

Wattis Institute // Julia Heyward

June 2, 2015

A lovely exhibition examining the undersung, innovative early career of Heyward. There are some real gems here, video works which feel as prescient as ever. A strange, electrically-lit costume hangs in a not untypical exhibition strategy, limp and inactivated except a slide projector close to a wall rotates through images of the artist in the suit, performing in the dark with red LEDs outlining the artist's form in a type of semaphore or dance. I loved the pieces I watched (I didn't catch all of the video but many of the pieces whole and bits from the others) Among connoisseurs generally there is a tendency towards assumed mastery, towards feeling like one can speak to, say, the best music of a given decade as based upon what one knew in one's teens and twenties. I'm a fervent believer that all the best music ever produced is just barely reaching my ears and/or still remains unheard and the same magical feeling of discovery coupled with a hint of what is still unknown pervades this excellent show. In this it is similar in vein to the recent Martin Wong show except here the installation seems better suited to a viewer seeing all of the pieces (nothing artfully hung out of reach etc.) and the pieces chosen give a better picture I think of what the artist is best known for, foregrounding the main brunt of the artist's practice while still offering peaks at its offshoots and ephemera. Recommended.