

CRISTIN TIERNEY



Wood and Harrison: Bored

April 16 – June 12, 2021

Boredom as a subject has a significant legacy in contemporary art. Bruce Naumann has returned to it again and again. John Baldessari famously promised not to make any more “boring art” and artists as diverse as John Cage, Andy Warhol, and Yoko Ono have conjured up artwork after artwork where nothing happens. Literally. It is within this (boring) lineage that Cristin Tierney Gallery presents a selection of works by John Wood and Paul Harrison.

Boredom, as explored through video, sculpture, paintings and works on paper by the British artists, is both a source of creativity and a joke about the limitations, blockages, and failures experienced in the studio. In *Bored Astronauts on the Moon*, the artists present themselves as modern astronauts who stand or walk around in silence on a lunar landscape. The video was shot in their studio, on a set designed to look like the Moon. It is a destination synonymous with adventure and excitement, but any initial enthusiasm soon gives way to tedium as minimal amounts of action unfold over the video’s twenty minutes. As the artists explain, “For us it wasn’t about the quest to conquer the world or space, although it clearly references that desire. It’s more about making an ongoing representation of the world, but all from the confines of our studio.”¹

Chair/Gum further investigates the notion of boredom with similar absurdist humor. The sculpture consists of a readymade chair constructed with a wooden seat and metal legs. It

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could easily be imagined in a classroom or studio, but this is where the work's ordinariness ends. Under the seat and stretching down to the floor are hundreds of pieces of chewed bubble gum, stuck together in one giant mass. A single piece of gum on the underside of a chair might suggest a disinterested student; an enormous wedge built from layers of gum applied over time beggars belief. How bored could one be to completely fill the space under their chair with pieces of the same kind of gum, over and over again? The supposition laid out by the artists is laughable.

Bored opens Friday, April 16th. The show was originally scheduled for spring 2020 but was delayed until 2021 due to the pandemic. This is the artists' first solo gallery exhibition in the US, and their first exhibition with the gallery. In summer 2020, the gallery released an online retrospective of their work titled *The First 30 Years*. It surveys some of the artists' most significant videos, sculptures, drawings and more produced over three decades of collaboration. The viewing room is available by request; email candace@crisintierney.com to receive the link.

John Wood (b.1969, Hong Kong) and Paul Harrison (b.1966, Wolverhampton) make single-channel videos, multi-screen video installations, prints, drawings, and sculptures that elegantly fuse advanced aesthetic research with existential comedy. The artists' spare, to-the-point works feature the actions of their own bodies, a wide variety of static and moving props, or combinations of both to illustrate the triumphs and tribulations of making art and having a life. The videos maintain a strict internal logic, with the action directly related to the duration of the work. Inside this "logical world" action is allowed to happen for no apparent reason, tensions build between the environment and its inhabitant, play is encouraged and the influences on the work are intentionally mixed. In their not-always-successful experiments with movement and materials, many of which critic Tom Lubbock has described as "sculptural pratfalls," Wood and Harrison employ exuberant invention, subtle slapstick, and a touch of light-hearted melancholy to reveal the inspiration and perspiration—as well as the occasional hint of desperation—behind all creative acts. Wood and Harrison met in 1989 at the Bath College of Higher Education and have worked together since 1993.

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Image: Wood and Harrison, *Bored Astronauts on the Moon*, 2011. single-channel HD video. 20:00 minutes.

¹ Bruno Volpi, "Things That Happen," *Dazed* (February 23, 2012): <https://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/12718/1/things-that-happen>.