

BCA
CENTER



ARTIST'S ARTISTS

The Way You Look

Tim Simonds and Ashish Avikunthak

August 10 – October 7, 2018



(Top) Tim Simonds, *Solips*, (Detail), 2018 (Bottom) Ashish Avikunthak, *Etcetera* (video still), 1997

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Artist's Artists: The Way You Look, Tim Simonds and Ashish Avikunthak

To see *The Way You Look* you must first look. Any writing about an exhibition with works from artists like Ashish Avikunthak and Tim Simonds first must beg the viewers to view. So I implore you to experience the art works before reading any further; to accept that the experience of the works, love them or hate them, is more meaningful than anything a guest curator prints onto this flimsy piece of paper. Trust yourself to enjoy what you find without any help from me.

The story of this small exhibition is, like many stories of art, one of chance encounters, glancing impressions, and lasting affects. *The Way You Look* is an experiment, and the first show in a series at BCA called the *Artist's Artists*. The series hinges on the belief that Vermont's artists have unique empathies and connections to artists and artworks from around the world. The greater Burlington community can experience, learn from, and enjoy these connections when artists are given space to share them. *Artist's Artists: The Way You Look* brings together two artists whose work forever changed my own, influencing me for years after just brief encounters.

Six years ago Ashish Avikunthak stood off to the side of a projection screen, his lips hidden behind a large mustache, the color from his films painting the audience as the room was slowly submerged in sound. A set of four short films, *Et Cetera* (1997), was the first to be shown that day. I remember being drawn into its depictions of rituals, surprised that something so simple could hold my fickle attention. Following a rickshaw through a city I felt myself humbled by experiences I've never had. As the sound fell out of sync with the video, I grew confused and searched for clues to understand what I was being told. But there were no answers to be found; instead it was like a visit to a sacred place, where mundane actions circle around complicated questions of existence, time, and experience. Fighting my desire to find the hidden meaning, I eventually allowed myself to follow Ashish and his camera. I struggled to keep up with a man walking through the desert, my breath keeping time with his. As the camera grazed the roughly shaved head of a grieving man the tension between inanimate and human, simple and complex, was somehow held in front of me. These difficult, grainy films weren't filled with symbols or sophisticated technical wizardry, but something quietly impressive - a chance to wonder at the experience of being.

In 2015 a fold of carpet caught my foot and I tripped on a work by Tim Simonds in a small Brooklyn gallery. Soft and restrained, tight and relaxed, this perfectly fitted carpet seemed to push back against the walls like a skin stretching the body it was on. The sculpture *if* pushed the walls even further outwards. It's cold, stainless steel grab bars were forced into service, holding the building up whether it needed help or not, while waiting to be held themselves. Cloaked and prodded, the gallery seemed at once too big and too small, and I felt out of context as I awkwardly sat on the carpeted floor. It was only when I began to wonder about my own reactions that I was able to see Tim's work, so sure of itself, more clearly. In *Solips*, the structure of celery was revealed as its color was bleached away. Maybe it too was forced to reflect on itself, finding only its own support structure. My time with Tim's work felt like getting to know someone; a private yet proud personality, hollow in sound but resonant with meaning that only time could reveal. It stayed with me.

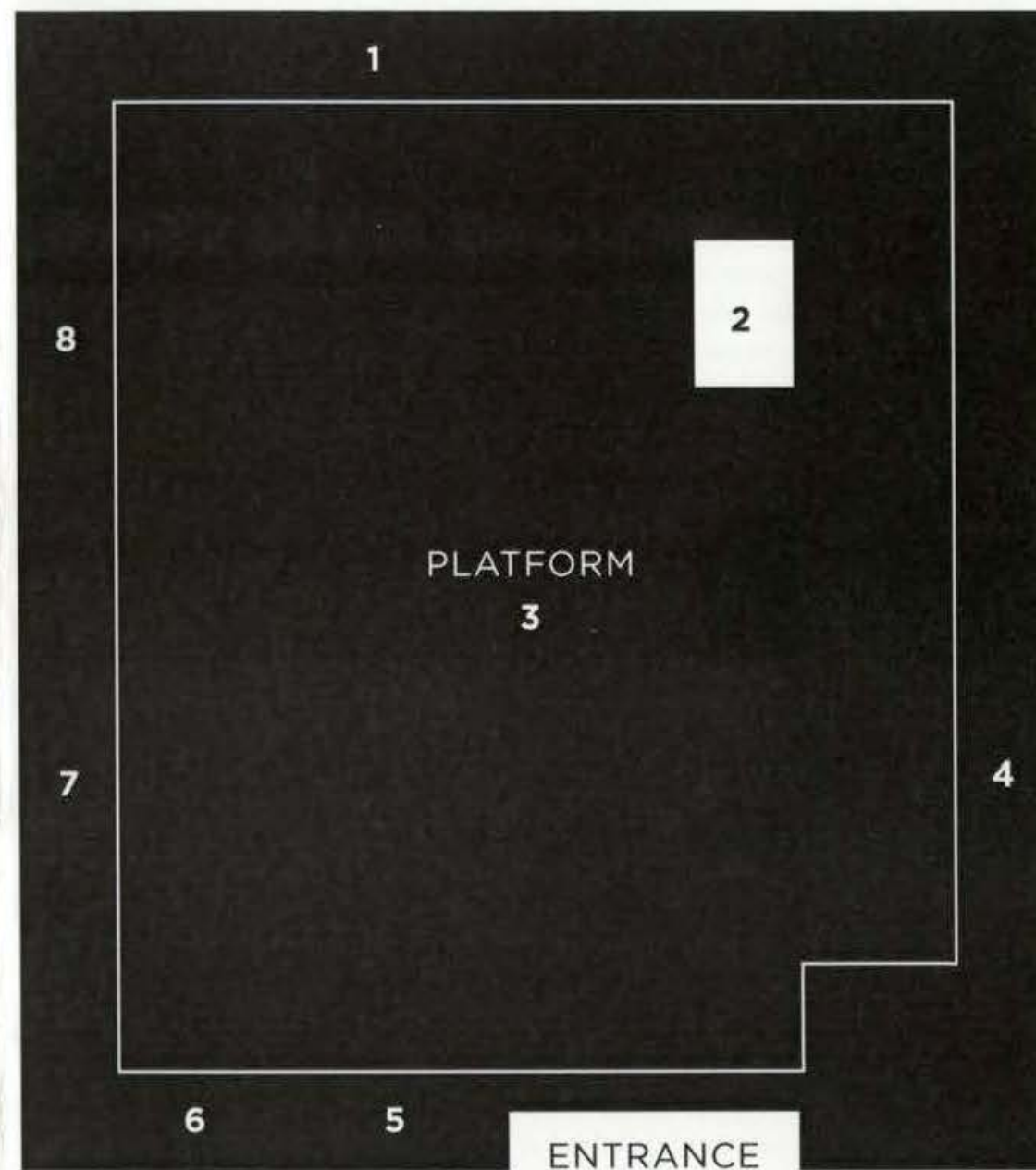
A few months ago I told Tim all of what I've told you, about Ashish's films and my time in the Brooklyn gallery. He told me about visits to temples and ruins - spaces where the senses were free from their insistence on language and logic; open to feeling without description. We talked about the way your feet can feel something hollow, and how you might hear a sound with your teeth. We talked about the assumptions, ideologies, and morals we bring with us when we look at the world.

Ashish, Tim, and I agreed that you might like the opportunity to join the conversation these artworks have started. We know *The Way You Look* can't seduce you with dazzling visuals or bright colors, but instead offer a chance for your attention to linger. Here, in the lower level gallery, you'll be on your own, offered a place where a mystery can become its own answer and an experience can become its own meaning. This chance encounter, brief as it may be, encircles the questions we most desperately need to answer - questions about being human in this world, about how we look out into it, and how we look when it gazes back at us.

Pete Moran, Guest Curator



LOWER LEVEL GALLERY



1. Tim Simonds
if (no.7), 2018
40" x 4" x 4"

4. Tim Simonds
if (no.2), 2018
78" x 4" x 4"

7. Tim Simonds
if (no.8), 2018
44" x 4" x 4"

2. Tim Simonds
Solips, 2016/2017/2018
20" x 12" x 12"

5. Tim Simonds
if (no.6), 2018
58" x 4" x 4"

8. Ashish Avikunthak
Et Cetera, 1995-97
16mm film
transferred to video
33 Minutes
Courtesy of the Artist

3. Tim Simonds
For, 2018
(dimensions variable)

6. Tim Simonds
if (no.4), 2018
56" x 4" x 4"

Prices available upon request

ARTIST'S ARTISTS

The Way You Look

Tim Simonds and Ashish Avikunthak

August 10 – October 7, 2018

BCA Exhibitions are funded in part by a grant from the Vermont Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. Farrell Distributing and Sugar Snap Catering are proud sponsors of BCA Center exhibitions and events.

135 CHURCH STREET, BURLINGTON VERMONT | BURLINGTONCITYARTS.ORG

   @BTV CITYARTS | 802.865.7166