

Routes 1 & 9 North

The video *Routes 1 & 9 North* was made in 1994 in the context of a project documenting the interiors of decaying New Jersey motels along what was once the main route to New York. Motels, diners, casinos and faded neon signs – the transitory, liminal architecture of transit in American roadside culture forms the backdrop of an exploration of self somewhere between control and surrender. In a small motel room, the artists subject themselves to the hypnotic suggestions of a professional hypnotist and are filmed while doing so.

The hypnotist works with the rather simple Milton Erickson technique that operates with open-ended visual suggestions, such as dropping a coin or raising a hand. How do the twin sisters respond to these instructions? Do they both raise a hand in the same manner? Are they just acting or really behaving in a trance?

Uncannily, the video camera documents a state between wakefulness and loss of control, between presence and absence. For a few seconds, it pans away from the sisters to scan the interior of the motel room and the cathode ray tube television mounted on the wall. In doing so, it refers back to itself and reveals that it is not a neutral observer. The cinematic *Cutaway* interrupts the action and displaces it elliptically into the viewer's imagination; here, this slippage evokes the logic of horror films. As an early reflection on media in the artists' work, the piece mirrors the logic of hypnosis in the logic of film itself. Attention is guided and control apparently relinquished. The image is active with suggestive power, the body is the corresponding echo chamber.

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