

Alejandro Cesarco

11.28.17



Alejandro Cesarco, *Revision*, 2017, 16mm film transferred to digital video, color, sound, 3 minutes 40 seconds.

*Alejandro Cesarco is a Uruguay-born, New York-based artist and the director of the nonprofit Art Resources Transfer. His current solo show, "Song," at the Renaissance Society in Chicago features a range of old and new works, and at its heart is the video *Revision*, 2017, which Cesarco discusses below. The exhibition is on view until January 28, 2018. Cesarco also has a show at Galleria Raffaella Cortese in Milan, "The Measures of Memory," which is on view from November 29, 2017 to February 28, 2018.*

THE FIRST THING YOU SEE when you walk into the exhibition at the Renaissance Society is a fifty-two-and-a-half-foot wall that horizontally bisects the room. On the entrance side of this partition is a faint pink silkscreen—*The Dreams I've Left Behind*, an image of the wall on which my bed rests. These two textures, my bedroom wall and that of the gallery, rub up against each other, signaling the apparent boundaries between the private and the public, the intimate and the institutional. The gallery wall appears to be blushing, a visual record of shame or embarrassment. In this case, it's unclear whether the wall is blushing because of the nature of my dreams or because I've left them behind. The rest of the show is concealed on the other side of this wall.

This masking of feeling, this muted form of melodrama, is in itself a way of silencing or withdrawing, but it is also a methodological move. It is a way of keeping intimacy at a distance, of staking out a comfortable place from which to speak. This particular staging—one which is so artificial, so planned—is also a way to materialize and give form to a secret, in the sense of "know that I am concealing something from you."

As you head into the space, an excerpt of *Evermess*, a video I made in 2008, plays on a monitor. In this excerpt, a young man, perhaps a literary scholar, recites a monologue on the meaning of tragedy. "I define tragedy as the arrival of an enigmatic and supernatural message that the hero fails to fully and timely comprehend," he says. Almost ten years later, I reshot this excerpt using the same actor. The script is basically the same; the principal difference is a change of verb tense, from present to past. "I defined tragedy as the arrival of an enigmatic and supernatural message that the hero fails to fully and timely comprehend," he now says.

This new work is titled *Revision*, and this repetition, temporal stutter, and self-citation return the finished work to a draft form. They open it up, call attention to the piece, and allow it to continue to unfold differently. In my work, I am interested in the act of looking again, repeatedly, from a different distance or perspective. Between *Evermess* and *Revision*, I explore the idea of tempo, phrasing, duration—the musicality of looking. What we consider tragic has shifted in the past ten years, as have the power and usage of words and facts. So, to go back to the problems of reading and deciphering seemed rather timely.

Revision also ostensibly thematizes a frustration with the actualization of an idea—the balance between an ideal always beyond reach and what you end up settling for, the "good enough," to put it in D.W. Winnicott's terms. At the same time, it is also a pretty direct statement against the continuous demands for productivity and the banal exaltation of novelty and newness.

There are two other new works in the show, *Interlude* and *Vanitas (From Remorse to Regret)*, that further address the "good enough," the misreading of opportunities, risks not taken, and longing. Broadly speaking, I think "Song" focuses on the (apparent) loss of possibility as a means of eroticizing it.

— As told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler