

# haley's odd logic

Richard Haley's *Breathing, Failing, Falling at Another Year in LA*

by Tim Quinn

A room full of—no, crowded with—familiar small objects forces one's path into tight curves at Richard Haley's *Breathing, Failing, Falling*. Forced meanders reveal similar objects repeating. Small odd pillows lean casually against the wall. Close observation of one of these reveals a rubbery cast of text. The text is the title of the work on the wall above. The little pillow, sitting on the floor, is the label for that work. Another bend finds a video monitor uncomfortably resting on two big orange sleeping pillows. The monitor is strapped securely to the pillows to prevent its need to topple from manifesting. The strap is bright orange, not quite matching the pillowcases. On the monitor a video is playing, explaining, in nine languages and dialects, a "Portable Hole Proposal": a hole in the ground might be created, without shovel or tools of any kind, by simply and repeatedly falling face-first onto said spot. The video shows our hero demonstrating the technique, close-up—though exactly what part of the body we are look-



ing at is never clear, as it smacks the earth over and over again.

An uncanny logic begins to emerge, but slips away.

A series of photos and objects documents another odd experiment: a bicycle is modified by adding a stencil to the rear tire. Via a roller applying mustard, the tire leaves behind a

message on the pavement: "Arroje Sangre!", which is Spanish for "Fling Blood!" One can't help but think of ketchup, yet the presentation leaves one feeling something more serious is under discussion. The title, *4 Miles of Excessive Redundancy*, deigns to illuminate, instead pushing the analysis back toward farce.

Could this goofy demonstration be an anti-war statement, commemorating our President's penchant for exercise in the face of crisis?

Meaning or intention, like something noticed too late out a bus window, are only glimpsed—gone before fully seen. Are they carefully and skillfully concealed to reward the informed and wily viewer? Are they elaborately constructed to fool the gullible, exhausted art public? Or are they pushed, intentionally, to the boundary of sense and silliness, for the pure pleasure of mental stimulation? The intelligent but uninformed have no way of knowing, but this is not unpleasant—or even unfamiliar—mental territory.

Richard Haley's works fall neatly into the legacy of Duchamp, through Bruce Nauman and Robert Gober. He has a sure hand and a distinct voice. Though his strategy has become familiar, this is expert work. Haley manages to bring an emotional dimension to a traditionally aloof form, and keeps the viewer poised between a worry and a guffaw. One still wonders, though, what his agile and sympathetic mind will come up with given a few more years of experience and self-examination. This excellent student could become a master—if he doesn't slip into a satisfied professorship amongst equally gifted copyists.

*www.anotheryearinla.com*  
March 10 to April 28, 2006