

Hannah Meerman

*The Cure: For as long as you
need or as long as you can
handle*

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‘The Cure: For as long as you need or as long as you can handle’ is interested in how the biology of safety and danger affects our ability to relate to other beings. Existing in the world is a constant negotiation between you and your environment. The unending onslaught of information and sensory stimulation is continually asking for your physical attention.

Combining virtual entertainment technology and the medicine of subtraction, the installation seeks to attune viewers to the quality of their own physical presence. If the brain is to be understood as a cultural organ, the project views the nervous system as an appropriate starting point from which to reintegrate the impact of our collective disassociation, denial, and delusion.

In a landscape of performative emotions we cannot simply delete our undesirable feelings and body sensations. Similarly, we cannot delete our connection to the undesirable people, places, or past events that have, for better or worse, informed our present-day conditions.

The pleasure of exit

~
on **Hannah Meerman's** *The Cure: For as long as you need or as long as you can handle*

On July 12th of this year Senator Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez addressed chairman of the Committee on Oversight & Reform Elijah Cummings and a coterie of members in a hearing on 'Migrant Children & Border Security' at the Rayburn Office Building in Washington DC. Sitting between Representative Veronica Escobar and Representative Rashida Tlaib, Ocasio-Cortez delivered an arresting account of her excursion to a 'detention facility' in El-Paso on the South West border of the United States drawing from the collated testimonies and grievances of seventeen confined women and her own first-hand observations. In the span of minutes, she condemns the cruel and unlawful conditions to which they (and many others) are subject, citing anecdotal explanations of unsanitary and inhumane conditions. The seizure and detainment actions against those who border cross is not the topic of this essay but it's launch point (an index of Web URLs is appended below that might offer something in the way of a partial portrait of this emergency). As Cortez grew increasingly distressed the further she revealed the terrors and abuses excessively wrought upon already vulnerable and impoverished families, a staffer standing on the dais fainted. The loss of consciousness and fall was captured all on C-SPAN, time-stamped (7:59 am Pacific Time) and distributed freely (most uses of C-Span footage are permitted given the channel's public domain status). A confused room murmurs and those around the fallen woman huddle to provide support before Chairman Cummings motions a ten-minute pause in the proceedings.

Watching and re watching this moment, her wakefulness to transient lifelessness on repeat, the leaning, swaying and buckling, feels charged with the very same debased allure and voyeurism that can be felt en masse in viral public outrage compilations or clips of school yard brawls. The accident illuminates the claustrophobic congressional room and the immense inertia of the societies it continues to cradle. It is an allegory of

the great onslaught of our now, where safely settled peoples are tracked and forcibly expelled by border agents and where an obvious podium to voice outrage and resistance to this appears ever dwarfed by press, swayed public and the laws enforced upon them. That 'swooning' is frequently deployed in storytelling to express overwhelming joy, erotic human encounter, character vulnerability or plot complication doesn't appear to have any likely basis in reality. Fainting episodes in public are involuntary. They shock and scare, are complimentary to nothing and have no tangible comedic effect, a far cry from a devised screen syncope.

Meerman in *The Cure*: For as long as you need or as long as you can handle screens a montage of found and film footage, low res YouTube uploads and theatrical cuttings of fainting subjects. Intended for comparison, her edits expose the difficulty of faithfully performing a cinematic loss of consciousness (despite it's frequent occurrence in Western cinema) and the clumsy and flaccid appearance of bone-fide falls in real life. The absurd looping of tumbling bodies hardly soothes, but because these feverish extracts are so systemised and spliced near to and shortly after the spectacle, all of them fail to develop the obvious substance that put them there in the first place.

Meerman intersperses these works like a concrete musician but a fluidity can be found in subject matter. In mindfulness and meditation, self-awareness plateaus as a state of total disembodiment. It is an informed tapping 'into passing' out and the catharsis and remedy that lies in unresponsiveness and self-deletion. 'Fainting when awake' can be then thought as transcendental, the same as 'ego death' in a Jungian sense or in pranayama breathing – in which inhalations and exhalations are regimented by 'relaxed attention'. Her open call to occupy her works at a pace and nearness of your choosing could likewise be disclosed before entering a difficult pose or challenging posture.

The potentiality of disembodiment is exactly what is sought after in Virtual Reality use too. It entertains by stripping a participant of their sensorial grasp while deploying a second field of response and play (this time

by electronic sound and vision). It can also confuse the two and provide restorative assistance, rehabilitation or therapeutic help for motor and cognitive-impaired individuals. The 'Walkin VR' system (currently in beta) introduces free movement to pedestrian environments. A grocery store counter is rendered and a user with cerebral palsy, equipped with haptic joy-sticks and head-gear, scans and bags items without limitation.

The vestibular system, a part of the ear responsible for balance, spatial orientation and coordination, can be compromised when in conflict with information received by the eyes. A frozen or stalled VR picture or sudden lag in frame rate in concert with an active wearer can quickly disturb their proprioception or spatial awareness. This disorienting latency is a particular risk with GPU-hungry games and dense RPG's. While the VR feed should remain gyroscopic and frictionless, if a prompted set of images can't be rendered in time in relation to head rotation, it is thought better not to load this information at all rather than have it run asynchronous. When big data fails a blank screen is preferential. A digital 'faint' has been pre-programmed ...

Will Kollmorgen

I live and work in Narrm, on the unceded sovereign land of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/issues/55-detention/3596-how-you-can-help-migrant-children>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/01/aoc-border-facility-horrifying-cbp-officers-tweets>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/30/us-immigration-family-separations-aclu-children-court-filing>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/10/usa-treatment-of-asylum-seekers-southern-border/>

Hannah Meerman is a Melbourne/Naarm-based artist. Through video, performance, and ready-made materials, Hannah seeks to examine the practical realities of co-creation operating at a societal level. Drawing awareness to the uncanny and fragile “mesh” that binds everything around us, her work challenges inherited hierarchies of agency and care toward both sentient and non-sentient entities. Despite proving herself capable of refined application, Hannah considers intermittent dedication and crude application to be best practise in light of her anxieties for the future.

Currently undertaking a double-degree in a Bachelor of Arts and Fine Arts at Monash University, Hannah received the Bus Projects Exhibition Award in 2018.

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Bus Projects
25-31 Rokeby Street,
Collingwood,
VIC 3066 Australia.
busprojects.org.au/

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