

RESTAREA

DESCRIPTION OF THE WEBSITE TO BE PRESENTED IN THE
LOCATION/DISLOCATION EXHIBITION, NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, NYC

When viewers come upon RESTAREA by Nancy Tobin, they are told two key things; that the piece lasts five minutes and that it is a site of repose. The picnic table logo that appears to announce Tobin's project connotes lingering over food on a hot day. In North America, picnic tables are ubiquitous in the rest stops that are provided to chop up long drives. RESTAREA exists, on one level, to chop up long surfs, break up the monotony of invasive images, texts and advertisements omnipresent on almost any brief web foray.

The ordered minimalism of RESTAREA will unfold for you. After viewers access the piece, no clicking is required. No scanning for hotspots or rollovers. RESTAREA is entire unto itself. The piece simply begins. Two tiny rectangular bars appear on the screen. They each progress slowly from their points of origin to another. We can keep the beat of their trajectories thanks to an exact count at the left bottom of the screen. RESTAREA is to the electronic superhighway what a scenic stop is to a long car trip. The use of colour bars makes reference to video and television. In video, the bars connote the beginning of a tape. In television, they are a station break, or a pause in programming.

In my old drivers education manual, one of the effects of a long drive was termed 'Highway Hypnosis', a kind of daze brought on by too much speed and too many passing bits of landscape. Nancy Tobin updates this notion by encouraging us to take a break. The soft blue of RESTAREA's background colour is restful, the sound regular and minimal. The bars appear and begin their inexorable process. The work is fixed and constant. You cannot, as a viewer, interfere with it by choosing a path or skipping a moment.

RESTAREA plays on expectations of web art and the ceaseless technological advances that guarantee speed and the click-happiness of surfers. So much has been done and so much made possible since first generation web pages. Nancy Tobin's piece reminds us of rapidity and its opposite. High speed connections are fast, but probably not fast enough for some. RESTAREA goes at its own pace, building itself from geometric shapes. We have time to ponder, to reflect, to enjoy.

In the fifth and final minute, there is more movement, more colour and activity, but one could hardly call it an explosion. More colour bars appear with more frequency. Sometimes, there are minute intersections and overlappings of colours, but generally, they progress without our possible interference or influence.

The tiny numbers that go to 60 five times in a row replace the ubiquitous connection time found at the bottom of a computer screen when web surfing. The colour bars are choreographed, coming together and separating. Will the bars bump into each other? No, but almost. RESTAREA remains a steadfast, unflagging five minutes made up of tiny movements and bold strokes. An abstract, humorous humanism resonates. The choice you have as a viewer is to take the RESTAREA break again.