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Blink, and I missed: Dave Dyment at MKG127



One of the things that drives me a little nuts about Contact is its tendency to overshadow the fact that there is, in fact, art to be seen all over the city that has nothing to do with the festival. That doesn't mean I don't go see it; it just means it takes me a while to get around to writing about it, which was the case with [Dave Dyment's now-closed show at MKG127](#), *'Between the Click of the Light and the Start of the Dream.'*

For those who know him, Dyment's clever, playful, pop-culture inflected conceptualism can be like Marshall McLuhan's proverbial warm bath -- an art experience that challenges the mind while warming that place in the heart where unbridled teen angst, buried under years of cynicism, still lives in full force.

Dyment's favourite tropes, like popular music, were fully evident here, in several pieces that embraced genuine adolescent devotion to Pink Floyd, inflected with the popular -- [ahem, stoner](#) -- myth that, when watching the original Judy Garland *Wizard of Oz* film with the sound turned off, and Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" as the soundtrack, it creates an eerily synchronous unity (Turner Classic Movies liked the idea enough that it actually broadcast the film with the Floyd album in 2000).

Psychologists call the phenomenon in which the human brain gropes for synchronous moments in the absence of rationale or fact apophenia -- which, in no coincidence, is the title of Dyment's piece (above) in which he takes a white pressing of *Dark Side* and splices it in a psychedelic swirl with the soundtrack from *Oz* -- together at last, never to be heard from again.

Little touches of literacy like this both take the idea of obsessive fandom to an irrational extreme, but also highlight the absurdity of emotional connection to pop ephemera. Dyment, with a deliberate ham-fisted glee, is able to point out both but avoid the trap of smugness; you get the sense he's right there with you, not above it at all.



Another great piece that struck me was *Addendum to the Tommy Westphall Universe*, a pencil-on-paper schematic drawing (left) that linked *St. Elsewhere* -- which, for those who didn't know, was an insanely popular, critically-acclaimed 1980s hospital drama that ran for five years, [only to reveal, in its finale, that the entire storyline took place in the mind of Westphall, an autistic boy](#) -- to hundreds of popular TV shows.

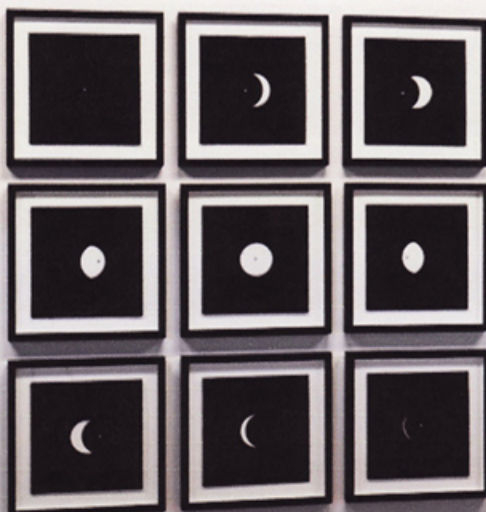
This is not merely Dyment's invention: The Tommy Westphall Universe is a full-fledged -- if tongue and cheek -- conspiracy

theory, suggesting that the Westphall dreamscape encompasses multiple other shows; as *St. Elsewhere* cast members crossed over into other shows -- *Homicide*, for one, and *Law & Order*, for another -- the theory grew, to the point where Tom Fontana, *St. Elsewhere's* creator, said in 2003 that "someone did the math once... and something like 90 percent of all television took place in Tommy Westphall's mind. God love him."

What Dyment does here in embody conspiracy-minded fandom in the vein of a true obsessive, trying to map the connections that would prove the theory right; that the form closely mimics the work of a truly conspiracy-minded artist, Mark Lombardi, whose schematics weren't mapping popular culture but dark connections in international military and political manipulations, is no coincidence, I'm sure. But Dyment's choice of Lombardi's form underscores that, for legions of fans, the connection is no less potent, or serious.

Finally, I want to finish by pointing out that, for all the heady play Dyment indulges in, his eye is equally clever. Apophenia, is one example; *Calendar* (for Jack Goldstein) (right) is another. You may not know that Goldstein was a Canadian who grew up in Los Angeles, and came to study art under John Baldessari, or that his work was rooted in Minimalism and performance, and that he would become a seminal film and sound artist, transferring the audio to vinyl records, or that he would turn to painting in the 80s and cash in a little, or that he killed himself in 2003.

You don't need to know any of that, really, to appreciate the black-and-white lunar phases, played out in gentle shifts of vinyl in its sleeve, that the piece comprises. The elegy is clear, spare and beautiful, and it does what all good art does: Holds you tight, and tells you nothing until you ask. And you do.



Untitled: Contemporary art in Toronto and beyond



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