

Emily Hall, Artforum.com, Sept 2006

At the Swiss Institute, Berlin-based artist Ceal Floyer presents a winsome suite of puns—one visual, one aural, and one verbal—that traffic in her usual method of re-creating or manipulating the simplest physical effects to great metaphoric result. It operates in the same register as her exhibition at 303 Gallery last spring, although it is somehow more satisfying.

The verbal pun is the least substantive of the three—a mounted tape measure displaying the whole nine yards—but the other two form an exquisitely calibrated call and response on the subject of futility. The audio work 'Til I Get It Right, 2005, features a line from a Tammy Wynette song, the familiar songwriting sentiment of the title manipulated and looped and played, repeatedly and a bit dementedly, from a few speakers. This loop functions as a perfect analogue for never arriving, for not getting it right; the major-key resolution the ear longs for never comes, and the listener is thrown into a permanent state of minor-key longing. In Double Act, 2006, a projection showing heavy red theater curtains picked out by the perfect circle of a spotlight creates palpable anticipation. It is similar in spirit, as well as in form, to Euan Macdonald's Healer, 2002, part of Creative Time's current "59th Minute" exhibition (through September 30 on the NBC Astrovision in Times Square), in which an elderly woman emerges from behind curtains and stares benignly at viewers, perhaps, as the title suggests, healing them through their engagement with the work. What's different here is that the emptiness begs to be filled by the viewer, who, by engaging, can only interrupt the projection, not inhabit it—the kind of excellent double bind that Floyer excels at.



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