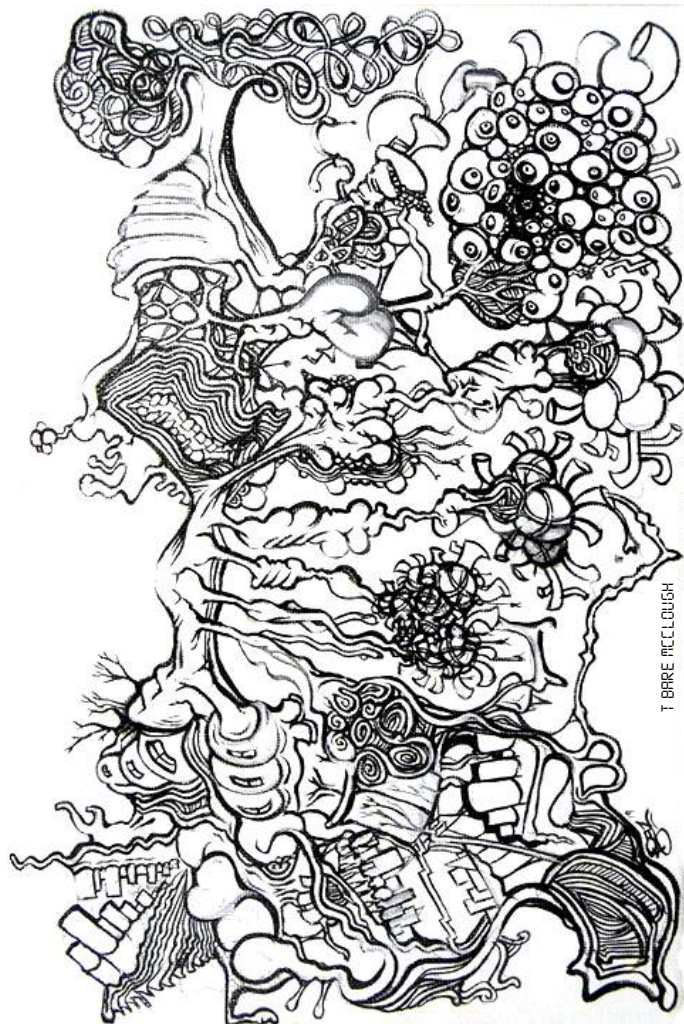


Well met everyone! For this Spooktober / novemberrrrr I'm going to review Observer (>observer_, actually the title should be written this way), a game developed by Bloober Team and published by Aspyr in 2017: a first-person adventure where we are Daniel Lazarski, an Observer. What is an Observer? To answer this question I must first give you a context of the world and time in which this title is set because we are in a possible future. Technology has seriously the chances of surpassing human limitation through cybernetic augmentations and Holo-AR tech creates a sort of overlay all around us to improve the perception of the world we are in: some sort of "away from the eyes away from the heart" situation. The REAL world is a dystopian future where a huge war has almost erased East from existence, a plague called Nanophage has killed thousands of augmented people and as a result the Fifth Republic was born, as a corporate government of course. Our adventure starts during a break between jobs. In this moment we receive a call from our son, Adam, who we haven't heard of for quite some time, and who asks for our help in a particular situation, as the good fathers we are, we instantly run to his location, a derelict building in the lowest-class neighbourhood of the city of Krakow.

As soon as we enter the building a lockdown starts and we are trapped inside the structure, with the only option to start looking for our son. The gameplay is pretty basic, we only have to move around and interact with the objects around us, we can use 4 different visions (normal, biological, electromagnetic and night vision) that are used to investigate what is happening in the building and a "probe" that will help us to literally investigate people's minds, like in the inside of their minds. Graphic is pretty good, a nice exploitation of Unreal Engine 4 with very good light effects that creates quite an atmosphere. An astonishing sound component that from the soundtrack itself to all the little sounds surrounding us makes a great immersion, and anxiety of course. Even if a dystopian cyberpunk world doesn't sound really a fit environment for a horror game, well, reconsider this idea. During the experience I found myself drowning in this technological nightmare, the visuals mixed with the music and sound effects created one of the most beautiful and suffocating horror experiences I've ever had. On a final note, I must say that the NPCs (Non playable Character Ed) are fascinating. Even if we don't interact very much with them, the way the game makes you interact with their context and their dialogues are perfectly fitting in the world of Observer. They don't sound like an external element that we need to interact with, but genuine people trying to survive in a world that has almost forgotten about them and doesn't care.

In conclusion, this Halloween, try something atypical, and give this game a chance, it won't let you down. DD.



T BARE MC CLOUGH

FAILURE

Failure are a trio from Italy dedicated to producing the fastest punk music playable. Although they don't like to define their genre, those of you fond of bands like Lack of Interest and Dropdead will hear similarities between them. Their style features an unique personal interpretation of the love for short-blasted tracks, with only one song exceeding one minute in length. The themes of their lyrics range from social confrontation to nihilism to new communications and of course, skate. I got the chance to see them at Chimpys fest at New Cross Inn, and my brain was completely blown out by their brief, intense, and completely insane live show (in my opinion the best one of the festival). Failure released a s/t 7" (Drinkin' Beer In Bandana Records, Here And Now!, Vleesklak Records, To Live A Lie) and a 10" split with Leeds based smashers Ona Snop (Dead Heroes Records). Their unique energy, surgical precision and friendly attitude left me wanting to know more:

Failure, such a current name. What sort of Failure do you identify with?

no one in particular actually. To be blunt, we chose this name because when the project started both me [Steve, drummer] and Los, our singer, were going through a difficult period, so we thought that FAILURE would synthesise well what we were living at the time.

The cover artwork of your split 10" with Ona Snop, a band who you shared the stage with at Chimpys, was conceived by T Bare McClough (who also designed the drawing for the cover of this fanzine). At the start I wasn't sure what I thought about it, but now it's hanging in pride of place on my bedroom wall. What made you decide to use an esoteric red frog for a powerviolence split?

The meaning of that cover art is linked to a story we lived with Ona Snop during a concert in Germany last year. Somehow it turned out that the Portuguese pronunciation of the word FROG is similar to a whiff, we found this hilarious and continued to joke about it throughout the whole night, we just kept on hearing this weird sound from google translator and could not stop ahhh. When the split was finally recorded, we had to find an artwork for it: George proposed the idea of using a frog in memory of that night and of course we could not help but agree. T Bare had already worked on artworks for Ona Snop, so we decided to let him do the trick, again! The result is outstanding and we're all proud and happy of what turned out, especially because, as you will have noticed, it's something completely different from the "standards" of the genre we play!

From what I grasped at your Chimpys live set, the whole festival has been an adventure for you, could you describe your experience?

Chimpys fest has been incredible! We have been following this event for years now and when we were asked to play in it and be part of such an amazing line-up, we were incredulous. We didn't know what to expect from it, but to see the extremely positive response of the public to our music has been moving. It has surely been one of the best live sets we have ever played as Failure. Anyway, for two days we felt at home, the Chimpys crew, worked restlessly and impeccably and partying with friends from all over Europe (and not only!!) has been wonderful.

At Chimpys you played a song about food, could you tell us more about it?

It's actually the cover of the song 'Rotisserie Geezer' by Ona Snop which we recorded on our side of the split. We love to play that song! Unfortunately, at the end of the concert the Snop guys made us understand that it would be better for us not to play that song in their presence, for copyright reasons, problems with majors etcetera.. Rockstar stuff you know! ;)

In "Pills Days", a track released on your first s/t 7", you use a sample from the movie Melancholia by Lars Von Trier. What do you think of this director?

Los, our vocalist, is a cinephile and he deeply appreciates the movies of Von Trier, but actually he chose this sample for the spirit of the song and its content and meaning.

Powerviolence is gathering more and more followers in the hardcore punk and fastcore scene, how's the situation in Italy?

There are a lot of very valid bands in Italy right now, but from my point of view I think that powerviolence/fastcore are still niche genres in our country. Fortunately, it's full of kids and collectives who are helping to carry it forward and grow the scene, organizing shitloads of concerts and festival of a very high quality, no doubt in that! Anyway, we don't really care about genre labels, on the contrary we ourselves don't define our music as powerviolence.

Could you give us some of your political believes?

We are against the philosophy of hate and racism which in spite of ourselves is catching on in Italy and Europe. Its really tough to bear witness to such slow degradation, which is now spreading like wildfire in every environment and social strata. Social centres and spaces for coming together are seen as a cancer and are being shut down. Those who decide to help people whose struggle is a matter of life and death are seen as criminals and there is more and more acceptance of those who express hateful ideologies, it's fucking gross! We don't define ourselves as activists, but we do everything we can to go against all this.

Will people still go around wearing Dropdead longsleeves in 2040?

I really hope that in 2040 someone with a wearable Dropdead t-shirt still exists hahaha.

Failure's music is available on their bandcamp page or contact the labels for the records, as we said its fast as fuck so check it out, gravity will win against you,

Found Footage Horror Films

Some feelings about Fear and the Appearance of Reality by Alexandra Heller - Nicholas

Alexandra Heller-Nicholas describes herself as 'a film researcher and a horror fan', her book is testament to this: well researched and respectful (but kinda boring; it did, however, help me get to sleep, so happy endings al'round). Like all woke Australians, she begins at the beginning (wokeness in Oz is performed by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land - wherever it is you happen to be standing - and all Aboriginal elders both past and present. Aborigines have lived in Australia for well over 60,000 years, and because of how oral cultures cultivate, hunt, speak, sing and dance, culture into existence - at all times every time - beginnings are important. beginnings are hard for people raised in the Abrahamaic traditions - their beginnings are still in the past, befogged by time - not unlike a found footage horror films...) with Orson Welles' War of the Worlds radio play. This, she reasons, is where modern media artists first began working with "the real" (her quotes, not mine. is she being ironic or quoting - and if so whom? - or is she trying to communicate to the reader that the word *real* signifies inadequately and/or ambiguously? and what to make of the definite article - aren't there other *reals*? see 'Oz', above) then goes on to road safety films made in the U.S. in the 50's and 60's that made use of photographs of actual auto accidents. These films - *What Made Sammy Speed?*, *Red Asphalt*, *Wheels of Tragedy* - typically built their narratives around photographs that had an authentic - not staged or recreated - indexical relation to gruesome auto accidents (o, dear reader, you see what lexical hoops i must writhe/write thru to - by omission - provide a context for the *real*? Heller-Nicholas does not respect these hoops and too regularly confuses/conflates *real*, *authentic*, *actual*. this is no mere quibble - think on it and yawn: wherefrom and how can one write of *real* while also confusing and/or diminishing the significance of the possible meanings of the word?). From vintage smash-ups, she motors breezily like teens out on a date to *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Man Bites Dog*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Paranormal Activity*, *[rec]* and *Cloverfield*, etc. with an informed and well reasoned detour thru the lexicologically stressed sub-sub genre of "torture porn" and the sub-sub-sub genre of "snuff" films (see: putting a word or term in quotes doesn't make it any more or less clear as to its etymology or current usage). It would seem that the former is neither actual torture nor porn - thus the term is insulting to both critics and fans of both/either/neither form, while, with the

latter, snuff - nobody dies! (spoilers...you should read this book bare-back and enjoy it as best you can; plot prophylactics and morning after pills will not work: you cannot unread what you will have read...regardless, you may want to adjust your biblio-tinder/grindr settings when you are done so as not to make the same mistake twice - unless you are into such things). Heller-Nicholas is most prescient when dissecting gender power dynamics. Her take on the seeming misogyny and family violence at the heart of *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity*, respectively, is exciting and well annotated (I must confess to being a bit of a foot-note fetishist). Disappointingly, the author plays slap-and-tickle with aesthetics - the how-why-what causes affect - by mainly referencing what others have written (typical of people or academics who think images are only signs, see: 'Oz', again) or, when strategies such as a hand-held camera, dim lighting, or poor sound are employed, referring to them as 'amateurish', 'non-professional', or just plain 'rough' is not enough; how these practices contribute to affect as well as story is important. So, why discuss content without popping the hood and looking into form (you don't buy a car without first taking it for a spin)? It is more than intimated in the sub-title (*Fear and the Appearance of Reality...* whose fear and how conjured?) that the phenomenology of found footage horror films would be explored, but she only goes to first base with that: it's as if she didn't trust how-why-what she *felt* (italicised by me to stress shock and/or disappointment) while watching the films. This was the biggest let-down (it's not me, it's you...); folk go to horror films wanting affect, that is why explication thereof would have been welcomed. Further, prior to the advent of CGI, filmmakers relied on framing, lighting, editing, and, sound design to create affect - and, in its infancy, found footage horror made great use of these technologies (the art of making something that is not seen, *felt*. there is something else, too, about *not seen* and *found*: return of the repressed, anybody?). So anyway, as a resource for those of us interested in learning more about the sub-genre of found footage horror films, let this book act as a sort of first date; it's not love, but you may get lucky and/or learn a few things....

Ben Speth
Critic-at-Large (motherfucker).

