

JUDY RADUL
AS THE PAGE TURNS

Pages don't really turn, they flip, but the word "flip" doesn't have sufficient gravitas to account for the reality parsing motions that this two sidedness engenders. Bernardt Siegert has devoted much of his 2015 book, *Cultural Techniques. Grids, Filters, Doors and Other Articulations of the Real*, to these recto verso questions. "The play of recto and verso enabled by objects such as book pages that can be turned creates an ambivalent threshold zone between the imaginary of the image and the real of the reader/observer. The medial conditions for the birth of a hallucination have been met—a hallucination that is at its very core a medial operation."

I have made three exhibitions,* that have, as a central component, a custom designed "page turning machine" turning the pages of a magazine produced specifically for the exhibition. A video camera is mounted above the page turning machine and magazine. The camera is one element of a closed-circuit custom system which plays back choreographed camera motion and assigns the live image to video monitors in the exhibition space.

I would describe the page turning machine/magazine/camera set up as an interface between media systems or "cultural techniques." There are a couple of things that really attract me about this page turning machine. I get a warm feeling from watching a bad actor at work. A bad actor is that one that works hard at what should be easy, breaks every impulse into a series of fragments, over does the gestures, smokes a cigarette or drinks a glass of water in a histrionic, mechanistic way. They go against the grain of life's flow, which is also to say, they tug at, or irritate, life's taken for granted, torrential, naturalism. Our machine actor turns the page, with more attention, concentration, awkward actions, than is humanly necessary. There is a beauty to the machine and its repetitions—which always verge on malfunction—it is just a bit fascinating to watch.

The other potentials of the set-up are harder to describe—they turn into themselves. The magazine is created with the recto verso of the page in mind. Its image in combination with live video images of the gallery folds the space, its doors and windows, its corridors, corners and edges, (the space's own folding mechanisms), back into the world of the page/screen. The horizontal scan of the video monitors transmits the vertical wave of the falling over page into or onto the space. Media operations and cultural techniques in general are implicated in this backward looking forward move. The cognitive structure of the page, the sequentiality of bound pages, open and close, containing and releasing the viewers in the exhibition space.

* The images on the following pages are from these three exhibitions. In order of the photographs: *Words No Pictures, Pictures No Words*, Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver, 2018; *Polyphonic Worlds: Justice as Medium*, Contour Biennale 8, Mechelen, Belgium, 2017; *the king, the door, the thief, the window, the stranger, the camera*, Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2017; page spreads from *Worlds No Pictures* (design and production assistance Alex Turgeon).



