

Anne de Vries: SUBMISSION

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Cell Project Space

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Review by Phoebe Cripps

Journalists, thinkers and worried parents seem set on a frantic quest to determine the concrete effects of the new online, pluralist culture. Narcissism, attention deficit, and the total overload of information are common fears attributed to a new generation 'Y' of millennials, and yet the lexicon used often has the adverse effect of dehumanising those we fear will be dehumanised. In 'Submission', Anne de Vries explores these anxieties from a perspective of complex humanity, demonstrating the potential for online networks to both internally fragment and externally connect us.

The main vaulted-ceiling space at Cell Projects is filled with a monumental fibreglass resin model of a head that has been architecturally exploded. The hollow pieces become shelter-like spaces, losing any dynamic function. The space is filled with a cacophony of transmissions. Live-stream screens and discordant audio recordings of conversations harboured within the structures transport the viewer to such real-time faraway scenes as Times Square in New York or a bird feeding in the South American jungle. These encapsulate and engross, yet the viewer cannot comfortably watch them as a part of the head always gets in the way. In the transmutation from life to screen to life again, there will inevitably

produce a delay. We think we are watching live footage, when in fact we are looking at a memory; we think we are infinitely connected, when in fact there is always a disconnect.

The brightness of the main room gives way to a back room that is darker in both lighting and tone, where de Vries' 11-minute film 'Critical Mass: Pure Immanence' plays. The title is a nod to French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whose work viewed the wider human connection as an innate and personal empiricism; it also refers to the point of 'critical mass' at which users' interdependence on interactive media grows its value. The work's title therefore is a sweeping, ironic statement that in a society that places so much value on the network, we can never be purely immanent. de Vries exploits perspective in images of tens of thousands of crowd revellers at a music festival, blurring and erasing distinctions between individuals and reducing them to mere particles. The style of the work suddenly changes from the melodrama of a video game trailer to the soothing voice that might be played in a dystopian advert for plastic surgery. 'Welcome to the omnisphere,' the female voice says. In the omnisphere, it is not the people themselves but the relations between them that are important, that make them feel truly alive.

'Omnisphere' is also the title of a music synthesiser plugin – described on its company, Spectrasonics', website as 'an instrument of extraordinary power and versatility'. Synthesisers, at their most basic nature take what was once an IRL sound and enhance it. de Vries' brilliantly sinister work seems to say that as humans, we are becoming enhanced – synthesised even, through the relations and connections of the networks that we occupy.

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