

Nina T. Becker : Artist Statement

My video installations and photography visually represent what can be felt but not seen, embracing this paradox. I use the camera to embody absent subjects, intervene in perspectival space, and arrest the normative passage of time. Though my frames are notably void of human bodies, the absent subject becomes as central to the work as what is visible in the image. Thematically, my work invokes tall tales from my upbringing and identification, the politicized history of the photographic apparatus, the cultural impact of our political economy.

I develop my artistic and aesthetic interests in my recent photographs and video installations. My recent work, a video installation titled *Aninut (72 Hours)*, depicts the home of a family member recorded in the 72 hours between her death and burial as it is ritualized in Jewish religion. Its title references both the Talmudic term¹ and the history of conceptualist time-based works. The installation wraps the gallery walls in a band comprised of five projections, each showing one room in the house. In each projection, the four walls of the room are stitched panoramically, creating an otherwise impossible 360° vantage. Formally, the almost-still videos inhabit the space between photography and video in order to access questions about the interstitial period after death but before burial. In my previous work, *Thank G-d for Mississippi*, I returned to my home state of West Virginia to photograph the area's most common sites of fatal or near-fatal jumps. West Virginia is continually ranked one from the bottom (above Mississippi) in most socio-economic measures, including a correlative high rank in suicides, inspiring common use of the phrase "Thank G-d for Mississippi." Using a boom to suspend my camera ten feet over various edges and cliffs, I photographed the view only seen by individuals once they have jumped. This work represents the individual and social implications of the depressed socio-economics of West Virginia, the "canary in the mine" for conditions that later reverberate throughout the nation. Both works expose the desire to evidence, record, arrest, and repeat the finite, ad infinitum. Using the camera and image, I suspend liminal moments, denying time its constancy and passing.

My upcoming projects continue to explore photographic myths and histories, and the broader political role of the artist in cultural production and memory. Currently, I am exploring constructed ideas of time in a video project about apocalypse theories, from Noah's Arc to the projected 2012 End of Days. I hope to further explore time and memory through visual representations of sites of trauma.

¹ *Aninut*, n.: The ritual time period distinguished in Jewish tradition between a person's death and their burial, the in between time. [Hebrew]