

# Artlink

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## rational / emotional

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confessions

anxiety

intimacy

family

mothers

love

death

friends

animals



Boris Eldagsen stills from *No Cure* 4-channel video installation, 14 min, 15 sec, looped.  
Courtesy Australian Centre of Photography, Sydney and Galerie Wagner+Partner, Berlin.

# speed of dark

**Boris Eldagsen must die (in a river, fire, cellar, forest, lake, in motion, at the end of some thing, passage, tubing, corridor, where there is no choice).**

**Boris and I are the same age. Flipsides of the same person. Natural, unnatural.**

**I close my eyes. The lights remain on.  
I open my eyes. There are shadows. They are always being dusted.**



They are in photographs, videos. They are installed and install, correspondingly, a jealousy in me.

The boy, the girl, the man, the lady. It matters little that the people in these materials are in pain – emotional, nearly physical, narrativel – after all, pain in these materials is always elevating. It is never cruel. It cannot be cruel. It is about what you cannot feel even when you feel it, are feeling it. It has claimed you and you reside, merely, helplessly, within, as you look down and see your shadow, moving, maybe, faster than you, moving on a train that pins your body to the window so that every picture is neo-noirish and fluoro-smoking... 'everybody moves, everybody changes, away from me' .<sup>1</sup>

They are moons, turning to face, turning away. They are self-sufficient. You reach out to speak to them, because you need a light, because you are a grown man and have a book of poetry and are easily wounded and love it, because you are not yet properly drunk, and they keep moving.

They cry. They couldn't care less whether you acknowledge their pain or not.

I want to be soft like that, hurt like that, feeling like that. There are many kinds of pain. I have never known any. I am therefore a non-artistic subject.

They have pre-enlightenment faces. Old, young. They stare at us, not from the modern world, the world they reside in, but from the dawn of the chiaroscuro, the landscape, the passage,

the interior, of their belonging 'looking back' on that time, if that is even possible. The lights, green, white, dimming, falling back into some place Joy Division made music about. Some industrial- but not, waste- but not -land, cascading into the past, because in the past are the faces. The faces pull at us. They are tidal beings, beings of the undertow. Back in the day people painted them because it was slowness that they required in order to speak, to call out at them and make them sound back, and to still them, right there between worlds, hovering waiting, waiting, for the sonar. Gary Hill called them Ghost ships.

Dead blank, oceans, missing sailors, anxious families.

This is not my world.

In my world there is: the Whitest boy alive, A Common Ground, Mykita Berlin, the bright light of the Tonglen, breathed out, whiteness, the darkness breathed in, the machinations of my faux Buddhism my last desperate pitch to get my anxiety in order before I, or someone very close to me, calls in the big guns. My plight, call it that, maybe, is to have separated myself from the Shadow, a classic mid-life phenomenon, of someone dazzled by their persona, bound by an old order, outside of themselves, by the flows of The Discipline.

I was travelling once and in, what, the half-morning sleep saw an old woman enter my room, and then leave. I was screaming, but making no noise. She was bathed in half light,





half present, half not. There was no record of the room being haunted.

I drove deeper into the forest.

(Whadda we want? To dump our demons! When do we wanna, um, dump these demons? Now!)

I dream Boris' dreams. He is taller than me, I think, anyway. When I came back from M. recently I had him in mind, when I said to Bug, I want to get an earring and shave my head.

As G. will testify, I am fascinated by other members of my exact generation. They are alternative selves, part of my body. Mid-life is hard life, the life as lived not the life not lived, the other path, the no stepping back.

Boris and I are the same age. Though, we did not meet. I deferred. He deferred. Meeting. What does meeting mean? What is translated, what is effected? What passes between?

I walk into a payphone. There is glass. I have seen the headache. Star-blind. The glass on the floor is twinkling at me and it has taken light years to reach and hurt and penetrate my brain. I receive, in my femur, a sensation of a man walking into a room, the femur sensation being one of a vague form of hysteria, vague, willowy, because its target is either undefined or unknown, heart-breakingly, absent in his movements that pull apart at his seams, until he is all space, behind the glass stars, emotional, waiting, but not for an event, waiting, for a payphone door to open, for one of us to start speaking.

On my email is a letter from a psychotherapist. The therapist is an MD. That throws me. MD is more professional than I was expecting. Is it a let-down? I am not sure. The whole field of psychotherapy is fascinating for its connections to amateurism, its insistence on different kinds of science, its refusal to set up experiments involving college students and fake electric shock machines.

Boris says N. thinks it is her diagnosis, that he has stolen it from her, that it is a misapplication. The MD had looked at some of Boris' work and was, properly, in the letter, at great pains to avoid having it being taken as a real diagnosis. Yet what the MD wrote was more like art writing than art writing has ever been: 'There seems to be an idealisation of the OTHER in a way of salvation from the darkness, loneliness as well as guilt and remorse of 'not being a better child'. The idealisation can appear in a dependence on being made, valued and noticed by the other(s) adult. The dependence on being noticed by the other can be seen both as desired and yearned




for, but through feeling 'not good enough' can be interpreted as feared and infused with darkness, despair and further isolation'<sup>2</sup>.

Boris and I are the same age.

And now, though, these lights are seen by the MD, by others inserted into the spaces of their actuation, I am more fixed, my own loneliness transposed into someone else's ideal world, if ideal it is, in fact, spatial and temporal, me clinging to his Gatsby-ish glow, the beauty of the faces and the bodies and the minds coming out of the pool, facing me for the first time, not yet open to what they can see of my person, but open to where they have been, the depths they have been within, the perversions they have crafted and are keeping secret, the Ideal they have encountered and countered, breathing for the first time, and I am alienated by this freshness, aware, shockingly, sadly, that this is not my world.

I have been in the light too long to ever feel darkness the way it is at its coldest and, therefore, most generative and that this is the symptom of not being able to alter anything that is already in progress and change nothing that has not yet begun.

We watch, in raptures. Thrilled, utterly, by our irrelevance. 

<sup>1</sup> *Died Pretty* (1986) 'Everybody moves' on the *Free Dirt* compilation (2008), Aztec Music.

<sup>2</sup> Report on artworks by Boris Eldagsen. Supplied by Boris to Robert.

Words by Robert Cook – Re-mix and five additional words by Boris Eldagsen.

Boris Eldagsen is a German artist living in Berlin and Melbourne. He is represented by Wagner+Partner, Berlin and for his collaborative practice 'BORIS+NATASCHA' by Strychnin Gallery Berlin, New York, London. Boris works as an arts lecturer at the Centre for Ideas, Victorian College of the Arts and Music and the Photography Studies College Melbourne.

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Robert Cook is the Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Photography and Design, at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Editor's note: Boris Eldagsen was born in 1970.

**Boris Eldagsen ABOVE:** *the shape of things to come* work in progress, produced with VCA and PSC students as models and assistants. Courtesy Galerie Wagner+Partner,

**OPPOSITE TOP:** I came to your party dressed as a shadow archival print 50 x 34 cm, Courtesy Galerie Wagner+Partner, Berlin. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Turn off the light slide installation with sound, 33 slides. Courtesy Galerie Wagner+Partner, Berlin.

Most of the works illustrated in this essay were made in Germany and Australia between 2007 and 2009 and typically are made over a period of several years.





**Boris Eldagsen** *The Promise* one-channel video work, HD, 8 min, 18 sec,  
looped. Courtesy Centre for Contemporary Photography Melbourne  
and Galerie Wagner+Partner, Berlin.

