

Marni Shindelman

REVERSING THE FALL

NIAGARA FALLS USA

A man quietly slips into the river above the American Falls,
calmly lies on his back and pushes off from shore.

Miraculously he lives.
Only the second person ever to survive a trip over the falls unaided.

He claims to be protesting the continuance of life support for a woman
who has been in a vegetative state for thirteen years at Morton Plant Hospital, Clearwater, FL,
the same hospital as my birth. After answering to charges,
he signs a lucrative deal with a national touring circus to entertain as the Human Cannonball.

His contract stipulates an endless supply of snow cones.

REVERSING THE FALL, a collaborative installation between Tate Shaw and Marni Shindelman, investigates intimacy through acts of public touch. Taking into account a desire for privacy in public spaces we are confronted with the following questions: How do we achieve privacy in public? Is there intimacy between private individuals and public arenas? How does touch factor into our public identities, if at all? Is touch always an intimate act?

As a result, REVERSING THE FALL is a public art piece that draws attention to these questions. It does so by incorporating imagery where private and public intersects the body. If we are choking, or experiencing a form of physical distress, we rely upon strangers, such as emergency care professionals, to come to our aid. These intimate moments are public displays of human affection where a proprietary understanding of our bodies is no longer significant. REVERSING THE FALL makes a subject of this blurred line between private and public consciousness by graphically depicting CPR and Heimlich references, as well as a pattern of first-aid red crosses behind 2-D monuments of hollow bodies. Our aim is to reflect upon the significance of corporeal information within the public sphere, and to comment on a lack of touch in virtual environments. Its representation of touch makes claims for the potential of intimacy, even in the public sphere. It is these instances of the body in public crisis which REVERSING THE FALL recognizes.

The piece consists of a rotating set of silhouettes. The interior is painted with a pattern of red cross symbols. Fluorescent lights are attached vertically to the back wall of the window, illuminating the backlight film, which is partially covered by the figure suspended from the ceiling. At night the piece is visible from a distance of five blocks, creating the effect of a large light box. Cards are available on from holders attached to the outer windows.