

TELEVISION SPOTS (1987/88)

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Produced between 1987 and 1988, the «Television Spots» are exactly what they claim to be: these twelve, short video sequences were originally planned as inserts within the regular advertisements on Canada's private television network. Unannounced and without introductions of any kind, on a nightly basis one of the fifteen to thirty-second-long spots was aired as part of the scheduled blocks of broadcasting. The sequences tell short stories or show excerpts of occurrences: so «Answering Machine,» for example, begins with the shot of a woman arriving at the door of her apartment. The moment she finds her keys, the telephone rings. One sees her enter the apartment, put down her handbag, and finally sit down to smoke a cigarette. On the table beside her, the telephone continues to ring. The spot concludes with the caller's voice leaving a message on the answering machine. Regarding the camerawork and sense of dramaturgy in the editing, the spots correspond—if greatly shortened—with conventional film and television practices. Yet their content, the dramaturgy of the action, and what's depicted, run contrary to the usual expectations of viewers; they undermine the usual construction of their needs; in doing so, the [representation of the] public's identity is shown in the end as a greatness defined purely through the medium. The «Television Spots» appear as «narrative» fragments spontaneously readable and formally easy to identify but their imagery shows «empty places»: interchangeable performance locations, urban areas lacking any dramatic or narrative value—as everyday and banal as the «action» or the «events,» images normally left out between edited shots. They show waiting, a lack of orientation and misunderstandings, or the impossibility to agree at all. Alongside all this, and while using an editing rhythm considerably slower than that of the advertising world's sense of dramaturgy (but always within the framework of the economic time-frame of conventional cinematic images), these shootings take on the quality of reality captured as found footage, as fragmentary found objects, or, in the transporting of medial constructions in their dysfunctionality, as an alternative way of representing reality—one that refers to meaning-laden structures outside of the medium.

(Source: «Seeing Time,» exhibition of the Kramlich collection at the Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, <http://on1.zkm.de/kramlich/douglas>) - <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/>

In 1989 his first series of short works for television, the twelve *Television Spots*, were broadcast in Saskatoon and Ottawa amid regular programming, as if they were commercials. Unidentified, the short scenes depicting open-ended, banal activities baffled viewers. In 1992 Douglas's *Monodramas* were broadcast on Toronto and Vancouver television to a similar effect. - Guggenheim

MONODRAMAS (1991)

Douglas's "Monodramas," ten 30- to 60-second videos from 1991, conceived as interventions into commercial television, interrupted the usual flow of advertising and entertainment when broadcast nightly in British Columbia for three weeks in 1992. These micronarratives mimic television's editing techniques, but as kernels of a story they refuse to cohere. They are tales of dysfunction and dislocation, misanthropy and misunderstanding. When the videos were aired unannounced during commercial breaks, viewers called the station to inquire about what was being sold, their responses evincing how the media can refocus attention from content to consumption. -- Nancy Spector