

groundlessness in the here and now

by vivian brockman

[cursor hand heavy with a link I forgot I was holding]

0:03 - 1:36

video (vertical orientation) and audio by Wesley Brockman (my father) reading texts he sent me on April 28th (highlighted portions were sent via text, but not recorded):

Reading your thesis

This is the first time I've had an uninterrupted moment coinciding with the energy to give something of this complexity my attention

May I 'live-tweet' you some nonsensical words to act as dog ears?

As I read?

This will be the only time I read it the first time.

Unless I get amnesia.

52 card pick-up

You are bugs

Nominalism and Hubble telescope.

Deep Fake and the collapse of truth

Is everything Telepresence though?

(don't try to answer these questions now)

Remember your most wished superpower?

Absence of time.

Is God's nature to make us small?

Maybe typo in 11. You are here:

Store or stored?

Cube house and value associated w/obliques

3 quarters view, Japanese screens and Baldur's Gate in reference to obliqueness

Oh no.....

I just read about my cryptic texts.... And I'm doing it now

I'm the worst

I am an old dog. No new tricks. But maybe have my uses

Prayed for a PS2!

I'm crying. You're so brilliant

I hope your honesty wasn't inhibited by the misfortune of my continued survival

Satellite 26

Time through a sieve and swishing flowers in a book

As it relates to Sontags token of absence

Brilliance built at the end of 27

Thank you for this. I need time to process.

Maybe it's the first day I've seen you.

1:37 - 4:48 (*Contempt* by The Books plays quietly in background, lyrics provided at end of section)

I come back here all the time—standing in t-pose, floating over this indiscernible space, looking down seeking a sign that reads YOU ARE HERE. This indiscernible space is what I have come to know as the narrow gate of here and now. This here and now has less to do with naming a specific mark in time

that holds a moment and more to do with the instability of time and space. The ability to stand in (or rather the inevitability of always standing in) the narrow gate of here and now is something I have found comfort in. Comfort in knowing the idea of a single unmediated moment of presence is errored. Comfort found in acknowledging unavoidable and precarious intersections of presence and intimacy—**physical, digital, and otherwise immaterial**. Remote sensing in the narrow gate of here and now.

I imagine myself standing in t-pose over the gate. T-pose was first introduced to me as a friend of mine joked that I often take on the physical form when gesturing a feeling of being whole and grounded at a specific moment in time. T-pose has become something of a symbol of groundlessness—simultaneously carrying the instability and comfort that one experiences when looking down.

The vertical gaze is a vantage point most commonly attributed to that of an aerial photograph. Alternatively, it can be a birds-eye view, god's eye view, view from above, top-down system, a transcendental experience, a means to determine the relative position of something to one's self, remote sensing extended and onward. A seeking you are here, you are whole, you are here to actually inhabit an information system.

The prominence of the vertical gaze began with aerial photography in the twentieth century: born out of cartography, accelerated by government surveillance of agriculture—as well as the military operations and mapping in World War II. The vertical gaze can be most practically and legibly exemplified as a relationship with maps, orientation, navigation, and the use of physical space to assist in structuring one's reality. Today the vertical gaze encompasses image-making and vision through technological means such as satellite imagery, google street view, drone photography, video surveillance, security cameras etc. These technologies are becoming an increasingly inseparable part of our lives, offering vantage points that are outside of human vision and at times human agency.

The National Collection of Aerial Photography, based in Edinburgh, Scotland, holds one of the largest collections of international aerial photography. They describe two types of aerial photographs: vertical and oblique. They explain that the vertical photograph is more popular and considered more useful, due to the accessibility of quantitative information (vertical images can be easily scaled and measured). Citing their potential usefulness for something like assessing property boundaries. In

describing oblique photographs, they explain that these images provide the viewer with easy comprehension, but the details and physical features of the image are often challenging to recognize and quantify.

These descriptions and their differentiations, show how value is placed on the acquisition of information over visual comprehension. The value placed on the acquisition of data through aerial photography and verticality cannot be ignored as it informs not only our social and political lives, but also our viewing and sensing practices.

These images, programs, and channels are not neutral.

(lyrics to Contempt by the books)

-What about my ankles, do you like them?

Yes.

-And my thighs too?

Also.

-Do you think they're pretty?

Very.

-Do you like my face too?

Yes, I love your face.

-Do you think I have a pretty backside?

Very pretty.

-What about my ankles, do you like them?

Yes, enormously.

-You like all of me, my mouth, my eyes, my nose, my ears?

-Me too, Paul.

5:45 - 9:30 (*World That's Not Real* by Gloria Ann Taylor plays in background, could not locate full lyrics to include)

Media Theorist, Johanna Zylinksa explains: "To speak of the photographic apparatus is of course not just to argue for a straightforward replacement of the human vision with a machinic one, but rather to recognise the mutual intertwining and co-constitution of the organic and the machinic, the technical and the discursive, in the production of vision, and hence of the world."

From the micro—looking at your childhood home on google street view—to the macro—looking at The Blue Marble (1972)—these images embody how the vertical gaze alters our human vision and relationship to time and space. The following images exist within the realm of the vertical gaze even if not formally representing the vertical gaze.

The most notable images of the whole earth are Earthrise (1968), The Blue Marble (1972), The Blue Marble: The Next Generation (2005), and The Black Marble (2012). Earthrise depicts the whole earth from the position orbiting the moon, you can see the surface of the moon as a sort of foreground to the earth in the frame of helping to orient the viewer. While the other images show the earth freestanding or free-floating in space. The images that followed Earthrise and The Blue Marble are all made using satellite imagery and remotely sensed data.

The whole constantly updated with new data, creating a patchwork and mesh of nonlinear time. Viewing these images produce a strange experience— one of disjointed space and time. An incomprehensible sense of orientation. Images of the whole earth being virtual does not make them any less true, but require us to pause and consider what we mean by truth. These images and other data-based images help us understand that the truth of images has become synonymous with resolution and measurability.

We find ourselves in the displaced temporality and neutrality of the vertical gaze. There is a comfort that comes with resolution, measurability, and a sense of orientation. Hito Steyerl explains that our current groundlessness and loss of horizon (what I am calling the vertical gaze) puts us in a state of free fall, but we don't feel like we are falling at all.

The vertical gaze disorients us, and we are required to confront the sense of comfort that comes with orientation, as well as the technologies and systems that allow one's body to momentarily float above a physical point located in a sea of limitations.

The wholeness the hand seeks in the object without ever being able to find it is a gesture of disappointed love.

I like things slightly abstracted, maybe even coded—but definitely clear, and seemingly neutral. The vertical gaze—a neutral sovereign eye, allure of clean images and clear data, a top-down-bird's-eye-god's-eye type place. I like maps, diagrams, alignment charts, floating in the low oblique space above

Google Street View, that 53 second videos of someone cooking without ingredients shared via twitter. Free floating, free falling, suspended, suspend belief, suspense, tend, and tension. A world of images, ingredients, and gaps informed by the vertical gaze. A gelatin here and now, poetry, riddles, dead ends.

A turn towards memory, a bluetooth enabled text activated vibrator, birdwatching, a relationship to god, the inexpressible stitch to the gap from here to there, or me to you. Active or passive, but always at a distance.

9:37 - 10:17 (Intro from *RO TALK* by R.A.P Ferreria plays)

Pure will in every moment, baby. That's all I can recommend. It's funny, it be the instinct to protect make you strike first. In a surveillance state, everyone is a performer, those that push to be influencers, less rigid artist types that garner followings. You know what I'm talking about? Creatives. Those people, they don't do nothin'. And that's cool, but when surveillance is weaponized, it can project limits on human interaction, or at least, that's how I see it. So, I advise pure will in every moment, beloved. (What that mean?) Pure will in every moment. There are no good ideas. (Oh, word?) Pure will in every moment, beloved. (But, what that mean?)

(Two cranes with man baskets pictured in celebration. A moment of gratitude for every person and place standing with me through this project)