Just Lewis Carroll wrote "Through the Looking Glass," a narrative that was updated through the frame of an ordi-
nary non-Victorian manuscript and started to play the interactive game. Beyond the frame
exist the definite features of wonder and virtual reality. Peter Sarkissian's clever video installa-
tions assume that at the moment you have stepped out of the elevator into the Wood Street
Galleries, you have, like Alice, started to participate in the works of art he has devised.

Ideally, the technology for which he is becoming famous should not intervene at all; it is, in
after all, only a means to an end. In the slice of the technological revolution, the means change con-
ciously, and it is important to recognize at the beginning that Sarkissian is a filmmaker. In a talk at
Wood Street Galleries last week he said, disarmingly, that the complex video work he was
showing to his audience could have been done by old-fashioned film projection, and had it been
the only technology available to him, that would have been the method he would have used. The
new technology of videography, if difficult to animate, have huge advantages to the artist.

They are permanent and can be reproduced infinitely without loss of quality, a marked contrast to
older technology of film and videotaping. Each presentation becomes a seamless repetition of the origi-
nal and lacks the fragility inherent in an aging work of art. (On the other hand, Sarkissian's art is how
on more, and that absence is an interesting component of a large body of contemporary art.)

The need to come in contact with the "how" of Sarkissian's work thus can become an
obstacle to the consumer. "Done," the most recent installation at Wood Street, will direct the viewer
for some time with its ingenious arrangement of screens and video projectors, and maybe with the
sinking electrical engineering in the background. Sarkissian is aware of the complexities of the instal-
lation (some of the cables were a little short, etc.), but in the scheme of things, the work proceeds throughout time. It is the
image itself that remains memorable.

In the darkened room, a cubic form is visible, and at any one time, only one, two or three faces can be viewed.
On five of the sides of the cube are pro-
crete images from video projectors carefully spaced some distance from the
edges (itself), and if not invisible, they certainly are not assimilable. The filmed
sequences are synchronized and reappear continu-
ually. What you see is thin. Look-
ing at the top side of the cube, a small hole is visible. If you look closely you
can detect two hadithul human forms
in the space, which contain a powerful light source. But, rather more interest-
ningly, marks appear on the other four
screens. What is actually happening is
that the two human beings inside the cube are
moving in the space. As they move, the back surfaces of the cube are wiped off its
base, so that gradually, during the course of a number of
minutes, you can see into the cube. The entire
sequence witnesses the removal of the marks and
their transference onto the bodies of the two people
in the cube. Formally, that is it.

In his talk, Sarkissian speaks of the "meaning" of the space and perhaps revealed to his audience his insecurities rather
closer than is usual for artists today. It is equally open for the viewer to interact with
the work as it suits them. So when Sarkissian
speaks of his own and death, about the cube as
approximating a word and other such
notorious issues, it is not incumbent on
the viewer to take him up on those points.
In fact, the piece seems to beg for highly personalized, individual responses. As in turn, it is a superb instance of bring varia-
tions, in which movement, light and sound make a sensitive presentation. The
viewer can readily be diverted by an
infatuation of extraneous considerations. For
example, the tight composition, intense
lighting from a single source and the physi-
ocal, human elements remind me, per-
haps, of Sketch of Cross, by Joseph Wright
of Derby's great paintings. "The Air
Pump" and "The Observatory." Both of those paintings
are composed in similar ways to "Done." (Oddly,
they happen to deal with small technologi-
cal achievements) in the 18th century and convey
the immediate sense of tension that Sarkissian's
work achieves during the course of the length
of the video. On any level, the piece, if taken at its

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SHEARING
If you worry too much about the medium in Peter Sarkisian's video installations, you could end up missing some of the art.

Sarkisian has three, maybe four installations by his side, which emphasize special areas of concern in his work. "Sleep, Defection," and "Lear Deep," are, I think, two separate works, but juxtaposed in such a way as to be complementary.

Two beds have a single pillow shared on each, showing the movements of the baed of the pillows, as if someone was in a bed, were sleeping, and then went on to another bed. A sound track of the sleep breathing is associated with the scene. The idea of a presence in the "Lear Deep," two sheets filled with water are placed on the floor. Projected exactly over the water is, creating an eerie effect of reality, a drop of water makes a splash. The splash turns with full sound effects. Another piece project into a white oval picture the image of a picture itself, again in a bed, and then interrupted by a sequence of shadow plays of some unknown individual who makes himself for her, self-conscious only by the shadow. As in Pino's case, we have nothing other than the shadow in a frame offered us. Incidentally, this piece is the only one in the installation that does not make use of colored ingredients.

Elsewhere two structures, found in deserted points, have been placed on their surface, parts of them moving, lines of light moving, and in that respect, that is the only light source. But the shadow, cast on a wall, creates the highly disturbing illusion of another source of light, and we are frustrated to discover that no such light source is there. The view of traffic comes over on a sound track. The sense of disorientation and dislocation is that newly achieved.

Sarkisian's work evokes the effect of film, with none of its techniques. He trained to be a filmmaker in California and rejected what, in film school, was required of him. The idea of linear narrative film — and all but the more heroic and innocent scenes be largely discounted — and technique shall be transformed into something that has a real authentic experience, reducing them with a different, and more physically immediate sensation. It is a hard exhibition and the videographer has little, if any, of the image, and the video is the only one in the installation that does not make use of colored ingredients.

Peter Sarkisian's "Sleep, Defection," and "Lear Deep" (at left):