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VISUAL ART

Yes I Would

A Review of Crawl Space's *Would You Like to Start Again?*

by JEN GRAVES

Josh Hite's video of stairs continually descending is a tribute to never getting there. I'm not sure, but I think he made it by piecing together still photographs he took of dozens and dozens and dozens of staircases (it runs for 11 minutes before almost imperceptibly looping back to the beginning).

He's lined up the stairs nearly perfectly, so that it's not until you've watched for a minute that you realize that all of these stairs are not part of one endless set of stairs. You have the Sisyphean feeling of climbing forever, assisted by the large size of the projection, which makes the stairs look as large as they would if you were actually on them, looking down at them. And you also start to register the labor that went into making this thing, to notice each segment of steps as a little photographic sculpture passing by.

That this work was on display during Barack Obama's inauguration and first few weeks of office (it closes February 8) is no coincidence. It's part of a show about beginnings, introducing four young BC artists: Hite, Raymond Boisjoly, Samantha Stagg, and Lilith Yacub. Called *Would You Like to Start Again at the Beginning?*, the exhibition appears during a moment when all of America is basically answering YES. PLEASE. Seattle curator Jessica Powers calls it "a critical, speculative discussion about moments of optimism, cultural progress, and habitation."

I'm not convinced that habitation—represented by Stagg's two nylon tents sewn together into a new, mildly dispiriting, uninhabitable monster—fits in. But Boisjoly's installations made with strings of lights and Yacub's nature photographs with incident captions ("Carmen took her sister's acid and skipped school") probe the desire for a coherently documented and progressive history. What happened? Where? What have we learned?

Boisjoly's rows of lights forming a circle on the wall spell out the letters of the title of the exhibition. The words shift back and forth between being legible and illegible, informational/directional and blindingly festive. Is this a celebration or a question? It's both, like inauguration day.

Would You Like to Start Again at the Beginning?: yet another example of Crawl Space earning its good reputation. ★