conflict, decision-making, and goal orientation are just some of the many ways scholars define game. Salen and Zimmerman eventually arrived at their own definition:

A game is a system in which players engage in an *artificial* conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome. (80)

Emphasis has been placed on the word "artificial" in this definition for it is a key point many game theorists have made in defining game. This theme is prevalent among contemporary game scholars in addition to Salen and Zimmerman. As Chris Crawford defined game,

I perceive four common factors: representation (a closed formal system that subjectively *represents a subset of reality*), interactions, conflict, and safety (the results of a game are always less harsh than the situations the game models). (Crawford CH. 2)(Emphasis added)

Influential game theorist and contemporary of Huizinga, Roger Caillois defined game as:

...an activity which is essentially: free (voluntary), *separate [in time and space]*, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, *make believe*. (10)(Emphasis added)

The intention of these definitions is to isolate game into their own “magic circle;” a commonly used concept with modern theorist and another term first introduced by Huizinga.

All play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course... The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e., forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart. (Huizinga 10)

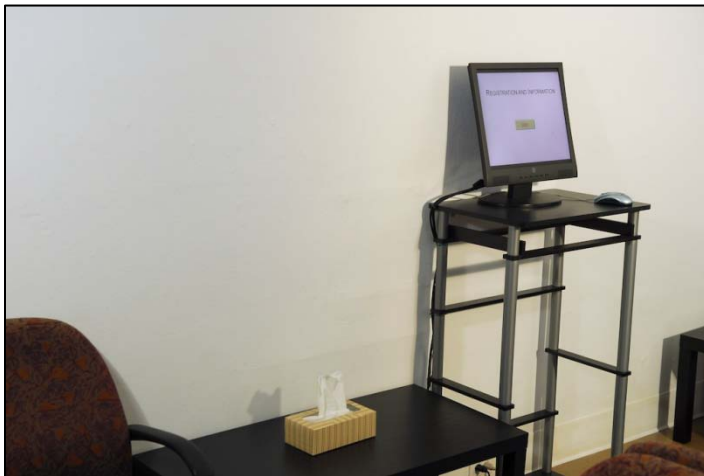


Figure 4 Detail: Computer Registration Terminal

What is of interest is how these modern theorist use the phrase “magic circle,” introduced by Huizinga, to refer to the special, *artificial*, world of *game*. Sport provides an excellent example of the “magic circle” whereas all play is

encapsulated within the lines of the

football field, sports field, or court. Once the participant leaves this “magical” boundary the rules and regulations of the game cease to exist. These same theorists are reluctant to pursue that condition to the “real” world, yet by Huizinga’s own definition i.e. “the court of justice” he is describing those very same systems of the “real” world. While this conflict between the real and

the separate worlds continue, other theorists have attempted to synthesize the definition to broaden the gamespace.

Jesper Juul, a modern game scholar and contemporary of Salen and Zimmerman, presented his own definition of game in his influential text *Half-Real*.

A game is a rule-based system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally attached to the outcomes, and the consequences of the activity are negotiable. (36)

This definition changes how game can be applied to the world. There is no longer the requirement that game serve in a separate, make believe world; Huizinga's *magic circle*. According to Juul's definition, game is at its core a rule-based system. Other qualifiers apply: quantifiable outcomes, player engagement and emotional attachment, but a fundamental shift exist between the Huizinga et. al. camp and Juul's definition. Juul's game can occur *anywhere*. Mary Flanagan simplifies the definition debated even further in *Critical Play*.

Each of these canonical authors in the field of digital game design—Crawford, Costikyan, and Salen and Zimmerman—notes the importance of rules in constructing games, with varying degrees of storytelling, conflict, and competition added into the (often, technology driven) system... I choose not to follow such strict definitions. Games can be thought of more productively as situations with guidelines and procedures. (7)

This definition can completely change the way the term *game* is used. Using Flanagan's definition, suddenly the majority of a person's day to day interactions can be viewed as game.

- The trip to the grocery store (A list of objectives to be completed, rules for how to complete those objectives)
- Making a cake (A situation with guidelines and procedures)
- Taking a shower
- Laundry

Registration and Information



START

Many people in the world will never view these activities this way. A football game can easily be perceived as a game, but earning a bachelor's degree less so. Why does this occur? How can a game theorist, artist, or political scientist see game in campaigns, but the general public see an election for public office? It all depends on perspective; how information is obtained and understood.

To Control The Uncontrollable: Why We Key to Game Frame

When I started my graduate work I was fascinated by my seemingly double life. It was hard to understand why my real world persona abhorred violence, killing, and especially weapons. This was compared to my game persona, a “gamer” who had become a skilled killer in a variety of different methods, in multiple gaming platforms. My early graduate work reflected this initial interest; a path of discovery. It was an attempt to answer this question, why did I play violent video games? After Claire's diagnosis of leukemia my work shifted to documenting our struggles through her disease. Many hours of footage exist of waiting rooms, interviews together,

and the occasional moments of laughter. After her death, I returned my art focus to the game world. My perspective had changed and I could suddenly plot a line of my involvement with game over the previous two years. The amount of time that I played game dramatically increased upon starting graduate school. This was despite the increased work commitment that graduate school demands. After Claire's diagnosis, my game time, as well as Claire's game time, greatly increased. We found comfort in these games, the violence was unimportant to me; I played any and all games that became available.

Games offered a unique ability to pacify our collective need for many important necessities. Games offered us quick achievable objectives, with clear directions and rules in a seemingly self-contained world. It was reassuring to know what we had to do and how we had to achieve it. Even the most difficult puzzles were solved in hours. We played games for these reasons. The "real" world was confusing, without clear goals, without clear guidelines. We had no honest way to know if or *how* Claire would survive her disease. Even if she *did* survive we didn't know what would become of us. Could we have children? Would we stay together? Common questions many people ask themselves in situations less stressful than ours. What happened over those many months was a slippage, or as Fine would describe it an *oscillation* of frame. It was never our primary framework, but suddenly the game frame was an integral part of our survival process. The medical world obliged us with all the up-keying that we needed. For the entire treatment process we were given rules, guidelines, and goals. It was easy to key to a game frame. This would ultimately lead to a collision course with reality: a frame derailment.

We played by the rules, we had beaten so many objectives; we could see the end goal. We were going to win.

But we didn't. Our game frame reassured us we were doing great. We became lax in our attention to one another. I concentrated more on school, she on returning to work. We began to plan our wedding. We got ahead of ourselves, because in a subtle way, our game frames told us to.

Could we have spent more time with each other those last few months? I believe so, although it's hard to tell how much difference it would have made. The timeline was very short. What is important, reflecting back on this period, is to notice the power that frames had over my life. Expanding further, it is equally important to note the power of the game frame in everyone's life as a means to create control, boundaries and direction in an uncontrollable, borderless world.

Someone Rearranged My Art: How the Installation *You're Gonna Be Ok* Functioned in a Gallery Environment

One hour before the opening of the first round of the MFA Thesis Exhibition I entered my installation space titled *You're Gonna Be Ok*. Many hours of work had gone into constructing a space which encapsulated the concepts behind my work. Two LCD televisions were positioned in opposing corners of the small room. Two pieces of "art"



Figure 5 *You're Gonna Be Ok* (Still Documentation)

hung upon the walls, and seventeen chairs hugged the perimeter of the room. This was

accompanied by office carpets, black end tables, and a computer stand with a survey program running. To my astonishment, someone had entered this space and *rearranged* the furniture to what can, only be assumed was, *their* liking. I was shocked at first. How could someone *do this* to my art? I quickly rearranged the waiting room furniture and left the space, irritated.

It was only later, watching people interact with the space, that I realized the installation was functioning exactly as I had hoped it would. Some viewers immediately removed themselves from the installation, believing they had entered something *not* art. Others remarked of the smell, a mix between rubbing alcohol and new office carpet; showing visible signs of being disturbed by the smell and “feel” of the space. One person even inquired into whether I had made the

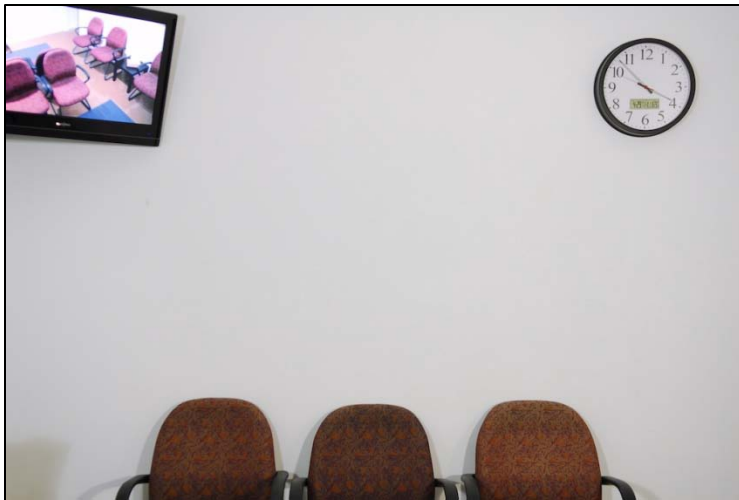


Figure 6 Detail: Art

paintings that hung from the walls of the installation. The participants’ perception of the space that night was constantly shifting between frames: what was the *art*, and what was the *waiting room*? My initial frustration and irritation in the

person who rearranged the work was replaced with the understanding that, to that person, they were framing the space as a *waiting room*, maybe a waiting room *with art in it*, but they certainly weren’t recognizing the *entire* space as an artwork.

How can an installation be critiqued? What framework can be used to judge whether an installation is functioning as intended? Could there be a structure to help guide an artist in the

placement of objects in a gallery space? These were questions I faced during the creation of *You're Gonna Be Ok*.

Conclusion: What's Most Important

In the days following the opening reception for *You're Gonna Be Ok* I was amazed by the emotion displayed in the faces of the participants I observed. It may seem odd to make such a statement. How could I, the person who centered my art on the most traumatic period of my life, be amazed or surprised that others would connect at such a level with the work? Despite the amazing experience I have had in graduate art school and the critical focus I have gained in understanding my work, this experience dramatically shifted the perceptive frame I used to understand the world. I spent countless hours, days, and months finding patterns, theories, or concepts to explore through my work.

As demonstrated in this defense of my final graduate work, theoretical components were *essential* to dialogue and *construction* of this work. Without the critical discussion of *Frame Analysis* or the debate of game theorist, the foundation behind *You're Gonna be Ok* is reduced to mere artistic impulse; a traumatized man yelling at the world to listen to him because he's in pain. To ignore one part of the artist is to lessen the other. That original impulse to cry out was the driving force pushing the theoretical concepts along. Those same theoretical concepts coherently explained what was happening in this work, *why* did the installation create a "feeling," *why* was the art moved before the opening? Ultimately these two parts of the artistic process, described however one feels; *the head and heart, logic and magic, body and soul*, these

components must come together for art to be a deep meaningful, multi-layered experience. This is my constant goal as an artist.

I've always been at odds with the title of "artist." The reason for this coincides with my earlier stated aversion from "self-indulgent" work. Until recently I saw the artist as the self-absorbed recluse, busy in the confines of the art world while the "real" world raged on. It was the writing of a fellow artist, the aforementioned poet Donald Hall, who showed me a new way to look at my role as an artist; not only as the cultural scientist, but as crafter of companionship in human experience, bringing together the two parts, the theoretical and human.

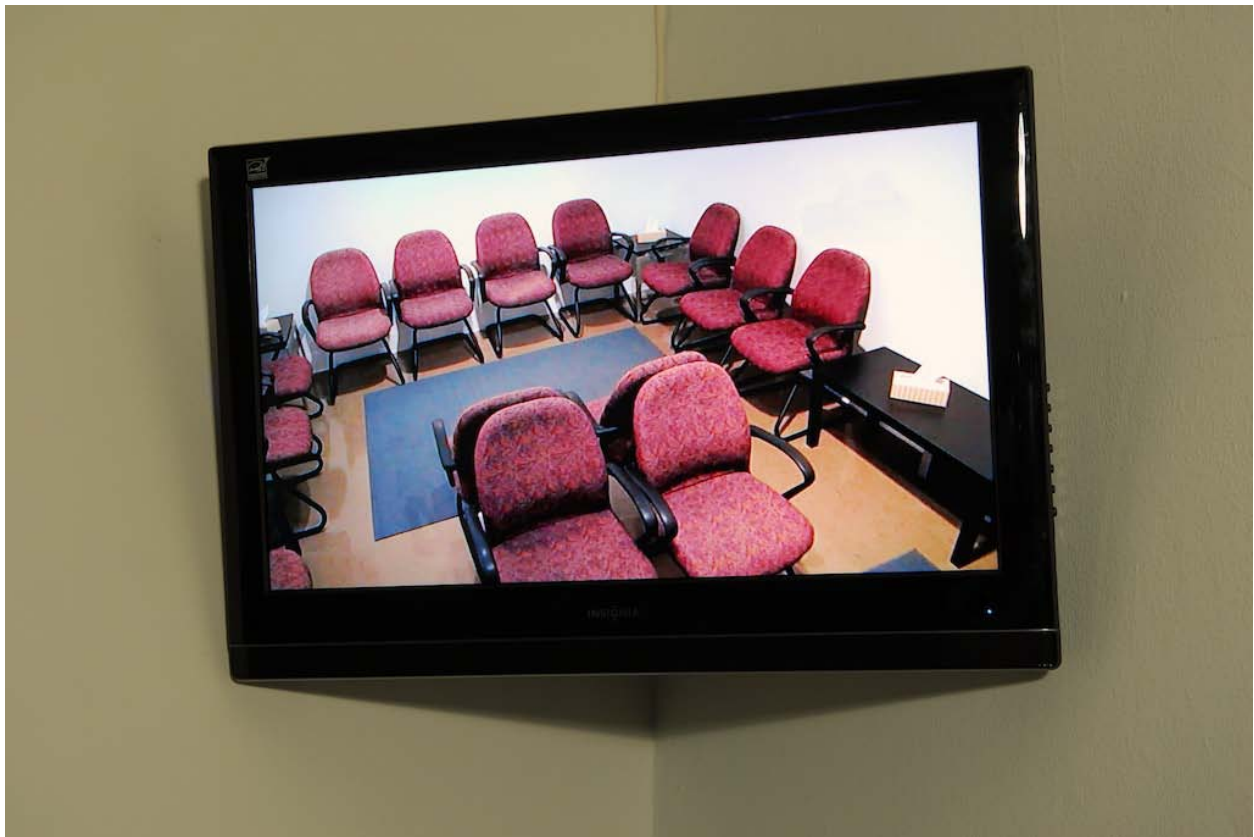


Figure 7 Reflection

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John E. Hendershot

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EDUCATION

2010 M.F.A Photography and Film, Virginia Commonwealth University

2007 B.A. (Honors) Film & Video production, University of Toledo

WORK BACKGROUND

August 2007-Current

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Virginia Commonwealth University Focused Inquiry Program

Worked in several areas of the VCU University College Focused Inquiry program, including four semesters serving as a Focused Inquiry instructor. Designed course plans, advised students, and participated in pedagogical symposiums.

August 2008-Current

Writing Consultant, Virginia Commonwealth University Writing Center

Served as a writing consultant for the university writing center.

Advised students on their writing process, supervised other consultants, and designed several lecture activities for workshop series.

April 2006-May 2007

Equipment Manager, University of Toledo Department of Theater and Film.

Responsibilities included: Maintained and serviced equipment, loaned out equipment to students and faculty, provided instruction to students, conducted class for absent professors, and served as personal aide to the associate chair.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2009 Capital One Center Graduate Exhibition, Capital One, Richmond VA

2008 Photography and Film MFA Candidacy Show, Plant Zero, Richmond VA

2007 Photography and Film MFA Introduction Show, Anderson Gallery, Richmond VA

2007 University of Toledo Film and Video Showcase, University of Toledo, Toledo OH

WORKSHOPS/PRESENTATIONS

“A presentation of work by artist John Hendershot”

Graduate Artist Forum, 1708 Gallery Richmond Virginia, 2009

“The femi-marxo-formalist lense: How to use critical lenses to analyze a text”

Writing Center Workshop Series, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2008

“Censorship, Video, and the Electronic Superhighway: A discussion on the emergence of video images within the Internet and its relation to censorship,”

Censorship Symposium, University of Toledo, 2006

“The Federal Government and Censorship,”

Censorship Symposium, University of Toledo, 2005