

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

The Propeller Room

A Written Accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition

by

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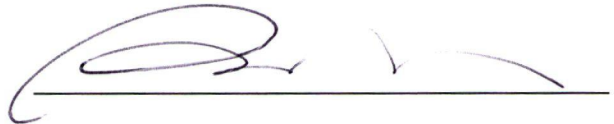
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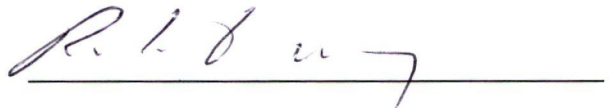
The undersigned certify that they have viewed and read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, respectively, a Thesis Exhibition and a supporting paper entitled "The Propeller Room": an accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition, submitted by Kevin Mazutinec in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



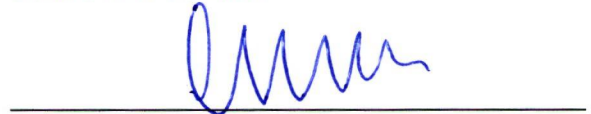
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## Abstract

This paper provides two complimentary experiences of the video production *The Propeller Room*: the original script and the artist's commentary. The script provides a look at the work from an exterior perspective allowing the opportunity to examine the structure more closely at a self-regulated pace. The artist's commentary offers yet another interpretation by providing an informal first hand account of the inspirations, ideas, and subtle details contained within *The Propeller Room*.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my committee members: Paul Woodrow, Christine Sowiak, and Robert Kelly. Without your patience, support, and wisdom, this work would have remained only a vision.

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## Introduction

Documentation is one of the dominant themes explored in *The Propeller Room*. The act of providing an authoritative record is observed in several different forms that can be classified into three main categories: the visual, the auditory, and the written.

The final audio/video version of *The Propeller Room* exists archived in the format of the DVD or digital versatile disk. The numerous incidents witnessed in this video artwork were logged on twenty-four hours of digital videotape, accompanied by a stereo soundtrack.

This written document is comprised of two corroborative components. The first is the complete text translation of *The Propeller Room* in the form of a script. Great effort has been taken to present this version of the work according to the conventions of the script format.

The second component is the transcribed artist's commentary. This item was initially an audio recording documented on micro-cassette tape. It was made during a private screening of *The Propeller Room* and ran for the complete duration (64 minutes and 40 seconds). This dictation adopted the form of a director's commentary, often found on DVD releases of theatrical motion pictures. Generated in an anecdotal fashion, it must be understood that the commentary was inspired and influenced by the continuous flow of visual information. The transcribed text contains, for reasons of accuracy and authenticity, fragmented sentence structure as well as numerous grammatical inconsistencies characteristic of casual speech.

## **The Script**

FADE IN:

INT. CORRIDOR OF UNDISCLOSED INSTITUTION -TIME UNKNOWN

We open in a long vacant hallway with grey-green brick walls and brown ceramic flooring. Numerous closed doors are found along the entire length of the passage. The SOUND of mechanized wind ECHOES through the corridor.

INTERIOR MAN ENTERS screen right and proceeds to walk down the hall.

He is wearing loose fitting grey trousers, grey jacket, a blue-green plaid shirt over a white cotton undershirt, sneakers, and carries an aluminum briefcase.

REACHING the end of the hallway he turns to the right and exits from view.

After a few seconds Interior Man reappears at the beginning of the corridor and proceeds to WALK the route again. This time he SLOWS briefly to CHECK his pockets before continuing down the length of the hall, EXITING again to the right.

He WALKS up to a service elevator and PRESSES the down button. While impatiently waiting for the elevator he attempts to CHECK his wristwatch only to find that it is not there. As he ROLLS his eyes and NODS his head back in frustration the elevator ARRIVES.

It is an older style lift with manual doors. Pulling open the exterior metal doors INTERIOR MAN enters the elevator.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR -TIME UNKNOWN

INTERIOR MAN CLOSES the exterior doors and then presses the button for the bottom floor. The interior metal grate closes accordion style from left to right and the elevator begins its descent.

During the ride INTERIOR MAN leans over, tilts his head back and looks up into the light in the roof of the elevator. He observes for a moment and then returns to his initial stance for the duration of the trip.

CUT TO:

INT. LOWER CORRIDOR -TIME UNKNOWN

INTERIOR MAN is revealed through the round window in the exterior doors of the elevator. He exits, and walks the length of another long hallway towards a

double set of doors. As he approaches he reaches into the right front trouser pocket for his keys.

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CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

The frame/room is pitch-black. As the door opens the light spills in revealing INTERIOR MAN as he steps into the room and closes the door behind him returning the frame to BLACK.

FADE TO BLACK.

CREDIT SEQUENCE:

The Propeller Room

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -TIME UNKNOWN

Diamond Head reaches into the kitchen sink and pulls a large knife from the soapy water.

He is wearing an electric-blue t-shirt with the words "DIAMOND HEAD" screened onto it, grey plaid flannel pajama bottoms, blue socks, and a blue bandage on the middle knuckle of the middle finger of his left hand.

He dries the knife with a dishtowel and then moves quickly towards the kitchen window, spreading open the Venetian blinds with his left hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUE VOID -TIME UNKNOWN

COMPUTER GRAPHIC IMAGERY (CGI) SEQUENCE

The blinds OPEN revealing DIAMOND HEAD as he LOOKS out nervously from inside he kitchen. Droplets of rain are FALLING.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN -TIME UNKNOWN

DIAMOND HEAD CLOSES the blinds and STEPS over to the kitchen counter where a raw piece of red meat sits on a cutting board.

He CROSSES his thumb against the edge of the blade to test its sharpness; then LEANS over the meat poking at it as if to check if it is really dead. Satisfied, he

begins to make the first incision. Halfway through the procedure is interrupted by the RINGING of the telephone.

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He calmly places the knife down and answers the phone.

DIAMOND HEAD

Hello?

SOUND of ECHOING WHITE NOISE.

Short pause as he waits for a response.

DIAMOND HEAD (CONT'D)

Hello?

SHRUGS and HANGS UP the phone returning to the task of cutting the meat. As he BEGINS his second attempt the phone RINGS again.

DIAMOND HEAD (CONT'D)

Hello?

Short pause.

DIAMOND HEAD (CONT'D)

Hello?

The same ECHOING NOISE is present. He begins to PACE around the kitchen, knife in hand, waiting for a response.

Finally he gives in hanging up the phone and returning once again to the meat. This time he is actually able to COMPLETE the first cut just before the PHONE RINGS for the third time.

DIAMOND HEAD with knife still in hand, SLAMS both fists down onto the counter throwing the knife and grabbing the raw meat, crushing it in his fist. He RIPS the receiver from its resting place and up to his ear.

As the phone is picked up it emits an ear-piercing SHRIEK. When it reaches DIAMOND HEADS ear he recoils in agony, throws the phone, and shakes in pain dropping the meat to the kitchen floor where it lands with a WET SLAP.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

INTERIOR MAN stands staring at a calendar on the wall, places down his briefcase, and tucks his keys into his jacket. He reaches to for a pen from the nearby desk and crosses the date OCTOBER 7th, 2001, off of the calendar. Retrieving a MICRO-CASSETTE RECORDER (MCR) from his pocket he begins dictation.

#### INTERIOR MAN

October, it functions as the tenth month in the western calendar, however the name seems to lead me to believe differently. "Octo" with a "C" is Latin. "Okto" with a "K", that would be Greek. But the whole ten-month thing, who in the hell makes a decision like that?

He ends dictation and turns off the MCR. He begins to remove his jacket as further ponders the question. Once again he retrieves the MCR.

#### INTERIOR MAN (CONT'D)

There's never just one, there's always two.

Clicking off the MCR he removes his jacket hanging it on one hook of a coat rack and removing a stethoscope from another. He places the stethoscope around his neck and stares at the image on the calendar.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR MAN'S POV - CLOSE UP - CALENDAR

COMPUTER GRAPHIC IMAGERY (CGI) SEQUENCE

The image is of a bucket. Slowly we move towards, above and down into the empty bucket.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUCKET -UNKNOWN

CGI SEQUENCE CONT'D

We are looking upwards from the bottom of the bucket as we watch planes falling into the bucket. The planes have images on them. These images are sequential frames from the preceding shot (9). As these images progress they differ from the events we have seen. The bucket in these images is NOT empty; this time there is a small piece of paper in the bottom of the bucket and on it a colourful image. As the planes finish falling...

DISSOLVE TO:

We now view the bucket from above, and as seen in the sequence of falling planes, there is now a colourful image at the bottom. As we move towards the image it fills the frame. We hold on the image.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -UNKNOWN

(The image on the paper is a posterized version of the first frame of the following sequence.)

We return to INTERIOR MAN staring at the calendar on the wall.

He reaches down, picks up his briefcase and walks across the room placing it on top of a filing cabinet. After opening the briefcase he removes three bottles of purified water and setting them down on a desk in front of a coffee machine. Before turning on computer monitors and checking phone messages.

There is a single message.

(RECORDED MESSAGE)

Message to self, yeah, remember to check the tapes.  
All of the tapes! This seems to be keeping us up till  
2:30 in the morning.

Interior man resets the machine and checks a reel-to-reel tape recorder. He sits down in a chair and wheels across the floor to a video monitor.

INTERIOR MAN

Well gentlemen, how are we today?

CUT TO:

INTERIOR MAN'S POV - CLOSE UP - VIDEO MONITOR

The image on the monitor is of TWO MEN sitting across from each other in an interrogation room engaged in conversation.

The TWO MEN are:

## DRY HEAD

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He is seated to the left side of the table, dressed in a beige, wrinkled, cotton dress shirt with sleeves rolled up to the elbows, green cotton trousers, black leather shoes, and a black tie. Beside him on the table is a pen and coil bound note pad.

## WET HEAD

He is seated to the right side of the table dressed in a navy-blue sweatshirt, beige cotton trousers, and black sneakers. His hair is slicked back as if recently soaked. He is smoking a cigarette. Before him on the table is an ashtray overflowing with cigarette butts and sand, a chrome plated cigarette case, a Zippo lighter, and a glass of water.

### DRY HEAD

...I would like to come back to that later, right now I would like to revisit an earlier issue.

### WET HEAD

Sure.

### DRY HEAD

It arose but I don't believe we afforded it significant consideration. I am troubled by the notion of the...sorry, I am trying to recall the specific terminology, was it transference, or hang on, I think it was transition in relation to passive acceptance?

### WET HEAD

'Kay, just a second.

WET HEAD lights a fresh cigarette.

### WET HEAD(CONT'D)

Well, certainly there are concerns specific to the progression, or the perception of progression. These add to the elusive qualities of this problem, and to the subsequent lack of ...

CUT TO:

## INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

We return to INTERIOR MAN who is still watching DRY HEAD and WET HEAD on the monitor.

He gets up from his chair and moves towards a two-way mirror covered by Venetian blinds. He spreads them with his left hand peering inside at WET HEAD and DRY HEAD.

After peeking in at the conversation INTERIOR MAN fully opens the blinds and steps away from the mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

Here we pick up the conversation between DRY HEAD and WET HEAD resuming where it ended on the MONITOR in the OBSERVATION ROOM.

WET HEAD

...concrete evidence. You have to imagine it  
like,.....like an echo.

DRY HEAD is LISTENING as he REACHES into his jacket to get a MCR.

DRY HEAD

(apologetically)  
You don't mind do you?

WET HEAD

If you feel like it will help. And you can stop asking  
me.

DRY HEAD

Thanks.

DRY HEAD reaches back into the jacket to retrieve the MCR. He shows WET HEAD a fresh cassette before loading it into the recorder.

DRY HEAD (CONT'D)

(again apologetically)  
New tape.

WET HEAD

(with great sarcasm)  
Looks like a good one.

DRY HEAD starts recording and places down the MCR.

WET HEAD(CONT'D)

I won't repeat myself.

DRY HEAD

No. No, that's fine.

DRY HEAD then glosses over appearing to have taken a mental tangent.

WET HEAD

Levels, depths, sometimes echoes...

DRY HEAD

(returning)

Sorry. Sorry. Right, and sometimes these can align?

WET HEAD

It happens.

DRY HEAD

Often?

WET HEAD

All the time. But you can't count on it. There is no discernible pattern.

DRY HEAD

So that I imagine can cause great difficulty.

WET HEAD

Well, it can seem that way. It is understandable, not entirely logical, but understandable.

DRY HEAD

But you have not particular problem this time?  
Why? What's different?

WET HEAD

Enough. It'll turn back around. You've seen it before.

DRY HEAD

That makes it a little disorienting doesn't it?

WET HEAD

Right.

DRY HEAD

Well I'm not so sure that it's that obvious. You know? I mean it seems wrong.

WET HEAD

Wrong? How can you think it's wrong? You should be able to recognize it, to read it, pull it together.

DRY HEAD

And there you go?

WET HEAD

(shrugs)

It can sound strategic and contrived, but that is because of the complexity.

DRY HEAD

Okay, so it's waiting, potential.

WET HEAD

All the time.

DRY HEAD

That's not a misconception. That's a little fatalistic isn't it? I'm not sure I buy that. It's in conflict with what you just said.

WET HEAD

How so?

DRY HEAD

Strategic, contrived, complex? That would indicate a superior.

WET HEAD

That depends on your perspective.

DRY HEAD

Which is a constant. A given.

WET HEAD

No. Not necessarily.

DRY HEAD

You're losing me again.

WET HEAD

That is your twisting, not mine. First it's marked just outside of the larger actions. A periphery is established. Then a perimeter. This is a given.

DRY HEAD

I am right then? 'Cause that's what I just finished saying!

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WET HEAD is smoking, with a thousand mile stare.

DRY HEAD

So this would be what then, two? Three? What?

WET HEAD

Do we want to work our way in, or out?

DRY HEAD

We?

WET HEAD

Yes we. It has to be that way. To be effective. To really be effective. It can't be anyway else.

DRY HEAD

So we can proceed with confidence then?

WET HEAD

Sure, you know, and a bit of luck.

DRY HEAD

Luck?! I don't believe we should be investing all of this effort in luck!! I mean it is not a game, and I'm not...

WET HEAD

(interrupting)

No?

DRY HEAD

No!! And that's not the way it should be looked at! Not sideways, not even a glance!! And you...Ahhh!!!

Frustration builds into a brief moment of silence.

DRY HEAD

(CONT'D)

Two. It's two isn't it?

WET HEAD

Feeling lucky?

DRY HEAD

No! Shit no! I don't even feel anywhere close to lucky!

WET HEAD

(clearly angered)

It's going to get quiet again.

It is very obviously understood by both that quiet is not a good thing.

WET HEAD

(CONT'D)

Quiet like you have never heard before.

DRY HEAD

(calm now and respectful)

Then it is two...right?

WET HEAD

Yes... right now. With confidence.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

Working alone affords INTERIOR MAN many perks. One of which is the ability to keep himself entertained throughout his working hours by exhibiting slightly abnormal behaviors; such as the donning of peculiar accoutrements.

We return to INTERIOR MAN wearing a gas mask and continuing to monitor the exchange of dialogue between DRY HEAD and WET HEAD.

Currently he is more concerned with the actual monitor itself than its presented events.

INTERIOR MAN

(Shaking his head in disgust)

Oh this is no good. This simply will not do.

He fetches a roll of blue masking tape from a desk drawer and begins to mask off all of the functioning monitors in the room. They are re-framed to a visual aspect ratio of 2.35:1 approximating the popular "wide-screen/letter boxed" video format.

Having accomplished this he reclines in his chair, removes the gas mask and breathes a huge sigh of relief. LIFTING the stethoscope from around his neck he inserts the ear-tips into his ears with some apprehension. He brings the chestpiece

to the wrist of his left hand, where his watch would normally be, in a feeble attempt to check his pulse.

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ECHOING SOUND as INTERIOR MAN hears the movement of tendons in his wrist but no pulse. He then moves the chestpiece under his shirt to listen to his heartbeat.

He closes his eyes and is lost in the RHYTHM.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

SOUND heartbeat from INTERIOR MAN dissolves into the obsessive, rhythmic, clicking of a spring-loaded ballpoint pen belonging to DRY HEAD.

He is reading notes from a large collection of documents spread before him on the table.

WET HEAD is SMOKING and WATCHING the seconds ticking away on a clock hung on the wall. The SOUND of the CLICKING PEN and the TICKING CLOCK overlap perfectly.

WET HEAD

This could take a while.

DRY HEAD STOPS CLICKING the pen and tosses it into the air in frustration.

DRY HEAD

I hate this shit.

WET HEAD SNUFFS out his cigarette in the ashtray.

DRY HEAD (CONT'D)

Thanks.

WET HEAD SHRUGS and immediately reaches for another cigarette.

DRY HEAD (CONT'D)

You're like an incinerator. I mean it's one after another, after another, after another. You're like a fucking chimney. And I have to consciously make an effort to inhale timing, match timing, your inhale so that I don't have-

WET HEAD

(Interrupting)

What was that?

DRY HEAD

I said I have to consciously-

WET HEAD

(Interrupting again)

No, before that. Back when you were reading.

DRY HEAD

Writing.

WET HEAD

Not what it looked like to me.

DRY HEAD

Reading while trying to write.

WET HEAD

You should try and focus.

DRY HEAD

(Sarcasm)

Umm hmm.

WET HEAD

Seriously, it's good practice.

He takes a drag of his cigarette.

WET HEAD (CONT'D)

(Speaks while exhaling)

So what was that you were saying?

DRY HEAD

I hate this shit. Is that what you mean?

WET HEAD

So I take it then that you are not much of a reader?

DRY HEAD

Not prolific. Reader, writer, writing. I'm much more of a visual person.

WET HEAD

Really? That's not how I see it.

DRY HEAD

Well sure. I mean this, this, this shit! It's all too slow. It retards real progress. Not that you're much help.

WET HEAD

Maybe that's the idea. To slow you down and shut you up long enough to really pay attention.

DRY HEAD

What?

WET HEAD

Exactly.

DRY HEAD

I heard you, but for a second there I could swear that you said "Pain and-

WET HEAD

(Interrupting again finishing the sentence)

Tension?

DRY HEAD

Yes.

WET HEAD

Good.

DRY HEAD

Sometimes it's hard to step up to that first page. You know. It's a big commitment.

WET HEAD

Huge, especially for a visual person such as yourself.

(pauses)

So how is your hearing?

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

INTERIOR MAN is wearing blue headphones and working at one of the computer stations where audio is being recorded and processed.

He removes the blue headphones, moves over to the reel-to-reel recorder. He dons a black set of headphones and checks the amount of tape left. Noticing that it is

about to run out INTERIOR MAN reaches for an audiocassette tape and inserts it into a four-track recorder. He begins recording just as the last of the reel-to-reel tape runs out.

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A deficiencies report, or P122-A form, is then filled out noting the slight gap in the reel-to-reel documentation is covered by the four-track recording. The finished reel is then removed and filed away in one of the cabinets. INTERIOR MAN fits a new reel onto the recorder and then continues the documentation.

The P122-A form must be filed with three additional copies. This is taken care of via the use of a photocopying machine in the observation room, but not without producing a number of unacceptable duplicates.

INTERIOR MAN files the completed form, and accompanying copies, in another of the filing cabinets, then proceeds to shred the deficient copies of the deficiency report.

He then begins to brew a pot of coffee using the three bottles of purified water that he brought in his briefcase.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

"ONCE WHEN WE WERE WHATS"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

DRY HEAD almost chokes reacting to a comment made by WET HEAD. The remark made was the exact wording shown on preceding TITLE CARD. He sips coffee from a blue mug.

DRY HEAD

Did I just hear you correctly? Did you just say,  
"Once when we were whats"? What the hell is that  
supposed to mean?!

WET HEAD

In order to gain anything you have to contribute to  
the effort as well?

DRY HEAD

Selves, do you mean selves? Wouldn't that be much  
easier?

WET HEAD

Perhaps, but...

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DRY HEAD

(Interrupting)

Enough already. Lets just keep it simple. I think that would help!

WET HEAD

Help? Help is not help if you're doing all of the work yourself! And as far as selves goes, that's restrictive. Singular and specific.

DRY HEAD

(Sarcasm)

Simple, Maybe? Effective?!

WET HEAD

(Sarcasm returned)

Seemingly! Limited!

DRY HEAD

But it is a good starting point.

WET HEAD

Started along time ago. X plus one.

DRY HEAD

Sorry?

WET HEAD

X plus one.

DRY HEAD

I hope you are going to elaborate.

WET HEAD

Consider X as the focus. Self, you, yourself. You are X. Now consider your situation, your circumstances.

DRY HEAD

Plus one.

WET HEAD

Right.

DRY HEAD

And you are?

## WET HEAD

I am only part of the plus one. Now with that recognized the known is then incorporated into X redefined.

## DRY HEAD

So then what now? The redefining of X is....

## WET HEAD

Subjected again to plus one.

## DRY HEAD

Repeatedly?

## WET HEAD

Yes. Things, selves, whats, they all begin to get interesting after 3.

## DRY HEAD

Three what?

## WET HEAD

Echoes, layers, depths.

## DRY HEAD

Right.

DRY HEAD proceeds to drink down the rest of his coffee.

FADE TO BLACK.

## INT. COFFEE MUG -TIME UNKNOWN

The coffee blacks out the frame. As DIAMOND HEAD drinks down the coffee a view of his face from the perspective of the bottom of the mug is revealed.

## DIAMOND HEAD

It's got to be in there somewhere.

CUT TO:

## INT. BATHROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

DIAMOND HEAD moves a blue coffee mug from his mouth and sets it on the bathroom counter. He examines his reflection in the mirror and then fills the sink with water. The sink fills; he shuts off the tap, cups his hands together and wets his face. Then he opens the medicine cabinet to retrieve shaving soap, a shaving brush, and a straightedge razor. He lathers up his face and begins to shave.

He holds the razor in a grip more suited to cutting someone's throat than to performing the delicate task of shaving his own face without the loss of flesh and blood.

Halfway through the procedure he stops and leans forward towards the mirror examining the reflection of his left eye.

DISSOLVE TO:

DIAMOND HEADS POV - CLOSE UP - LEFT EYE

CGI SEQUENCE

DIAMOND HEAD STARES at his image twice reflected, first in mirror, and second in the cornea of his own reflection. He LIFTS his right-hand HOLDING the razor so that it becomes visible in the reflection, LOWERS it and then LIFTS his left-hand. He REACHES out with his index finger to TOUCH the surface of the mirror/cornea.

There is a slight ripple in the reflection as the cornea rolls back, opening like a glass dome, exposing the iris to direct light.

Light rays project onto the iris and pour through the pupil illuminating the back of the reflected eyeball.

We follow the light moving inside of the eye and rotating 180 degrees to view DIAMOND HEAD through the pupil. He continues to move about and gaze into the reflection.

Rotating another 90 degrees downward there is a small vent on the bottom of the eyeball. We move closer observing the rate at which it opens and closes. Slipping through the vent we now occupy a large oval chamber with moving patterns of light and 100 incinerators built into the walls.

We move through the chamber and pass a second vent into a tunnel that curves and twists until we exit through a grate and enter a second even larger round chamber. THE PROPELLER ROOM (TPR).

At the centre of TPR there is a column. It splits across its center and the top half lifts away spilling out bright light. The light reveals a large propeller rotating at high velocity in the lower half of the column. As the top portion comes to rest, four enormous doors open on the outer walls of the room allowing hundreds of red blood cells to float towards the center of the room drawn by the force of the propeller.

As the cells reach the center they are driven into the hollow of the upper section of the column.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

INTERIOR MAN SITS at the audio workstation listening to his heartbeat with the stethoscope. Removing the Stethoscope he picks up the black headphones to check in on the recording. He makes slight adjustments to the recording levels.

Things seem to be running smoothly. He removes the headphones from his right ear picks up the telephone and holds it in place between his ear and shoulder. He dials out.

As the phone engages we hear the SOUND of ECHOING WHITE NOISE. He listens for a few moments and then hangs up and dials again. Again the SOUND of ECHOING WHITE NOISE. Hanging up the phone a second time INTERIOR MAN adjusts the recording levels of the reel-to-reel recorder and makes a third attempt at calling out. As then phone engages an ear-piercing shriek emanates from the left headphone.

INTERIOR MAN recoils in agony, throws the headphones off, and slams the phone down. He jumps up from his chair sending it rocketing across the OBSERVATION ROOM, smashing into the photocopier. He turns towards the two-way mirror.

INTERIOR MAN  
(Screaming)  
That's fucking number 1!

He stomps up to the Venetian blinds, and yanks them loose. They fall closed, but are not yet rotated to fully block out the view. Standing at the two-way mirror INTERIOR MAN manages to regain some composure. He then slowly returns to his desk places on the blue headphones.

INTERIOR MAN (CONT'D)  
Okay, let's give this a try.

He drops his right index finger onto the spacebar of his computer keyboard.

CUT TO: BLACK

AUDIO SEGMENT

The screen remains black as we listen to a crudely assembled audio segment fashioned by INTERIOR MAN from recordings of conversation between DRY HEAD and WET HEAD. Some of the recording is difficult to hear clearly as there are fragmented words and various speed adjustments which have been made.

I'm having to work. There are rules here. Strange rules, but I am not telling you anything you haven't already been made aware of. Don't let it loose until it is just right. You can watch it, right from the beginning. You can watch it unlock. You're not listening. And you are not paying attention. Do you hear me? Do you hear me? There is a difference. A difference between hearing and listening. What I can tell you is that from, well pretty much right from the beginning, it's almost as if it was supposed to happen. As if there was no other choice.

We can back our way into the path of future conscious. We already have the image. In fact what we already have will significantly aid us prior to any further experimentation. And wanting more. Are you with me? It is of little significance. Attempting to translate these events, little prompts, little cues. Shaping seconds from year's worth of abstract documentation. Could be difficult, it drags you back constantly. Difficult, or it could be a huge pain in the ass. We'll have to wait and see. Laying it all out will be a laborious task. There are always responsibilities. Now it's working it's way back around. A bit of a distraction. I can't talk about it anymore. Speech can be dismantled right in front of you, one degenerative layer at a time. Cut out your tongue and watch. Just open four of the holes in your head and pay attention. Maybe it's that easy. Maybe it's that easy. Maybe it's that easy.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

DRY HEAD

Are you sure?

WET HEAD

As sure as I can be. Look I am only a participant. It is not as if I'm orchestrating these events.

DRY HEAD

No but you have this false modesty about you.

WET HEAD

You have got to be kidding me?

DRY HEAD picks up the MCR (running) and begins dictating into it.

DRY HEAD

Still highly resistant.

WET HEAD

Resistant to what?

DRY HEAD

Easily agitated, highly volatile.

WET HEAD

What is your intention here? Are you looking for something to prove, or is there a greater satisfaction in disproving?

DRY HEAD

That should do.

WET HEAD

No there are a few-

WET HEAD is interrupted by DRY HEAD clicking off of the MCR

DRY HEAD

There is something I want you to hear.

WET HEAD

Like I have a choice.

DRY HEAD rewinds the cassette. Stops it and presses play. The MCR plays back an earlier conversation.

*DRY HEAD*

*So this would be what then, **three**? **Two**? What?*

The words "**two**" and "**three**" have been reversed in this version of the conversation.

*WET HEAD*

*Do we want to work our way in, or out?*

*DRY HEAD*

*We?*

*WET HEAD*

*Yes we. It has to be that way to be effective, to really be effective. It can't be anyway else.*

*DRY HEAD*

*So we can proceed with confidence then?*

*WET HEAD*

*Sure, you know, and a bit of luck.*

*DRY HEAD*

*Luck? I don't believe we should be investing all of this effort in luck!! I mean it is not a game, and I'm not...*

*WET HEAD*

*(interrupting)*

*No?*

*DRY HEAD*

*No!! And that's not the way it should be looked at!  
Not sideways, not even a glance!! And you...Ahhh!!!  
Three. It's **three** isn't it?*

*"Three" replaces "two" in this version of the conversation.*

*WET HEAD*

*Feeling lucky?*

*DRY HEAD*

*No! Shit no! I don't even feel anywhere close to lucky!*

*WET HEAD*

*(angered)*

*It's going to get quiet again.  
Quiet like you have never heard before.*

*DRY HEAD*

*(Now calm and respectful)*

*Then it is **three**...right?*

*"Three" again replaces "two" in this version of the conversation.*

*WET HEAD*

*Yes... right now, with confidence.*

*DRY HEAD*

*Are you sure?*

*WET HEAD*

*As sure as I can be.*

DRY HEAD TURNS OFF the MCR and looks at WET HEAD with arrogance.

*DRY HEAD*

*Well?*

*WET HEAD*

*Well what?*

*DRY HEAD*

*(Screams)*

*Oh, come on!!*

*WET HEAD*

*Play that again.*

DRY HEAD viciously grabs the MCR and rewinds it. As he presses play they both react immediately to the EAR-PIERCING SHRIEK emitting from the MCR. DRY HEAD is affected far more than WET HEAD. DRY HEAD refuses to believe that the conversation has disappeared so he and rewinds again, plays, fast forwards, plays, all with the exact same result. He goes as far as to remove the cassette and blow out the MCR only finding that the same noise still remains.

*WET HEAD (CONT'D)*

*Maybe you should clean it?*

DRY HEAD reacts to WET HEAD's comment as if he is speaking a language from another planet. He reaches into his jacket pocket retrieving a small screwdriver that he uses to open up the MCR. He pulls it apart and then turns it over dumping out onto the table seven dust balls all about the size of a pea.

WET HEAD in the meantime is smoking away as if there is absolutely nothing out of the ordinary going on.

DRY HEAD picks up one of the dust balls holding it close to his face. As he examines it he notices a small ribbon of paper and looks over at smoking WET HEAD as if to "say hey look at this."

WET HEAD still smoking away.

DRY HEAD pulls the ribbon free from the dust and unravels it to find that it contains the text that was recorded on the MCR. In a hurried state of disbelief he

begins to unravel the rest. Upon accomplishing this he again looks up at WET HEAD in total shock.

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WET HEAD with a cigarette hanging loosely from his mouth reaches under the table and into his pocket. As he brings his hand out there are a few small objects that fall from his grip. WET HEAD reaches forward over the top of the table and dumps out a pile of dust balls exactly like the ones removed from DRY HEAD's MCR.

WET HEAD (CONT'D)

There's the rest of it.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

INTERIOR MAN REACHES for a blank videocassette at the end of a long shelf of numbered tapes. He then retrieves from his desk a bottle of whiteout and a small plastic package of one-sided razor blades.

He opens a fresh razor blade and uses it to remove the plastic wrapping from the new tape. After painting the number 180 onto the new videotape with the whiteout, he ejects tape number 179 and replaces it with 180.

INTERIOR MAN takes a close look at the razor blade and then leaps from his chair moving to one of the filing cabinets. Frantically he attempts to open the top drawer. It is jammed so he begins to yank it back and fourth by the handle using his entire body to weight the effort. Finally it releases with a loud metallic CLANG. The metal lock-release tab on the inside of the handle gouges out a chunk of his knuckle. The pain sends him running around the OBSERVATION ROOM shrieking like a schoolgirl, blathering something just barely comprehensible that sounds like, "I broke the car! I broke the car!"

He then returns to the offending cabinet drawer that just happens to contain the first-aid kit. Flinging the lid open he grabs a 100-watt "Crystal Clear" light bulb inspects it momentarily and then tosses it back into the drawer instead opting for a package of bandages.

Moving across the room to the audio workstation, he sets the package of bandages down on the only uncluttered desk-space available and readjusts the desk-lamp to address his bloody wound. As he tears open a wrapped bandage, suitably a "knuckle dressing", its shocking blue colour is unveiled.

No sooner is the injury covered than INTERIOR MAN grabs for his MCR beginning dictation.

INTERIOR MAN  
(SHAKEN and BABBLING)

For the past series of weeks I have experienced a number of small but painful injuries. I haven't required hospitalization, however they have required minor medical attention. I am finding that I have not been paying close enough attention to my physical presence and pain, pain is a leveler, and it brings you immediately to the present tense and reminds us that, ahhhh, what we, what we really are, is simply meat!

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -MORNING

DIAMOND HEAD is SLEEPING in a waterbed and dreaming deeply, indicated by R.E.M.s. His LEFT ELBOW HANGS over the edge of the bed and his LEFT FOREARM is raised in the air propped up against stacks of books shelved in the cabinet at the head of the bed. The arm is asleep.

His arm slips off of the books crashing it's full weight down onto his nose with the SOUND of WET SLAPPING MEAT, then falling lifeless to the bedside.

DIAMOND HEAD awakens as a result of the impact looks around completely disoriented. He focuses on the alarm clock which reads 2:30 am. Looking to his left he notices his arm hanging limp.

DIAMOND HEAD  
(SCREAMS out)  
Dead!

He reaches for his sleeping arm with his functioning right hand, hauls it onto the bed where he looks down at it helplessly.

CUT TO:

INT. VEIN -THAT INSTANT

CGI SEQUENCE

We look down the vein as if it is a long dark tunnel. There are small bluish-white particles floating slowly by.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -THAT INSTANT

SLOW MOTION as DIAMOND HEAD begins to panic and attempts to SLAP the life back into the sleeping appendage.

CUT TO: 27

INT. VEIN -THAT INSTANT

CGI SEQUENCE

Six red blood cells float quickly down the length of the vein.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM -THAT INSTANT

CLOSE UP- SLEEPING ARM

SLOW MOTION as DIAMOND HEAD SLAPS the arm again and then rubs it to encourage blood flow.

CUT TO:

INT. VEIN -THAT INSTANT

CGI SEQUENCE

Full blood flow returns.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -CONTINUED FROM SCENE 29

INTERIOR MAN still STANDING at the filing cabinet as he continues DICTATION into his MCR.

INTERIOR MAN

One very curious thing that I noticed, I must have seen it before and just never thought about it. On the bandage wrapper that I used to tend to my latest injury, there's a strange image of what seems to be a Caucasian male. Over the bridge of his nose he has applied a knuckle dressing, marking an "X" on his forehead. I can't for the life of me figure out what kind of sadistic sick-o would target a poor knucklehead for ridicule like that. Very strange.

INTERIOR MAN reaches up to a bookshelf, pulls out a red hard covered book, and places it on the desk opening it up to the very first page. He unwraps another blue bandage and sticks it down to the first page.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -SECONDS LATER

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DETAIL of a BLOODY PIECE OF FLESH hanging off of the lock-release tab on front of the cabinet drawer. It moves with slight flapping motions as a glistening drop of blood stretches from the bottom edge with a syrupy viscosity. It finally releases and falls out of the bottom of the frame.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

DRY HEAD sits rolling a pair of chrome plated Chinese meditation balls in his LEFT HAND. They CHIME away gently with the motion. He is reading through a stack of documents. As he turns over a finished page he switches the meditation balls into his RIGHT HAND.

WET HEAD continues smoking. It has, as he predicted, gotten quiet.

DRY HEAD pauses the meditation balls and lifts his finger to accentuate an oncoming statement. WET HEAD, shrouded in smoke from a recent exhale, turns his head from side to side indicating that any conversation at this time would be a bad idea.

DRY HEAD completely halts rotation of the balls. He separates the pair, one into each hand, and stares at WET HEAD in deep contemplation. He suddenly slams down one of the chrome balls onto the tabletop, pauses and then rolls it towards WET HEAD.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -THAT INSTANT

CGI SEQUENCE - CLOSE UP - ROLLING BALL

The ball is illuminated tightly by a spotlight. It continues to roll across a wood-grained surface, continuously increasing in velocity. The duration of the sequence lasts far longer than it ever could based on the dimensions of the actual table.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -SECONDS LATER

DRY HEAD and WET HEAD stare at each other. DRY HEAD slams down the second ball as he shoves his chair backwards and rises to his feet. The ball remains on the table. He then approaches the two-way mirror, looks at his reflection, and traces the edge of the mirror with his finger. DRY HEAD then turns away from the mirror to look at WET HEAD who is staring right at him. He

once again turns to his own reflection, shakes his head, and then violently strikes the surface of the mirror.

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CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - THAT INSTANT

INTERIOR MAN is shocked upright from his seated reading position by the impact of DRY HEADS blow to the mirror. He SLAMS his book closed, approaches the blinds, and turns them fully closed. This completely blocks his view of the two gentlemen in the INTERROGATION ROOM

RETURNING to his seat INTERIOR MAN flips through his book to pick up where he was interrupted. Setting the book down on the desktop of the video workstation he continues reading.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE UP - PAGE FROM BOOK -SECONDS LATER

CGI SEQUENCE

Text scrolls upwards and blurs with the motion. Additional layers of text begin to overlap. The text disintegrates from the page leaving only the words "perverse optimism".

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM -THAT VERY INSTANT

CGI COMPOSITE

INTERIOR MAN is looking down at the book he rubs his eyes dislodging an EYELASH that falls wiping the screen.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP - PAGE FROM BOOK -THAT INSTANT

CGI SEQUENCE

The center of the letter "O" in the remaining words "perverse optimism" opens like a sliding door. The EYELASH falls through the hole landing on a wood-grained surface. Off in the distance chiming is heard. The rolling chrome meditation ball speeds towards the eyelash.

As they collide the impact slows the ball skidding to a stop at 90-degree drop off. The edge of the table.

In the reflection in the ball is the image of WET HEAD lighting a cigarette.

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DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -THAT INSTANT

WET HEAD picks up the meditation ball from the edge of the table and exhales.

WET HEAD

I told you it was going to get quiet.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -TIME UNKNOWN

DRY HEAD and WET HEAD engaged in conversation.

DRY HEAD

I'm having to work.

WET HEAD

There are rules here.

Strange rules, but I am not telling you anything you haven't already been made aware of.

Don't let it loose until it is just right.

You can watch it right from the beginning.

You can watch it unlock.

DRY HEAD

You're not listening.

WET HEAD

And you're not paying attention.

DRY HEAD

Do you hear me?

WET HEAD

Do you hear me?

There is a difference.

A difference between hearing and listening.

What I can tell you is that from, well pretty much right from the beginning, it's almost as if it was supposed to happen.

As if there was no other choice.

DRY HEAD

We can back our way into the path of future  
conscious.  
We already have the image.  
In fact what we already have will significantly aid  
us prior to any further experimentation.

WET HEAD

And wanting more.

DRY HEAD

Are you with me?

WET HEAD

It is of little significance.  
Attempting to translate these events, little prompts,  
little cues.  
Shaping seconds from year's worth of abstract  
documentation.

DRY HEAD

Could be difficult, it drags you back constantly.

WET HEAD

Difficult, or it could be a huge pain in the ass.

DRY HEAD

We'll have to wait and see.  
Laying it all out will be a laborious task.

WET HEAD

There are always responsibilities.  
Now it's working it's way back around.

DRY HEAD

A bit of a distraction.

WET HEAD extinguishes his cigarette.

WET HEAD

I can't talk about it anymore.  
Speech can be dismantled right in front of you. One  
degenerative layer at a time.  
Cut out your tongue and watch. Just open four of  
the holes in your head and pay attention. Maybe it's  
that easy.

DRY HEAD

Maybe it's that easy?

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WET HEAD reaches for his glass of water.

WET HEAD

Maybe ...

As he Pours the water into the palm of his hand it leaks through his fingers  
dripping down onto the table.

WET HEAD (CONT'D)

...it's that easy.

THE END

### Artist's Commentary

Welcome to the Artist's Commentary for *The Propeller Room*. This is Kevin Mazutinec and I am the person responsible for this work.

I am looking at this now after the fourteen months that it has taken me to complete this project, from the initial beginning of production. Some of the ideas contained within this work go much farther back than fourteen months. Some of them reach back five or so years to when I originally came up with the concept of *The Propeller Room*. It has changed over that time significantly.

The intro credits that we are currently looking at were crafted as cues. Umm, there is no apology for this art-video taking on the look and feel of a theatrical motion picture. I myself am comfortable discussing this work in the terms of "movie". The reason that I don't... I don't look at this so much as a video. Although that's the technology used, I've really made an effort to through editing techniques, camera angles and what not, I've attempted to give it the look and feel of a, as I said, movie.

I make a clear distinction between movie and film. Umm, any theatrical release that is shot on celluloid, shot on film, I refer to as such. "Movie", I think, doesn't necessarily pin down the medium, but more the effect. So that's why I am comfortable using that term.

I have done a lot of research over the years. I consider myself to be a great "watcher". And by that I am looking at a number of years viewing television, viewing film in the cinema, but also viewing films which have been translated to video for rental and purchase in the home video market. Earlier on in my scholastic career I was exposed

to early video artists, such as Les Levine, William Wegman, Nam June Paik, Bill Viola, and in watching works by these artists I felt that they really attempted to separate video from television, its frightful parent.<sup>1</sup> One of my concerns in the choice of this medium was the common association between the viewer or the viewing audience, and video. The main use of video technology is television and through logical extension I would include the rental and purchase of movies for use in the home. I decided to capitalize on the conditioning that television has provided for generations, educating audiences, increasing their visual vocabulary to understand the pacing, the editing, the techniques that have generated certain expectations. The choice to present this work in the same familiar fashion makes it accessible for a wider ranging audience without a need for a specific knowledge of video art.

The inclusion of computer graphic imagery, or CGI sequences, which employ the use of 3-D animation, and visual effects, along with compositing, offer the viewer visuals that are today considered commonplace in film and television. This is something that I took to learning, not specifically for this project, but more out of general interest. I have always been fascinated in all aspects of movie making from writing, acting, directing, visual effects, cinematography, sound design, and this was one project that had enough depth that it would allow me to pursue all of these interests.

Originally *The Propeller Room* started off, as most of my ideas do, with an origin based in visuals. I had envisioned images of a large industrial interior and a gigantic propeller. With the propeller came the need for motion, followed by sound as well. So for me video was the only logical medium in which to realize this vision.

Right now we are watching the animated introductory wave sequence. This sequence came about referencing the importance of water to life and the relation to blood as the liquid of the human. A paralleling of two essential liquids. There is also a reference to an early cinematic memory which takes me back to I believe 1979. I was attending a screening of *The Muppet Movie* (1979). My mother took my younger brother and I to a matinee showing. I would have been nine years old at the time and he would have been seven. I really cannot recall much about seeing the film itself, however one thing that I have never forgotten is viewing one of the trailers for up and coming releases. It was for the release of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980). That trailer etched itself into my memory and encouraged or sparked my initial interest in horror films which seems like a perfect topic discussion while we are watching the meat/kitchen sequence.

During that trailer there is a deep-perspective shot of the interior of a hotel lobby. At the end of the lobby is a double set of elevator doors. One of the doors opens spilling blood out onto and across the floor, washing up the walls, pushing aside furniture in the lobby with great force, and finally wiping the screen in crimson revealing the title. That horrifying image never left my memory. I still to this day find it a powerful moment and I can remember turning to my brother and saying, "We have got to see that!" Now, I cannot help but wonder what my mother was thinking at that point. I mean she had no idea, and certainly a trailer of that sort should not have been paired with *The Muppet Movie*, but you know, these things happen, and some of them influence your worldview for the rest of your life.

The genre of the horror film is something that I grew up with and something I became quite obsessed with. And when you look at the meat/kitchen scene there are a

few things going on. You've got this mysterious phone call that interrupts the events, you've got the domestic location, obviously the large meat knife, and with everything there I attempted to build an atmosphere where you expect something awful to happen.

One of my intentions was to elevate expectations to a certain level, focusing audience attention, and then switch back to the storyline that was originally introduced. Returning to the character that we followed into the dark room. This was intended to split, or fragment, the concentration of the viewer between two, soon to be three, elements of action that paralleled the multiple versions of the actor on screen.

From the very beginning I had decided to try my hand at acting. I really had no significant stage or screen experience. Only a small amount of self-directed video work. I have a great deal of admiration and respect for actors who can perform on screen and on stage. The choice to craft a storyline where a single actor would play multiple roles would be a huge test and provide an interesting take on the idea of identity and self. These multiple roles I equate to the different circumstances that each individual encounters in everyday life. I think, at bare minimum, people have two roles. One would be their personal life or "home" role, and the second would be their "work" or professional life. If you look at these circumstances as roles you have a person who responds to a variety of expectations and what I tried to do was split it even further. One of the initial ideas that I had for *The Propeller Room* was that there would be a number of dialogue exchanges which would take place between two characters in the setting of an interrogation room, borrowing from the genre of the crime drama. The decision to use a single actor to play both characters allowed the story to develop an interesting psychological angle where I gave differing points of perspective the same physical

representation. This may not be the most novel approach, but I decided to take it a step further.

The two-way mirror, commonly featured in this type of setting, provides a third point of perspective. Ahh, perhaps window/mirror would be a better description. Behind this barrier exists Interior Man, a privileged observer who is afforded the complete “picture” so to speak. By representing this third character by the same actor there is a further disruption in logic. You have an individual who is employed to document the exchange between two opposing versions of himself that he has the opportunity to acknowledge or to completely ignore and deny.

Because I had set a positioning of opposites within the interrogation room, it seemed logical that I needed to include a separation of the character on the other side of the mirror as well. For this fragmentation I decided to resort to the base level that I spoke of earlier, the simple distinction between the roles of personal and professional. Things were already getting difficult to sort out and organize with the three versions of this character, so I decided that the fourth, although essential, needed to be simplified.

Just to clarify I will go through a breakdown of the characters. Diamond Head is fairly obvious as he has a blue t-shirt with the words “diamond head” screened across the front. That piece of wardrobe/prop was chosen for its reference to a hard or thick skull. It also refers to the dormant Hawaiian volcano of the same name. Dormant. Sleeping. Not fully conscious. Not quite with it. And for trivial interests it was a Neil Diamond concert t-shirt that I received as a gift. It was because of these multiple readings I chose to take advantage of it.

The character that works inside of the observation room I began to refer to as Interior man, plain and simple. You see him outside of that specific room, however you never see him in an exterior setting. There is no exterior in this work. The closest you get is the single shot of Diamond Head as he looks out of the kitchen window, and even at that point nothing is defined. There is just this dark-blue void, nothingness, and what looks like falling rain.

In the early developmental stages of this work I began with an idea of tension existing between the two characters inside of the interrogation room. One of these characters would play the role of cop or detective, and the other who would portray suspect. The suspect was initially going to be shaking and smoking throughout the scenes soaked with a nervous perspiration, hence Wet Head. Dry head, on the other hand, was lacking in knowledge, thirsty, and in pursuit of information that Wet Head was believed to possess.

After spending some time mulling over the situation, I decided that it was too literal an illustration. It was too cliché for these characters to visually present their positions. The result would be determined from the outset and I wanted to level the playing field. Allowing me to sort of tip the scales, tip the balance of power back and fourth.

The scene where we have Interior Man inside of the observation room wearing a gasmask was chosen for three reasons. First to suggest the seclusion of his environment. Second, the shape of the gas mask is similar to that of an eye in the human face, which

will become the focus of a later scene. And third, the mask corresponds to the “masking” off of the monitors at a 2.35:1 ratio duplicating the presentation format of this work.

The reflective surface of the mask enabled me to layer the action. You’re able to watch the expression on his face, the environment, and his movement all at the same time through the use of this simple device.

Now wearing the gas mask can seem absurd, but the logic I was following was that this guy works on his own, in total seclusion, so his mind is going to wander. His thoughts are going to drift off on tangents as illustrated by the short bucket/calendar CGI sequence we saw earlier and in a situation like this, one would develop behaviors to keep themselves busy, amused, and awake.

Action is driven from a second important object in this scene, and that is the stethoscope. It is used to check his pulse and heartbeat. He uses it to check time on a larger scale relating to mortality. When Interior Man is introduced at the beginning of the movie, there is a segment where he looks at his wrist to check his watch and realizes that he has forgotten to wear it. Later on, in the observation room, he hangs up his jacket and retrieves the stethoscope from the coat hanger. He moves in front of an electronic punch-clock that is set to nine o’clock, but is unplugged from any power source and the cord is visibly wrapped around it. Time is elusive.

There are two clocks that are mounted to the wall of the interrogation room. Now these clocks have been modified, the minute and hour hands have been removed leaving only the second hand to count duration. These two clocks differ in the respect that the one

on the left hand side (Dry Head's clock) has a second hand that jumps with each second, measuring them out in clear, specific movements. He needs things compartmentalized, labeled, and categorized. The clock on the right (Wet Head's clock) has a free flowing second hand, suggesting a harmony, or an ease.

You only get a good look at these props during the first transition between the observation room and the interrogation room where they are displayed prominently. These timepieces were originally conceived of as a sculptural work that I have wanted to do for a number of years and I felt that it would add to the characterization at a subtle level. In the final version of *The Propeller Room* these items are reduced to a minimum for the reason that during a time-based work, to require a viewer to observe a lengthy illustration of the passage of time seemed too heavy-handed. It was like beating them over the head with the obvious. It may now be too subtle to pick up on these ideas, but I would rather sacrifice it. At times I have to be sympathetic to the viewer. I understand what its like to experience work from that perspective. I don't want the work to become pretentious.

There is repeated attention to various forms of documentation throughout this work. For example, there is the specifically chosen reel-to-reel tape recorder. Chosen not only because of its function, but because of the name referring to reel as in reel of tape, real world or real time, as well as reel as in unsteady movement. This technology may be considered out of date by today's standards, but there is a nostalgic relation to the genre of spy movies and surveillance activities. It brings to mind Gene Hackman in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974).

In the scene that we are currently watching, the reel-to-reel runs out and Interior Man makes sure that the audio is backed up by cassette tape, so that he gets everything. He records all of the information. The events are constantly being documented, and the lapse in the reel-to-reel must be noted in a deficiency report explaining the exact measures taken to keep track of the incoming information. This introduces the hard copy, the authority of the written document, and not just a single copy, it must be noted and verified in triplicate. During the process of duplicating the written record, Interior Man produces inadequate copies. He generates deficient deficiency reports that are obviously unacceptable so he then proceeds to shred them into unreadable fragments. The action of the shredding produces ribbons of paper with text which will link to a later scene where text appears in a similar format.

*The Propeller Room* approaches authority with skepticism. It doesn't matter whether the record/evidence exists in the form of the written, or oral, or visual information, each of these are suspect. Each form of communication can be used to establish "truth" and "fact", however, they can also be manipulated to direct and influence opinion.

The coffee sequence is important for a couple of reasons. Interior man transports with him bottles of water. Purified water. If you watch closely, the set of the observation booth has a number of empty bottles scattered around. There is no source of nourishment what so ever inside of this environment. The coffee break provides relief. A retreat from the grind of the workday. I chose to use this element as a transitional device that would access all three of the settings.

Interior Man starts off by making the coffee, producing a stimulant to keep himself alert and energized. There was an attempt, through the use of the abrasive audio and visual element of the television “snow”, to convey a sense of agitation, energy, which builds and then gives way to the next scene between Dry Head and Wet Head that begins with Dry Head sipping from a coffee mug. At the end of this scene Dry Head is again drinking from the coffee mug. He takes a large gulp as the screen fades to black. There is a vertical wipe from black revealing Diamond Head from the perspective of the bottom of his coffee mug that begins the shaving sequence.

Lets go back to Dry Head and Wet Head again. I just want to explain that the items that are presented through these two characters follow very different rules. With Wet Head things are constant, stable. He always has the same objects available. There is the glass of water. Fire in the form of the lighter. There is an ashtray. This. This ashtray has sand in the bottom symbolizing rock, earth, time, erosion. There is the constant smoking allowing the observation of the flow of air. So he has a representation of all of the natural elements. He is elemental.

The objects that appear with Dry Head are....., there is a lot of freedom taken with that character. He has the magic jacket from which he can pull the micro-cassette recorder, or the screwdriver. The coffee mug appears in front of him and is gone in the next scene without explanation. There is also the segment where he has numerous pads of paper, notes, and folders. He seems to exist in a magical state, however these items never seem to really give him an upper hand.

Moving forward again, to the shot of Diamond Head from the bottom of his coffee mug. That particular shot is homage to Sam Rami, one of the directors whose work I have followed for a number of years. He has a history of innovative camera movements and for going to great lengths creating specialized rigs to achieve innovative angles and effects.<sup>2</sup>

I achieved this effect by removing the bottom of a ceramic mug and mounting it to a Plexiglas surface. The Plexiglas was then attached to a camera rig so that when I was drinking the coffee there was no perceivable movement on the part of the camera. The design and fabrication of the device took a number of hours that translated into about thirty recorded seconds. Twenty-two of which would actually show up on screen. I think it was worth it. The initial inspiration for this shot stemmed from a childhood fascination with the grotesque reflection visible when you actually press your face down onto the rim of a mug and stare into the bottom.

I knew I was going to have a scene that took place in a bathroom where Diamond Head was washing his face and eyes, a routine cleansing ritual. Originally there was no plan for the character to shave, but I was talking with Jamie Goodenough, a video artist from Scotland, and we were discussing work by Martin Scorsese. I told him about one of Scorsese's early short films called *The Big Shave* (1967) where a male character repeatedly shaves his face with a double-edged safety razor. As he does he cuts himself and is soon covered in blood. We talked about how you could up the ante by using a straight razor, also known as a cutthroat razor. I think that using this personal grooming device is a lost art, and for good reason. Could you imagine the way you would react if you found out that one of your friends used one these things every morning? I'm afraid

for people driving to work half asleep in their vehicles, never mind if they were to start the day this way. I couldn't do it. I thought about learning, but then I decided that to watch someone who had no clue at all about how to go about this was probably be more... amusing.

Anyhow, since I already had the scene with the kitchen knife and the meat, I decided that I could reinforce this idea by expanding the bathroom sequence adding in the element of the straight razor. The very presence of this item, thanks once again to the genre of the horror film, causes people to flinch with the expectation of gore. I wanted to head in that direction but stop short, choosing to spill blood in a much different manner from within the "propeller room" itself. The combination of the eye and the razor also brought to mind the collaborative work between Salvador Dali and Luis Bunuel titled *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).

As I started to develop themes within this project, blood became very important. And when I chose the lighting for the sets I wanted the observation room to be illuminated with red and the interrogation room to be blue. The barrier between the two, the mirror/window became key. It signified the split, the point where the blood changed. The location where the blood undergoes oxygenation.

While designing the propeller room itself one of the ideas was to model the room after an artificial heart, mans attempt to redesign the organ that propels life. My version would of course include a large propeller. And, so if you wanted to take a very saccharine, sentimental approach to *The Propeller Room*... ahh, let's not go there. Basically this idea became too specific. So I decided to combine the original idea of the

industrial environment with biological elements that would hint towards the idea of a heart. It was still important to feature blood in the form of cells because I knew that a little further along was the “beat the meat” scene where Diamond Head’s arm would fall dead/asleep, and this would connect the two together visually.

We are now watching the scene where Interior Man is on the telephone and you hear the high-pitched shriek that makes him throw the headphones off and scream at the characters in the interrogation room. That was the same sound heard in the kitchen scene immediately before Diamond Head drops the meat. This connects the phone calls suggesting that it may have been Interior Man calling himself at home. Are they two separate people? Is he really the same person? You are not really sure. And I am quite satisfied to leave it at that. There is some indication that he may have been trying to call himself provided by the earlier message heard on the answering machine.

The audio piece that Interior Man plays is as an artwork within an artwork. It was created as an experiment in memory and record. For years I have been carrying with me a micro-cassette recorder to record thoughts, events, and inspirations. While writing *The Propeller Room* I came up with the idea that Interior Man might reorder a previously recorded conversation. So I decided to take a sixty-minute cassette of my own and transcribe it all into text format. Using these words I rearranged them into a poetic work that was designed to function as a monologue as well as a dialogue.

Once I had created a version I was satisfied with in written form, the next step was to then go through the original sound recording and select all of the words needed to create a sound track of my own voice speaking phrases never actually spoken. In respect

to the monologue, the result was a butchered audio track that offers no apology for the manipulations required to achieve the desired effect. The result in the form of dialogue is seen during the last exchange between Dry Head and Wet Head. I'm not sure if viewers will be able to catch this on the first viewing. I tried to increase the chance of this by removing the visual information as the monologue is played. I don't know what would please me more, to have it easily recognized, or if it was difficult to make the connection. And if it sounds confusing, believe me it was. It was a very strange process, far more demanding than I had initially anticipated. This process may be something that I will revisit. It could result in a series of audio works. I am also considering the possibility of attempting a similar process with video.

One of the points that I try to make repeatedly throughout this work is the importance of paying attention. To look at happenings a little bit closer, to look for the significance in the seemingly insignificant. Ummm. If you wait for great things to come along to move or excite you, you may only experience a handful of such events in a lifetime. However if you can be moved and inspired by the smaller wonders that can be found in the everyday, you can live a lifetime filled with wonder and excitement.

A lot of the events that take place in *The Propeller Room* were inspired by actual events that happened to me over the fourteen months of production. For example, the scene with the micro-cassette recorder where Dry Head goes to play back an earlier conversation and finds the audio replaced by the ear-piercing shriek was inspired by real life events.

I was very excited about a selection of audio I had recorded and I showed up unannounced to play this track for a friend, but as it turned out they were unable to meet with me that day. I decided that I would go ahead and listen to it myself and when I did the track was gone. All that I got was a high-pitched shriek. I retried it again and again finally sure that what I had done was accidentally bump the record button, completely erasing it. I decided to blow out the housing of the micro-cassette recorder with compressed air and when that had no effect I decided to take it apart and clean it. When I did I found these little dust balls which were actually shaped more like eggs. Dust eggs. Seven of them. I believe there were seven of the inside of the micro-cassette recorder. This was just dust that had over the years accumulated and been rolling around inside. So I took them out and cleaned the playback heads. I was fascinated by these little objects. I reassembled the recorder and was able to playback normally the original contents of the tape. Still taken by this sequence of events and finding these little dust particles, I decided to incorporate this right into the work. And ahh, that's how I came up with that scene. I just decided that instead of Dry Head getting the recorder to work again the contents of the audiotape would be transferred to ribbons of text, which would be tightly wound, into dust balls. This then led to the supporting scene where Interior Man would shred to ribbons some sort of documents. As it turned out these documents became the deficient deficiency reports.

There is another scene which was very much influenced by an event that happened during set construction. I was hauling around these filing cabinets and I had locked the drawers so that I could easily drag them around by myself. Well one day when I was doing this, one filing cabinet drawers burst open and there were these small locking tabs

on the inside of the handles, and this one tab ended up gouging a humongous chunk out of one of my knuckles. At this point I realized that my mind was constantly drifting, that my life was totally occupied with coming up with ideas for this script.

I was so obsessed with trying to flesh out the story to a great degree of detail, that I was not paying attention to a lot of the events going on around me. There was a period of about a week where I had injured myself six or seven times. I had cut myself on knives at home. Once it was the “bagel injury”, apparently one of the most common home injuries, I suffered early one morning. My mind once again completely preoccupied with *The Propeller Room* project. I think it was later that same day that I cut my leg on a board with a screw in it while building the set. Pain was becoming a reoccurring event in my life so it became an element in the storyline. “Pain”, as I say in the movie, “is a leveler and it brings you immediately to the present tense.” So again an example of how I translated daily events into this fiction.

When I do make the decision to show blood, or injure the character, it is in a comical or absurd manner rather than for pure shock value. For instance, the events surrounding the aforementioned “knuckle” injury. Interior Man is desperately trying to open the jammed drawer that finally gives, inflicting a painful wound, only to have him return to the very same drawer to retrieve the bandages from the first-aid kit contained inside. The quick pacing of this particular scene helps distract/manipulate the attention of the viewer and depending on how closely the events are being followed, this detail could easily be over looked.

The black and white sequence or “beat the meat” sequence uses colour or the absence of colour to illustrate the fact that Diamond Heads arm is asleep. The limb at this point is nothing but a piece of meat that falls, hits him, he has no control over it because the nerves are dead asleep and, he screams out, lifting his arm up onto the bed and begins to smack life back into it. It is at this point where I gradually return color to the image, and as the blood flow fully returns red increases to its normal value and we proceed onward with the story.

It is amazing, the number of people I have spoken to who have had similar experiences with limbs falling so asleep that they wake up and panic because they can't find it or can't feel it. And similar to pain, this kind of experience reminds you of your physical composition. It reminds us that our bodies are meat, or flesh for those of you who find it difficult to deal with the idea of the body as meat.

The bandage wrapper segment was a continuation of the actual injury that I received to my knuckle. I went to a nearby first-aid kit and opened it up to find these bandages that had this ridiculous image of a character with a knuckle dressing applied to his forehead. As I was dealing with my bleeding wound I made the decision to include this detail in the script. Incidentally these vibrant blue bandages are used in the meat packing industry. They are radio-opaque bandages and the colour, first off, is easy to spot if one of these things falls off and into a package of meat. They are also detectable by x-ray. Apparently all meat that is issued from a processing plant must pass through an x-ray machine to ensure that there are no pieces of metal in the form of blades or machine parts buried inside.

The meat that remains attached to the filing cabinet after Interior Man's injury is a special effects prosthesis. This shot may seem a bit gratuitous, but considering that I have resisted the use of gore in earlier situations, when it was almost expected, I decided to "play it up" when there was a legitimate basis for it.

Earlier in the work Wet Head tells Dry Head that, "It's going to get quiet again." This statement established the need for a scene between the two characters where the continuous dialogue exchange would end, at least for a short period. During this "quiet" a tension is created by simply altering the dynamic between Wet Head and Dry Head. This tension is underplayed with the gentle chiming of the meditation balls used by Dry Head.

I'll just talk about animation for a second. The computer animations were used to accentuate surreal elements. I didn't want to include animation just for the sake of including animation. It had to fit in with the storyline. And this particular scene, where Dry Head rolls a meditation ball across a table, features two things that animation can do extremely well, generate geometric shapes, and calculate accurate reflections. Through the use of CGI I was able to move into another level of fiction and create visuals that would otherwise be unattainable. I would compare the freedom it offers to the more traditional artistic disciplines of painting, drawing, or sculpting. They are not necessarily limited to a real world subject or source. With video, pure untouched video, you are limited by what you can get the camera in front of. With animation not only do you build the environment, you build the camera as well. It also offers the ability to work directly with the fourth dimension of time, to design and manipulate a sequence of events.

Returning to the props or meditation balls, Dry Head is using them in pursuit of balance. Attempting to right things, to achieve equilibrium, to gain a greater insight. He is seeking an inner balance, and if you choose to interpret the characters of Wet Head and Dry Head as the subconscious of Interior Man/Diamond Head, then they would represent the inner balance of those characters as well.

Dry Head slapping the mirror/window between the interrogation room and the observation room provides an effective transitional device through which we can follow the action between the two realms, bringing the focus to the world of Interior man. It also provides the “last straw” after which Interior Man completely closes off the blinds, essentially “blinding” himself, as he then proceeds with his daily routine.

This is the final scene featuring Interior Man, and the second scene to prominently feature the element of text. At times myself I feel that I, as Dry Head states, “I’m much more of a visual person.” There was a time where I read very little and was arrogant and unapologetic about it. Comments like, “it’s not fast enough” or “it’s not interesting enough” were spouted. I have changed my mind since. Thankfully. However I have a great deal of catching up to do.

I would like to once again bring attention to fictional elements that were influenced by real life. One night while I was on the phone with a colleague reading a passage from a book about the director David Lynch. The book was *Weirdsville USA: the obsessive universe of David Lynch* by author Paul A. Woods<sup>3</sup>. I was rubbing my eyes and an eyelash came loose and fell onto the book landing on the dot of the second “i” in optimism. Documenting this event on my micro-cassette recorder, I was even more

amazed when the word “perverse” preceded “optimism”. Now, in *The Propeller Room* I exercised artistic license and changed the point where the eyelash passes through the text to the center of the letter “o” in “optimism”. I felt that this larger opening could, theoretically, accommodate the passage of an eyelash far easier than the dot of an “i”.

When the meditation ball reappears and collides with the eyelash there is again a disjointed chronology continuing from the previous animation sequence. After the ball skids to a stop at the edge of the table surface, Wet Head is seen in the reflection returning us back to the interrogation room.

While creating *The Propeller Room* there was no preexisting script. My approach to this work was perhaps not the most logical. It probably would have been easier to do it in a more traditional order, but because I had fourteen months in which to produce this work, I felt that I needed to start immediately. What I chose to do was split the storyline down into the different areas defined by character. Interior Man was first. I decided to write all of the sequences that I could come up with in relation to his character and setting. This would obviously produce gaps, which I would later patch together with events specific to the other characters.

The final written version of the script for *The Propeller Room* was completed only at the end of production. I extended the parameters of this piece into a larger work that included an installation component in the Nickle Arts Museum in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The video/movie itself has been used to establish the parameters and orchestrate the performance of this artist’s commentary. The audio recording of this commentary will document the final character role of this project, and there will be one final translation of

this commentary into text format that will be combined with the final version of the script.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Antin, for his analysis of the relationship between video and television.

<sup>2</sup> On the creation of specialized camera rigs, see Warren pp.119

<sup>3</sup> See Woods pp.9 for the text excerpt that includes “perverse optimism”.

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