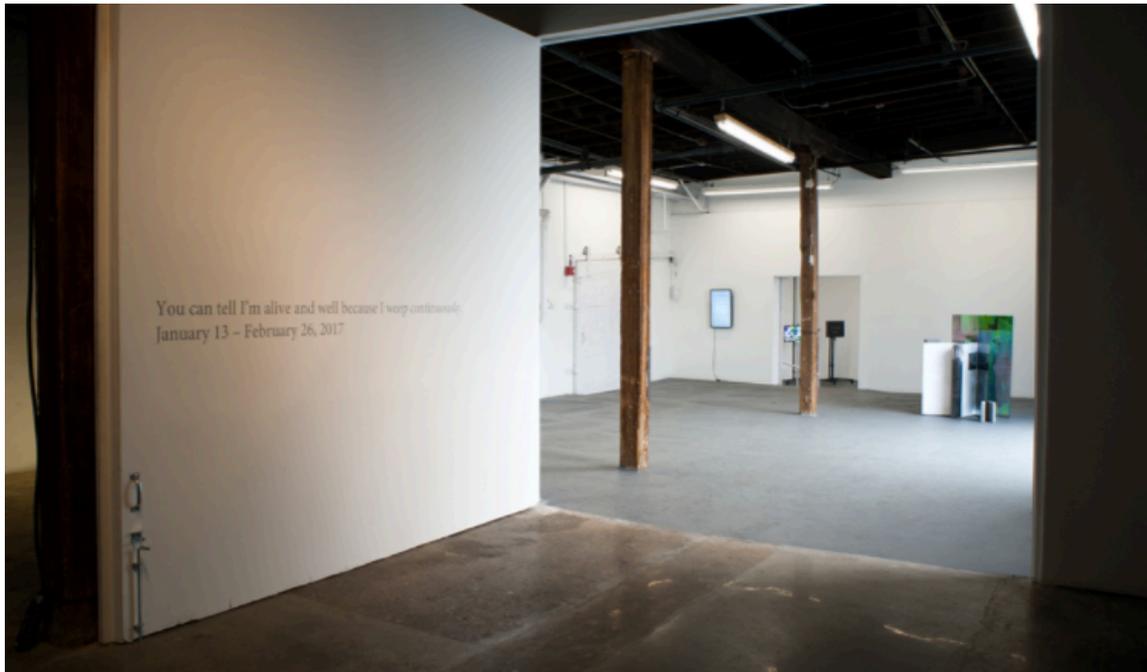


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You can tell I'm alive and well because I weep continuously.

BY TAYLOR DAFOE | FEBRUARY 18, 2017



"You can tell I'm alive and well because I weep continuously." at Knockdown Center. Photo: Emily Kloppenburg.
(Emily Kloppenburg)

Communication — cross-cultural, transnational, intergenerational; between lovers and friends; or mediated by technology — is at the heart of “You can tell I’m alive and well because I weep continuously.” at Knockdown Center. The smart show, curated by Alison Burstein, takes its name from a section of a 2012 poem by Steven Zultanski, titled “Agony”:

You can tell I'm alive and well because I weep continuously

Given that the average person, in a lifetime, sheds about 4,167.921 cubic inches of tears, and that I'm somewhere around 1/3 of the way through my life, then we can assume that, so far, I've shed about 1,373.034 cubic inches of tears

Since water makes up 60% of a human body, and the volume of the average body is 5,064.97 cubic inches, then we know that the volume of water in an average human is 3,038.982 cubic inches

And so, so far, in my lifetime, I've shed about 45.181% of my body's water in tears.

Since tears are mostly water

Let me see here.

In contrast to the oversaturated media fields through which we communicate, the show, instead, is sparse. Like the eponymous source material, it's concerned with alienation, specifically in the modernist sense.

To wit: a video installation by David Court in the back gallery features two imposing monitors which sample generic advertising graphics to conflate marketing with art: one reads "Your Text Here," the other features a constant stream of animated credit cards, like a screensaver. Likewise, Zultanski's poem is displayed on a bright TV screen in the corner of the gallery. Looking at it, you're acutely aware of the fact that the experience is much less intimate than reading a poem in a book.

Nearby, an Anouk Kruithof image on acrylic is a rephotograph from a computer screen. The lines of the monitor warp against the lens, creating a moire effect — you'd recognize it as what happens when you take a picture of a computer screen with your phone. Part optical illusion, it's also a visual metaphor for a communication culture that begins and ends on screens. The content of the image is a sweaty back, cropped to show only fabric, eliding the sticky context into which it was born. Instead, a formal beauty emerges. Sweat stains look like Rorschach blots or spots on butterfly wings. Folds in the shirt curl like lilac peddles. Blur your eyes and the whole thing looks like a color field painting.

Amanda Turner Pohan transmutes an otherwise intimate act — SEX — into something alien. For a pair of sister works, she measured her own CO₂ emissions during orgasm. In one, "Orgasmic Exhalation Form #1," she translated the datum into plot points for a CNC printer. The result is an oblong stretch of dimpled foam resembling beached flotsam or a rotting log. In the second, "Orgasmic Exhalation Device for Body Spray #11," Pohan algorithmically converted the numbers into a recipe for perfume. The product is housed in a six-gallon jug on the gallery floor. Every once in a while, an atomizer mounted on a nearby wall siphons the liquid from a small tube and emits the surprisingly sweet scent. The work recalls Anicka Yi's use of smells and her piece, "Grabbing at Newer Vegetables," 2015, which turned the bacterial samples swabbed from 100 women into text.

In a third work, Pohan presents a poem simultaneously written by her and three lovers around the world in a Google Doc. Indeed, it has all the markings of a conversation held over chat: abbreviations and misspellings; lowercase letters and disjointed dialogue; the sudden fear of being spied upon.

this is being screen recorded.

?

oh shit.

by whom?

whatever

so exciting, deciding where to I want to go here. oh yes. that feels
insert post-insertion myself, blinking on off on good. Get in deeperoff

I

Excu

se insertme but I was there. you just

moveyou insert in me i insert in you d me.

thout aski

ifsif that 's the way you want to play it ert

g me. that'is is?

s not oinsewell? rti stop this. ve

ry p *

While the poem nears gibberish, the text itself, installed in vinyl lettering on the gallery walls, is more compelling, making tangible the otherwise inappreciable connections between the lovers, and, subsequently, the audience as well.

David Horvitz's piece, "Some Meditations for Resonating Hourglasses Sounding the Shapes of Hours," 2015/17," similarly turns ideas into objects: a device used to *see* time is reconfigured as one for *hearing* it. A dozen-plus hourglasses cut in half are filled with water so that, when touched, they make sounds. An accompanying score is printed and hung next to the installation of glasses, further exaggerating the complexities that come with the transposition of symbols.

Though not as overt, semiotic fissures like this are everywhere in "You can tell I'm alive." It's a simple idea, but a big one: breakdowns in communication are as generative as communication itself.