

## **TIME!**

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In the photographic series *Waiting* (2003), Pascal Grandmaison asked friends to think about their near future while he took their pictures. His subjects are set within a large neutral field, positioned far to the bottom of the frame. They appear to be engaged in private thoughts but we must take it on faith that the camera has actually caught them thinking about what the artist asked. The images might depict these individuals musing about events that just happened, or of a distant future. Because they are the artist's friends, their relationship with him probably means they feel comfortable under the stare of his camera, free to let their minds wander. But perhaps, as most of us do when a camera is pointed in our direction, and no matter how comfortable we feel, these people are caught in awareness of their eventual depiction on film, and in this case aren't just depicted thinking about their future but of being shown thinking about their future.

In the video installation *Solo* (2003), Grandmaison admits to the influence of director Jonathan Demme's 1985 video for Manchester band New Order's *Perfect Kiss*. Cutting against the already established, kinetic editing for the nascent genre of rock video, Demme's languidly paced tracking shots of the four band members was prescient even during its day and now almost twenty years on is genre-defying and revolutionary.

*Solo* employs similarly paced camera and editing techniques, but where Demme shot the English band full figure from middle distance, Grandmaison uses tight close ups on musicians as they warm up or rest between playing their individual instruments. In one shot we see the hood of a drummer and hear him sketchily beating on his snare before breaking into a rhythmic paradiddle. In another, the (taped) eyeglasses of a guitarist frame an interiorized, focused stare. In total there are five portrait sections in *Solo*, each of a musician playing alone. Taken together, the individuals appear to be band members playing component parts of a song in a recording studio. A woman, for instance, hides behind a large studio microphone, headphones on, singing what is obviously part of an unheard track. Like *Waiting*, the figures in *Solo* are composed and shot alone in moods of contemplation. Each appears to be thinking about their individual part in a larger whole.

Grandmaison depicts time. The people in *Solo* and *Waiting* are shown in the midst of durational processes. In similar fashion, *Running* (2003) and *Manner* (2003), the two works at the Contemporary Art Gallery, document durational activity, but in this instance its aftermath and effects. Drum skins exhibit the abuse of hours of service, while *Running* shows a foot, its rhythmic motion almost imperceptibly hinting at past activity. Was the person wearing the trainer just running so that the blood pumping through their leg, and making the trainer beat, is a sign of it? While an answer to this question might be possible, it misses the point. Grandmaison's images don't depict activities per se, but the pervasively unacknowledged time and space that living consumes.

The titles Grandmaison assigns his works—to date mostly suites of related images on video or photographic series—provide provocative clues to their intent. *Waiting*, for example, isn't a word we might normally associate with contemplative thinking—the state of mind Grandmaison suggests to his subjects. It's a word that connotes biding time in a state of anticipation. Thinking about the near future and waiting for it, while related, are two distinct phenomena. Perhaps then, Grandmaison's photographs don't depict a state of consciousness. How, after all, could he, and we, ever know what's on someone's mind? What can be concretely presumed is that Grandmaison has caught his friends waiting for their picture to be taken. They look expectant, maybe even a little bored. Similarly, *Solo* shows band members extracted from the stereotypical frame we have grown overly accustomed to seeing musicians in (rock video predominantly), where as part of a group they are invariably pictured in some theatrical performance (of their music, or themselves). Rarely are musicians shown in the act of actually making music, or engaged in the repetitions, practice, and rumination which form so much a part of any creative act.