

## On Elaine Despins

By Elle Flanders

Video in Elaine's hands has become not just a technique to return to painting, but a medium she has made her own with breathtaking results that engages with her intended project at its core.

Elaine's overall project is rooted in philosophical questions that are some of the most complex, compelling and necessary questions contemporary art should be grappling with. It is not only 'refreshing' to see an artist delve into the most difficult questions we face as human beings but it is also inspiring. As we face a 'crisis of art', and an art culture strewn with commodities, Elaine's project of undoing the mysteries of existence are not to be underestimated. Simply, Elaine questions our purpose here—and by association her own purpose as an artist. Without a didactic moment she quietly but fiercely engages the question of ontology and in Heideggerian fashion, it is only about Being and what is at the heart of existence. For Elaine, form, regardless of her media, is fashioned with painstaking regard for every detail that in turn fleshes out her 'question'. Her work is motivated by a passion for seeking—her work exemplifies an understanding that the 'answer' is not the question but rather the process is. Elaine's new series of video works is a continuation of her previous investigations into Being but from what feels like a new vantage point: an exploration of landscape as figure. Her turn from the flesh as body, from the figurative to landscape, exemplifies her understanding that Being has little to do with corporeality.

Her shift to video has been remarkable in her deft control of the medium—she has been able to 'minimalize' video's endless margin of 'ability' to a succinct understanding of its purpose in her hands and its ability to perform FOR her. Her classical training as a painter is well read into her style of video as she draws from it only what she needs.

*Elle Flanders is a filmmaker and artist based in Toronto. She was raised in Montreal and Jerusalem and holds both an MA in Critical Theory and an MFA from Rutgers University. Her work has been screened and exhibited at the Berlin International Film Festival, the MOMA and festivals and museums worldwide. Flanders is a PhD candidate at York University where she also teaches.*