

Visual Art



During the Images 2004 Festival, visitors to Gallery TPW can see Adad Hannah's slow-moving *Folk*.

Unmoving pictures

Adad Hannah plays with time

Folk & Still show at Gallery TPW

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VISUAL ARTS CRITIC

Adad Hannah's "Folk & Still" might get lost among umpteen others at Images 2004, which wraps up this weekend.

It shouldn't. At the very least, the 32-year-old Montréal-based artist is staking out the perimeter of what might emerge as a new art form. If painted illusion — fake windows painted on windowless old buildings, say — is called *trompe-l'oeil*, what Hannah is after might be called brain tricking, or *trompe-le-cerveau*.

To experience "Folk & Still" — two connected if rather different pieces of work — you enter two dark rooms, each with its own large screen, each with an image that doesn't do much of anything at all. In both cases you're left a bit in the dark, literally and figuratively.

Yet the installation questions the connections (and disconnections) between moving images and still images, between photography and film and between video and film loops. These are the very ideas at the heart of the festival, and lead to even more questions about the relation between images and time itself.

With "Folk," the viewer is confronted by what appears to be a larger-than-life still photo. Here's a circa '80s couple — he looks like George W. Bush's younger brother — playing at being '60s-era folkies.

Holding his acoustic guitar up high on his chest, the guy leans toward the microphone, its stand being adjusted by a young female technician, on her knees in front of the couple.

His partner stands more upright than he is, her head back a bit, her right arm extended out toward the viewer, palm flat.

You can almost hear them below, "If I had a hammer . . ."

You eventually realize that this is no still photo but a tape loop made with a pair of actors able to hold a pose for a long time.

There. You see? Her left eye glances at him. There. His eyes move.

Is this film-length loop simultaneously aping and subverting still photography?

In his way, Hannah defies the notion that film is "mummified change," in critic André Bazan's words, by creating a film-length visual form where change is denied as the mummification process is played out forever.

It's a gallery of the living dead or, rather, the barely alive undead.

With the movies *Memento*, *21 Grams* and *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* blurring the distinctions between flash-forwards and flash-backs, popular culture is beginning to enjoy playing fast and loose with the idea of time.

And Hannah is already waiting on the new frontier for the general audience to catch up.

(Hannah's other installation space at TPW presents a minimalist interactive experience between viewer and screen that, alas, offers minimal thrills.)

"In *21 Grams*, you still know it's the actor Benicio Del Toro," says Hannah. "But in 'Folk & Still,' when you slow everything down, you lose your relationship with real time. The people are just posing. We're all pulled relentlessly through time no matter what we do.

"Culture is speeding up, at least the general transfer of information is (speeding up).

"But in 'Folk & Still,' you're being dragged through time."

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Just the facts

What: "Folk & Still" by Adad Hannah

Where: Gallery TPW, 80 Spadina Ave, Suite 310

When: Tues-Sat., noon-5 p.m. To May 1