The Spectacle

Using the carnival as an easily accessible metaphor I invite the audience to enter a space that confronts them with issues of power, the gaze, and the draw of the spectacle. This interaction allows the viewer in the words of Lygia Clark “to invest his or her gesture with meaning and for this act to be nourished by thought, in the process of bringing the participant’s freedom of action to light.”1 However, in this installation, the viewer is not free, and the investment of their gestures reveals the freedom as a preliminary façade. In fact the directions they are to look and the opportunities to interact are contrived and controlled with specific intent. In addition the awareness of being viewed is juxtaposed with the contention of at what moments they are actually being viewed, by whom, and for how long. They are alternately placed in the position of active voyeur and performer.

The participants are not expected to walk away with a deeper realization of these issues; however it is the foundation for the context of these momentary images. The themes the viewers interact with are Actualization (as relates to Maslow’s hierarchy), the Body (the attraction and repulsion of the organism), Equivalence (dealing with philosophy of life), and Surveillance (the power relationship of viewing). The live camera feeds coupled with the viewers’ interaction create the forefront of the concept. In this manner the importance of the image is equal to that of the viewer’s interaction or lack thereof. It reflects the temporal nature of image production and the modern conundrum of the fleeting digital image, thus raising questions of volume, selection, and the irretrievable moment. The inability of the voyeur to control camera selection, angle, or zoom accentuates this tension.

The modern spectacle of human interaction in a contrived environment provides private space that lends itself to the idea of free response, however the presence of cameras and wires mentally restrict this freedom with a connotation of consequence. In this way the spectacle/curiosity is both the draw and transforms the seeker into its own realm thus accentuating the cyclical nature of human response.



1 Stein, Jean ed. *Grand Street: Crossing the Line,* issue 63, p.133, 1998