

*Seismic Gauge*

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Pervading Thomas Swinkels' exhibition *Pavement Whisper* in Lisbon's Spirit Shop is the relentless and investigative search aimed at finding the core residence of affection. While this can signify a plenitude of ideas it is recognizable here in particular by the utilisation of certain aesthetic tools and the allocation of their visual translations. Consequently, the work seems to evidence the gaze of a criminologist. The scene is of an unknown origin and setting; the artist maneuvers through their surroundings while giving deliberate attention to the loci of way-gone travelers and passerbys. Imprints of heavy footfalls on the stones are all that remain in the wakes of those who came and left again. These reverberating waves charged the receptive material substrates. Only echoes linger; perceptible by their immediate temperatures and steady de-acceleration. How fitting is it to imagine affection and sentiment as agents of heat and its absence.

Installed in the exhibition is a video and a series of thermal-transfer prints wherein this is stressed. We are presented with impressions of heat signatures that are slowly burning off into the cold. Once there was a body on this bed, and here a rough hand once tenderly graced this rail. Some of these are actually triggered by the artist himself and subsequently convolute whether the traces actually testify to anyone other than he himself. The enduring traces of bodies in motion and bodies in contact with the world then begin turning into echoes of energy and receptacles of affection. Perhaps we alone are powering the machine which houses us by our continual prodding and stroking? Maybe this work

offers us a chance experience to perceive what lies at the heart of all the objects and people around us. Could it be that this is the way that other species experience the world?

If that is the case, then the ability to see these energy transfers might also develop a commensurate system of estimating their quality too. Because in acknowledging these quantifiable values there ought to be a method of gauging their worth. What remains if we strip away the color, detail, and volume which we've so readily accepted as synonymous with value and heart? We are left instead with a monochrome scale of absence. Suddenly the lightness of the medium and the airiness of Swinkels' works presented in *Pavement Whisper* are juxtaposed by the sombre weight of the world presented in terms of mere heat and charge.

While ruminating in thought before these images of ghosts, I find it becomes steadily more difficult to observe my thoughts. Normally one thought blooms into many. However here they seem to freeze in place before wilting and collapsing downwards. Resulting from this is my experience of Swinkels works being reinforced by the persistent presence of just what is there. The effect is pronounced, and it is strengthened by the by way of the video which emits a regular, irritating sound. My immediate impression is that this cadence is like the chirping of grasshoppers or the rattling of a cicada. Ci-Ca-Da, Ci-Ca-Da, the word itself is an onomatopoeia in its replication of the Tshick-Tschik hissing drone it makes. The cicada's song is made by flexing a special muscle in the abdomen which causes a ribbed membrane to vibrate and amplify. Nevertheless, the sound in the film is not an insect. Rather, it is the result of the

camera apparatus itself which has a special function that allows for it to measure its own temperature. While listening to the mechanical thermometer the world is reduced to a pinpoint. Listen to the heart-beat of another entity in the world as it tries to gauge its environment. You are not alone. Repeatedly the residences of affection are offered and always as evidence of that idea that we've missed the main event, or in looking so hard for it, we overshoot, and peered past it. It is the ebb and flow of water after some great storm. Simultaneously one feels the present moment and the absence of another force. We watch the waves as they slowly fade outwards from the now void epicenter.