



Armory Center for the Arts

RAYMOND PETTIBON AND YOSHUA OKON: Video and graffiti are among the components of "Hipnostasis."

Freedom's fantasy, lives stand still

"Hipnostasis," a collaborative video installation by **Raymond Pettibon** and **Yoshua Okon**, is by turns celebratory and baleful. Fantasies of freedom are lionized and lamented.

A narrow, corridor-like gallery on the second floor of the Armory Center for the Arts holds three elements. At one end, a 7-foot-tall, phallus-shaped sculpture that recalls a Hindu lingam hides a video projector inside; the words "dead end" flash in and out of view, projected on the ceiling. At the other end, 28 pages from old books are pinned to the wall; faded pages from works by Laurence Sterne, Rudyard Kipling, Jack Kerouac — authors of boy books, variously regarded as adventurers dissolute or corrupt — have been added to in Pettibon's familiar script: "we seem to hear his sermons over again," "the play has left the stage" and more.

Then there is Samuel Beckett's "Malone Dies," a non-narrative novel of an old man's struggle with consciousness, which seems to set up the installation's centerpiece. A half-dozen small, flat-screen video monitors, connected by scrawled graffiti and a tangle of wiring that disappears into the wall, show video portraits of six

grizzled men, singly and as a group. Bearded, scraggly-haired and weather-beaten, they are seated on a rocky outcropping at the ocean's edge, several munching on food.

"Hipnostasis," which is one word scrawled on the wall, reads like a mash-up of hippies, hypnosis and hypostasis — the last a philosophical notion that connotes an essential condition of humanity, as well as a rather contrary medical condition of poor circulation that leaves sediment in the organs. Are these "lost boys" at the beach merely reenacting an ancient need for unfettered existence? Or, did they just not get out enough into the unfathomable wonders of a diverse world?

Pettibon and Okon don't answer such questions, seeking instead to limn a portrait and place it inside an illuminating frame of complex design. The image of men on the rocks reminded me of a male version of ancient Greek sirens, whose purity of voice and irresistible charms lured sailors to their ruin. With its soundtrack of roaring surf, the scene is inescapably bereft.

Armory Center for the Arts, 145 N. Raymond Ave., Pasadena, (626) 792-5101, through Aug. 31. Closed Mondays. www.armoryarts.org

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