

Brian Fridge

Essay by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

In *Sequence 2.1* (2002-03), time slows down for two minutes as the muscles of the eyes relax while the gaze is lulled into a vortex of light refracting off of barely material objects – occasional glitter, mostly haze – spiraling and pulsating organically. It is a microcosm or a macrocosm, endlessly coming together and then apart, suggestive of galaxies and quasars, and like them, unfathomable intellectually in terms of translating in our mind the light years of their location into a graspable notion of space and distance from us.

Yet Brian Fridge's universe is also a simple one as he explores an epic and vanguard notion of photography and film in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, his camera recording the condensation of humidity in the air above an open freezer, pulling us back to the basics of photography, and making us think of salts and silver nitrate. His art shows us how the iris of the video camera strives to pick up light. A Hi-8 video camera, some lights, and a freezer are among the few things in his stark studio/apartment in Fort Worth, Texas where one has the acute sense of being in the alcove of a true modernist, experimenting with vision, form, and the representation of space through both aesthetic, philosophic, and scientific parameters – searching for something absolute.

The thoughts that run through his mind must be almost unbearable at times, bordering on folly. In his universe, there is ultimately no free will and there is only free will: all has already happened; human beings exist as sculpture in the universe which is in itself also a sculptural event on a broader, larger scale. When you look at things from his point of view, motion and events that happen around us are not actually happening because everything has already happened. Fridge's art makes you think of Big Science and Big History today, and how those perspectives may open up new fields of research. Time can be conceived in nanoseconds or billionths of seconds. At the same time, his art evokes the sublime, epiphany, transcendence, and the exploration of the soul (at first glance more typical of religious endeavors than of science or philosophy). His acute explorations of vision and perceptions are also self-portraits, analyses of the self and of consciousness.

Although apparently an artist of detached viewing, and although he uses video to make his art, Fridge is more significantly a sculptor. His earliest works, in fact, prior to 1997, were spherical objects covered in graphite on plinths. Then he began to use the video camera to "see" what he was seeing, empirically pointing it towards elements of his environment that he could perceive on the same scale as his body – no microscopes, no telescopes, just his freezer that he could also look at with the human eye. Using lighting carefully and moving air vapor in an open freezer her encouraged condensation and ice crystal formations became visible to be recorded by the camera lens, turning into abstract images when projected or seen on monitors, with gray and whites and glitter effects, suggestive of electricity.

When he shows *Sequence 2.1*, *Sequence 2.2*, and *Sequence 2.3* (2003) on three monitors in a space, like he did at Artpace San Antonio, technology transcends power- monitors are no longer television sets, nor are they merely means by which to present videos, rather, they become opalescent laboratory tubes that are freed from the fetters of reporting daily life. *Sequence 2.1* rushes quickly as three seconds loop over and over again, a lapse of time during which the notion or precipitation is represented as continuous through the

implosion and collapse of tiny iridescent circles. Sequence 2.2 and Sequence 2.3, instead, slow duration down again around experiences of focus and radiate outwards and inwards, suggestive of solar eclipses and of eyeballs. As the gaze is pulled towards the center of the images by the camera recordings of simple magnetic phenomena, vision becomes three-dimensional and sculptural.

A deep sense of solitude emanates from these works, of melancholy, daydreaming, and detachment from current events and the apparent urgency of conceptual documentaries so topical in the art world today. It is not that Fridge's art is apolitical – it is rather that it is more deeply political, engaging the viewer into a thought process about vision itself, and how knowledge is constructed through the dance of perception and memory in consciousness, as something ultimately liquid and made up of shifting dimensions. His art grounds the viewer in the body precisely through the presentation of constant embodiment and disembodiment (while news broadcasts disengage viewers from the body by projecting them into an inevitable unsatisfactory experience of mere information and lack of agency). In many ways, not too many words should be spent on describing Brian Fridge's works for contemplation. Like a poem by William Blake, he evokes the sublime and sees a universe in a grain of sand, and he delves into the incandescent iris of a tiger's eye.

When I visited his home and studio, he offered me some grapes on a dish, and we spoke of the early-twentieth century Suprematists, from Malevich to Tatlin, we spoke of Henri Bergson's notions on duration, of Julian Barbour's Block Universe theories in physics, and of the visionary culture of the 60's Belgian artist Panamarenko's flying machines, the way Robert Smithson addressed time in *Spiral Jetty*, Arte Povera's celebration of endless change, process, and the flow of energy. We spoke about science and art in general and never mentioned poetry, of course.

*Carolyn Christov-Barkargiev is Chief Curator,
Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy*

essay from *Artpace, New Works : 03.1*, 2003, Artpace, The International Artist-in-Residence Program, San Antonio, Texas

Brian Fridge

Statements

The universe is useful because it is at the service of nothing and is in this respect similar to art. (1999)

Art can mark the center and edge of the universe as well as be its purpose. (2000)

The format of short video segments is a way of engaging space and time in manageable units. All of the segments are generated by the artist; this active involvement is important, as is an involvement with the physical conditions of material and light. The interest in recording video indoors stems from the desire to have the imagery come from a place consistent with human size and human habit. (2007)

Large sculpture and small sculpture are practically the same size when considering the outer and inner limits of space. The pictorial space of video addresses the spaces of the imagination. Video images have no actual size, yet my images have as their source something that has, or has had, an actual size. (2009)

The cataloging system gives an external support for all the individual video segments. In early 2002 I began titling the works as *Sequence*, followed by a number designating the family and number within that family, such as *11.5*. I keep a running list of the titles and the list is roughly in the same chronological order as the videos are made. The families are based upon likeness of form, or theme, or other things. There is no strict logic or system to the cataloging. My interests are cosmological, but there is no cosmology, no system or story. (2010)

From Mircea Eliade:

"All this amounts to saying that by consciously establishing himself in the paradigmatic situation to which he is, as it were, predestined, man cosmicizes himself; in other words, he reproduces on the human scale the system of rhythmic and reciprocal conditioning influences that characterizes and constitutes a world, that, in short, defines any universe."
(*Body, House, Cosmos*, pg. 173)

"For it is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the axis for all future orientation."
(*Homogeneity of Space and Hierophany*, pg. 20)

Brian Fridge

Education

1994

B.F.A. University of North Texas

2011

M.F.A. University of Texas at Dallas

Awards and Grants

2003

International Artist in Residence, ArtPace, A Foundation for Contemporary Art, San Antonio, Texas

1996

Dallas Museum of Art, Kimbrough Fund

Selected Exhibitions

2010

Moonlighting, Hosfelt Gallery, New York

Encountering Space, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas

Temporary Occupants, Eastfield College, Dallas, Texas

AC-X, Tarrant County College, Arlington, Texas

Sustenance, Project at Singleton Blvd. Dallas, Texas

Digital Document, Centraltrak, University of Texas at Dallas Artists Residency

2009

Cou Huo, three public venues, Beijing, China (catalogue)

co-organized by Chen Xinpeng and Red Box Studios

Archetectonic, CADD ArtLab, Dallas, Texas

Blueprint, McKinnney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas

Say Anything, University of Texas at Dallas, Texas

10th Anniversary Exhibition, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas

2008

A Place in the Painting Continuum: Brian Fridge, Jin-Ya Huang and Derrick Saunders, University of North Texas Galleries, Denton, Texas

ech_o, Centraltrak, University of Texas at Dallas Artists Residency

Something New, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas

2007

Brian Fridge: Photographs, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas (solo)
P.R.I.N.T. - Looking Back, Pressing Forward, University of North Texas Art Gallery, Denton
Everything, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
The Frontier is Here, National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture conference, Austin, Texas

2005

The Pantagruel Syndrome, TI - Turin Triennial Threemuseums, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, the GAM Galleria Civiva d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy (catalogue)
Video Installations: Nic Nicosia, Brian Fridge, Bill Viola, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NE (solo)
Works on Water, Environment Education Science and Technology Building, University of North Texas, Denton
Symbiotic, UNT artspace FW, Fort Worth, Texas
Conspicuous Production: UTD Southside Artist Residency: The First Two Years, McKinney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
Material Support, Main Gallery, University of Texas at Dallas
Art Show Here, Janette Kennedy Gallery, Dallas, Texas
Non-Narrative, Mountain View College, Treetop Gallery, Dallas, Texas

2004

New Prints, International Print Center New York, NY
One Hundred Drawings, University of Dallas, Haggerty Gallery, Irving, Texas
5th Anniversary Exhibition, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas

2003

Brian Fridge, Susan Phillipsz, Paul Pfeiffer, ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas (solo) (catalogue)
Brian Fridge, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas (solo)
Projections: Elemental, Brian Fridge, Samantha Krukowski, Rivane Neuenschwander, The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas
Brian Fridge, Sala Diaz: Tia Room, San Antonio, Texas (solo)
Untitled, Bower Living Gallery, The Bower, San Antonio, Texas
Flip, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas

2002

Slide, University of Dallas, Haggerty Gallery, Irving, Texas
Surface: Works on Walls, Tarrant County College, Arlington, Texas
Next, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas
Graphite/Graphite, NRH Gallery, North Richland Hills, Texas

2001

Composition in Black, Dunn and Brown Contemporary, Dallas, Texas (solo)
Alternative Currents, The McKinney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas, Texas

Phoenix Triennial 2001, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona (catalogue)

2000

Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York (catalogue)

Out of the Ordinary: New Art from Texas, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas (catalogue)

Crossing State Lines, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

Houston Sculpture, Art League Houston, Houston, Texas

Texas in the Biennial, Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, Louisiana

Artistic Centers in Texas: Dallas/Fort Worth, The Texas Fine Arts Association, The Jones Center for Contemporary Art, Austin, Texas (traveled to Galveston Art Center, Galveston, Texas).

Vault Sequence: Video Projections by Brian Fridge, Art on Site, Inc., Four Walls, Displays Unlimited, Fort Worth, Texas (solo)

Positexan...the show with the right attitude, PROJECT, Wichita, Kansas

1999

Toy Models of Space, Conduit Gallery Annex, Dallas, Texas (solo)

Between Image and Object, Arlington Museum of Art, Arlington, Texas

Black and White, Grey Permitted, Amarillo Museum of Art., Amarillo, Texas

Wired for Living, The McKinney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas, Texas

1998

Slag Channeling, Good/Bad Art Collective, Denton, Texas (solo)

Blurring the Lines, University of Texas at Dallas, Dallas, Texas

a posteriori, charlieuniformtango, Dallas, Texas

Scratch: a drawing show, Rachel Harris Gallery, Fort Worth, Texas

1997

Video Flash, Hohenthal und Bergen, Cologne, Germany

Fort Worth Hot Shots: Nine Artists, ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas

Convergence of Kinds: Collaboration, North Lake College, Irving, Texas

Video Night 4, Good/Bad Art Collective, Denton, Texas

1996

Fort Worth Hot Shots: Nine Artists, Main Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas (traveled to Artpace, San Antonio, Texas)

Brian Fridge/Keith Lymon, Gallery 414, Fort Worth, Texas (solo)

Gallery Night, Gallery 414, Fort Worth, Texas

1995

Anti-Gravity and Artificial Snow, Good/Bad Art Collective, Denton, Texas (solo)

Frozen, Cora Stafford Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas (solo)

Brian Fridge, Union Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas (solo)
Expo '95, 500 Exposition Gallery, Dallas, Texas
Voertman Exhibition, Main Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas
Video Night 2, Good/Bad Art Collective, Denton, Texas
Members' Show, The McKinney Avenue Contemporary, Dallas, Texas

1994

Hybrid Forms, Cora Stafford Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas
Voertman Exhibition, Main Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas
Spring Exhibition, Union Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas

1993

Select Show, Cora Stafford Gallery, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas
Members' Show, Good/Bad Art Collective, Denton, Texas

Selected Bibliography

Mitchell, Charles Dee. *Dallas Morning News*, "Rewriting the Rules," January 20, 2007, p.1E
Merino, Tony. "Brian Fridge; Photographs," *Glasstire*, February 2007, online
Terranova, Charissa. "Brian Fridge: Photographs," *Artlies*, Spring 2007, p.110
Gupta, Anjali. "The Inner Life of Household Appliances, Brian Fridge at Artpace," *Perla*, January/February 2003, pp. 56, 57
Robinson, Gail. "When Fridge Defrosts..." *Forth Worth Star-Telegram*, July 12, 2003, p. 5F
Kutner, Janet. "Images, Uncut," *The Dallas Morning News*, July 16, 2003, p. 12E
McCabe, Bret. "The Iceman Cometh," *Dallas Observer*, June 28-July 4, 2001, p. 65
Mitchell, Charles D. "What Goes on Behind Closed Freezer Doors," *Dallas Morning News*, July 11, 2001, 12C
Robertson, Johnny. "Brian Fridge," *ArtLies*, Winter 2000 – 2001, p. 66
Ennis, Michael. "Northern Exposure," *Texas Monthly*, February, 2000, p. 130
Kimmelman, Michael. "A Whitney Team Makes Its Biennial Pitch," *New York Times*, March 24, 2000, E31
Marton, Andrew. "Celestial Video..." *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 26, 2000, p.1F
Kutner, Janet. "Art Outlet," *Dallas Morning News*, July 8, 2000, 1C
Long, Andrew. "Artistic Centers in Texas Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas Fine Art Association," *Artlies*, Summer, 2000, p. 50
Kutner, Janet. *Dallas Morning News*, "Show Covers the Whole Wired World," March 14, 1999, pp. 1C, 8C
Rees, Christina. *Dallas Observer*, "Meteor Man," July 15-21, 1999, p. 21
Martin, Curtis. *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, "Brian Fridge, Video Artist," May 22 -28, 1998, p.3
Palmer, Rachel. *Denton Record Chronicle*, "The Weather Channel," May 21, 1998, pp. 3, 14
Sime, Tom. *Dallas Morning News*, "... Cameras Tweak Reality," October 30, 1998, p.5C
Goddard, Dan. *San Antonio Express News*, "Fort Worth Hot Shots..." "February 16, 1997, p. 7F
Wilson, Wade. *Flash Art*, "Fort Worth Hot Shots; Nine Artists," October, 1997, p.76
Kutner, Janet. *Dallas Morning News*, "Risky Business Shows a Profit," *Dallas Morning News*, October 1, 1996, p.27A
Kutner, Janet. *Dallas Morning News*, "Nine Artists and Several Surprises," October 18, 1996, p.47
Phelps, Paula. *Denton Record Chronicle*, "Offbeat Art," January 15, 1995, p.4C

Catalogues

"*Cou Huo*", Chen Xinpeng and Red Box Studios, Beijing, 2009, p. 19

"*The Pantagruel Syndrome*", Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Francesco Bonami, TI - Turin Triennial Threemuseums, Turin, 2005, pp. 260-261

"*Brian Fridge*", text: Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Artpace, San Antonio, 2003, (solo)

"*Phoenix Triennial*", Brady Roberts, Phoenix Art Museum, 2001, pp.36 - 37

"*Out of Ordinary: New Art from Texas*", Lynn Herbert and Paola Morsiani, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 2000, 36-43

"*Whitney Biennial 2000*", Michael Auping, Valerie Cassel, Hugh M. Davies, Jane Farver, Andrea Miller-Keller, Lawrence R. Rinder, Whitney Museum of American Art New York, 2000, pp. 110-111

Selected Public Collections

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Seattle Art Museum, Washington

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas

Dallas Museum of Art, Texas

American Airlines, Dallas, Texas