

Juliette Blightman RELATIONS

December 1, 2018 - January 26, 2019

It was serendipity that brought James Benning's exhibition, *31 Friends* (October), to O-Town House just before Juliette Blightman's exhibition *RELATIONS*. I had introduced James and Juliette at a bar in Berlin many years ago. They became fast friends, and I guess I wasn't surprised. I liked them both immensely, so that should have been enough, but when I saw how they got along, I then was able to see their work all over again for the very first time. James was not just a structuralist filmmaker whose durational films demanded a new, more intense kind of looking, and Juliette's time-based, media-specific, and sometimes even weather-conditional works were so much more than just poignant, aesthetic exercises. My observation of this blossoming friendship showed me that both James and Juliette were tapped into a unique mode of collating our realities. Even with nearly 40 years between them, I witnessed a kinship that was located in a yearning: a yearning for exactly that kind of kinship.

Like James, Juliette is a documentarian - a looker and a listener - but instead of narrating a story, she enables a new space for discovery - away for us to find and write the story ourselves. The way her works unfold beckon our attention. Insist on more time. Implore us to linger in the in-between. The unsaid. There is a generosity inherent to allowing (demanding) time be spent. Here the durational becomes less punishment and more privilege. Suddenly we can relish this fleeting suspension in the ephemeral. Things shift. We can almost taste our own experience of things.

Juliette started as an artist working primarily in film. Her films at the time, shot on 16mm, located their own medium (dated as it may have been already) as a means to suspend time by counting it. Her filmic narrations (static shots through a window or of a painting on a museum wall) revel in the *ordinary* and the *familiar*: usually unremarkable vistas.

"By focusing on details, texture, and the non-event, and making this ephemeral substance the subject of a practice, a displacement of relations between centre and periphery occurs."

- (Kirsty Bell in *Scripts, Descriptions and Texts* 2011-2016)

Juliette's paintings embody a remarkably similar *staycation* in the *fleeting*. Lovers (real or imagined), friends and family all materialize like our own sketchy memories. Whether or not we can identify and name the individual subjects is completely irrelevant because they seem so familiar. The paintings capture what could be chat-histories or photo-streams. There is something universal about this collection of people - photographs from a recent holiday: perhaps on an island, or a road trip. Late nights of excess ending in long afternoons of lounging. Mentors, idols and proxy-father-figures. All of the improvised patterns of leisure as quiet byproducts within a greater narration of life.