

ICE CREAM

CONTEMPORARY ART IN CULTURE

Sutton, Gloria, "Kelly Nipper", *Ice Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture*, Phaidon Press, New York, NY, 2007, pp. 268 - 271

Kelly Nipper's four-channel video installation **Bending Water into a Heart Shape** (2003) comprises moving and still intermittent images of slow pans of an empty ice-skating rink; a delicate mobile made of wire and droplets of frozen water, its arms teetering from the changing weight of the melting ice; and a dancer in a red maillot painstakingly executing a figure-skating jump in slow motion. Through this composition of images, Nipper locks the viewer in a tight series of equivalencies.

Through the course of fifteen minutes, we see the transformation of water from solid to liquid and back again, with the notion of duration feeling subject to analysis. Each of the activities presented in the four screens offers a different approach to marking what Nipper would call 'clock time.' The quiet trickle of the mobile's melting droplets hitting the floor generates the video's soundtrack, offering a real-time system to track the span of an hour. The two videos of the empty rink were shot simultaneously from cameras mounted on opposite sides of a spinning turntable making the cameras literal timing devices, measuring two halves of the same action. The twin circling motion forms a figure 8, the symbol for infinity, a concept paramount to many of Nipper's works.

The act of isolating discrete movements serves Nipper's interest in conveying, though not illustrating how vision is a subjective experience. In her constructions vision and expression go hand and hand. The video and sculptural installation **An Arrangement for the Architect and a Darkroom Timer** (2005) contrasts the tendency for technological rather than sensory communication. In a dim room, viewers stare at two red saturated squares projected to the scale of the wall. In each, images of a young man and woman face each other, their bodies' only centimetres apart, but never touching. As their movements clearly register mounting tension and fatigue; the audience within the space of the gallery unconsciously mimics the couple's nervous ticks and symptoms from being physically scrutinized on video. In the corner a darkroom timer with illuminated hands relentlessly registers the passing of each second until the silence is broken by its obtrusive buzzer, which wails until someone in the audience physically resets it. In an adjoining room, a red apple projected against a chalky pink background silently splits and falls apart in two halves. In the case of the couple, the apple and the group dynamics that transpire in the gallery, there is a gravitational pull invisibly bringing things together while physically separating them. **Arrangement** suggests how communication is reliant on static protocols that facilitate efficiency over understanding.

Floyd on the Floor (2006-7) melds Nipper's interests in meteorological phenomena and notational systems of experimental dance. In a single-channel video a female dancer methodically gyrates her hips in an even clockwise rotation while small electrodes measure her energy output. She is subjected to temperature checks by a technician who inserts a digital thermometer into her ear and the resulting data provides the timing and movement patterns for the dance 'score' to a live performance showing an allegorical meeting between a hurricane (Floyd) and the earth (the Floor). Nipper clearly revels in the 'typology of testing' making the work compelling through the use of empirical forms to focus our attention on process and action rather than end products and results. * **Gloria Sutton**

