

Nelson Henricks **by Vicky Chainey Gagnon**

“There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, rose-shaped blots of an indistinct color – dim pinks and blues - which will, as time goes on, become more definite, become – I don't know what...” Virginia Woolf, “The Mark on the Wall” 1921

Canadian artist Nelson Henricks is inspired by daily life and personal experience. His videotapes are clever weaves of sound, image and text in which various forms of writing create “small fugitive spaces that allow the viewer/ listener to reflect and interpret – something that seems both a rarity and a luxury in contemporary society.”¹ The intimate imagistic spaces he carves out show traces of the visual styles of experimental film, video art, literature and popular culture and address issues of communication, identity and invisibility. ²

In the fragmented and episodic narrative of *Time Passes 3.*, an anxious view of language is charted. Impermanence and contradictions in meaning are framed within an ever-shifting temporal landscape where the treatment of time, intrinsic to the video medium, is condensed and details become contracted. Streams of light move across the planes of Henricks' Montréal apartment, gradually displacing a series of moments as a metaphor for the contained and fluid rhythm of time passing. In counterpoint, a fragmented architecture of space features pixellated images of Henricks frantic in the act of writing. The visceral soundtrack of his hand scrawling on a page are separate from the fluid images lining the videotape, adding a disjointed sense of absence. Provocative text emerges in the black fields of the video frames, telling us: “No place is as real as this room and “We write in order to disappear.” The words, imbedded deep and unexpectedly into the channels of video space, resonate across the videotape with weight and point to a presence that can never fully be recaptured – the physical presence of the body in the act of communication.

Time Passes is inspired by the writings of Virginia Woolf and like the famed author's fiction, Henricks emphasizes patterns of consciousness rather than sequences of events in the external world, creating a video form that translates the subjectivity of inner life. Rooms provide vectors of illumination where meaning is unwrapped in tense transfers of time, and the passage of the imagination through language is made literal. As pages accumulate into volumes of signs, Henricks reminds us of the struggle to fix meaning and claim the imperceptible. A slow spiral is traced on the blankness of the waiting page and a longing is inscribed that cannot be reconciled. Permanence is fractured, like the illusion of transparency in language made apparent in *Time Passes*. Through the eyes of the camera we see an indigo blue sky melting into the radiant pink sunrise, and similarly, a gradual dissolution is at work within language, ever changing and eroding, like the time passing.