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SEARCH YEAR –

/SOFT TURNS – ENCLOSED
 PROJECT ROOM. SEPTEMBER 2 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2011
 RECEPTION AT STRIDE GALLERY
 OPENING RECEPTION FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2011, 8PM
 ARTIST TALK - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 AT 1PM

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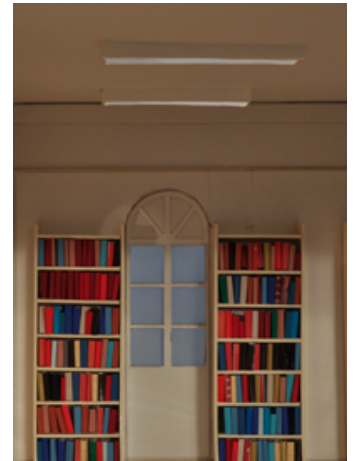
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/The movement between what is accessible and what is inaccessible, between the comprehensible and incomprehensible is at the heart of the video ENCLOSED, 2010, a dual-channel projection, which presents two synchronized spaces of miniature libraries (predominantly built out of books). As the camera moves mechanically, arbitrarily, through the twin spaces, one witnesses the changing scenery like a passenger, caught in its unyielding movement. The challenge is for the individual to negotiate their own level of engagement, to navigate this indefinite space.

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[/ARTIST BIO](#)

/Currently based in Toronto, SARAH JANE GORLITZ and WOJCIECH OLEJNIK have been collaborating on stop-motion and video installations since 2006. With simple means, their work considers the relationship between the real and the imagined, the intimate and the unfamiliar.

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/INSIDE THE LIBRARY INSIDE MY HEAD: SOFT TURN'S ENCLOSED
 ROSEMARY HEATHER

In the best part of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2*, the last instalment of the eight part series, Harry speaks to Dumbledore in a vast white space. 'Is this real?' Harry asks. 'Or is it inside my head?' 'Of course it's inside your head' the wizard replies 'but why should it be any less real?' From the mouth of a wizard in a children's tale comes wisdom about the metaphysical problem of our age.

How we understand the real is changing. Working as Soft Turns, Sarah Jane Gorlitz and Wojciech Olejnik created their video, *Enclosed* (2009), which dramatises this transition in the form of a question: What is real? With *Enclosed*, the artists suggest representational media, in the form of film or video, is one cause of the difficulty this question presents. Just how real is the world image technologies create?

Like storybooks, image-based media tend to be thought of as 'not real'. When you watch a movie you are participating in an illusion; it's made-up, in part 'inside your head'. With the

proliferation of electronic media, the boundaries of this 'in your head' dimension are expanding. Gorlitz and Olejnik create artworks that examine a key part of this phenomenon: our credulity.

We are so easily fooled. It's a narrative Soft Turns often play out in their work. In */mm* (2007) and *just add water* (2007) stop-motion animations move through maquettes of subway stations the artists have constructed. In *Enclosed*, the camera pans amongst the shelves of a library. In each work, sleek spaces cast shadow and reflect light; when looking at these volumes and surfaces, the eye draws its own conclusions. What we see is real enough, if only to understand we are looking at a subway or library; or the idea of these things we have in our mind, contemporary places that – not incidentally – happen to be devoid of people.

In the artists' hands, verisimilitude comes from a meticulous attention to detail. Soft Turns describe their work as "meditative" – this is as true of the time they put into making their works as it is of the pleasure viewers get from looking at them. Scaled to the size of a hardcover book, the library they construct is made from discarded books the artists found in Berlin. Through a labour-intensive process, Soft Turns transform the substance of books into a library, a sly commentary on the idea that books contain multitudes. That the library itself is a universe is one potential meaning of the work's title.

But *Enclosed* is not a library; it is the image of such. *Enclosed* is a film that constructs, through accuracy of architectural scale, detail and dimension, a figural space, the library we might visit in our dreams. While we recognize what we see, we will never read these books; *Enclosed* presents 'library' as an idea, one that is accessible to us and yet just out of reach. The space of *Enclosed* is not real; but does exist within the real space of film.

To ensure this space has substance, the artists took pains to construct it. Their use of real world source materials (as opposed to computer-generated graphics) helps give the animation a tangible presence. More important, the library we see on film is a composite structure, composed of not one but 12 different maquettes, each one of a different library. The end result is a generalized space, the Platonic Form of the library as it were. This is a library as a contemplative entity.

By creating a space for the purpose of filming it, the artists concede to practicalities. However heroic the effort, making art is certainly less arduous than making architecture – and serves a different purpose. In the construction of each maquette, fidelity to detail translates into the indeterminate scale of filmic space. Miniature does not necessarily matter when filmic illusion sets in; it simply becomes the volume that defines the filmic space. By shooting the maquettes and editing all views into one homogenous space, the artists create an encompassing view. However, the continuous motion – within the film and of the film itself – also prevents close looking, and so the illusion is further perpetuated. This is true, even though *Enclosed* is presented as two films on a split screen, each providing slightly different views of the library construct.

In his book *The world viewed: reflections on the ontology of film* (1971), Stanley Cavell writes: "In viewing a movie my helplessness is mechanically assured. I am present not at something happening...but at something that has happened, which I absorb (like a memory)." ¹ Elaborating on this passage by Cavell, Rosalind Krauss notes that the viewing of a film "suspends our presence to the world it shows us" ²

In a work like *Enclosed*, however, the artists create the world they show us. This is true not only of the materials in the film, but of how it plays out. The work creates its world, a process co-enacted by the viewer every time they view it. The camera pans through the halls of a 'library' and we see the books on its shelves. At a certain point, the camera zooms close enough so we can see that the books are something other: cut up pages folded into dummy books. This is the reveal: the moment when the *mise en scène* looks fake and the illusion is dispelled. Seen on a loop, the process is repeated: the world of this particular library is created and destroyed all over again.

As sophisticated viewers, we greet each stage of this cycle with equanimity. We credit the library as real in the moments that this is possible. We accept that it's a maquette when the cracks in the illusion start to show. Initial perceptions are followed by a reassessment. And each time, arguably, we are willing to be duped. Perhaps this is the real meaning of the title *Enclosed*: we live inside the world inside us.

¹ Stanley Cavell, *The world viewed: reflections on the ontology of film* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1971) 27.

² Rosalind E. Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010) 63.

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[/WRITER BIO](#)

/ROSEMARY HEATHER writes about art internationally. A co-author of the novel, *Philip* (2006) she curated *Ron Giii: Hegel's Salt Man* (2007); *Serial Killers: Elements of Painting Multiplied by Six Artists* (2000); *Eli Langer* (1999); and, *I Beg to Differ* (1996). From 2003-2009 she was the editor of C Magazine.

