

Being Infinite and High: On *If you never take it seriously you never get hurt* (2025) by Richard Sides

The irony of Western thought lies in its methodical confidence... conceiving space as infinite is really mapping coordinates onto the void. Rationality masquerading as insight. Did we truly grasp infinity, or merely find ways to avoid confronting its unsettling depth? Other phenomenological perspectives suggest that infinity transcends language and concept; it exists less in endless potential, and more in recognizing the infinite already within us, shaped by contingency and spirituality, manifesting as embodied perception, empathy for others, and dreams too sometimes.

Richard Sides' new video work *If you never take it seriously you never get hurt* engages this quieter, internal infinite. It positions dreams not as separate from reality but as structural interrogations of what we presume real. Both waking life and dreams are equally saturated by inherited narratives. They are cultural, ancestral, mediated.

We traverse an infinite series of mundane rooms and realities, propelled by quiet ambitions for autonomy while simultaneously attempting escape—moving between spaces that feel structured by invisible authority. The supposed dissonance between everyday and dream worlds collapses; reality itself becomes dreamlike, provisional, corroding at its edges.

The film evokes this tension through shifting imagery: night abstractions, barriers and architecture near the artist's apartment, cinematic and cultural references (*Easy Rider*, Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, Tony Soprano's high on peyote), and cosmic stills. A question emerges implicitly through the anxiety produced by the work's looping form: "Tell me the truth, are we still in the game?"¹ Bad tripping haunts these unfolding sequences, suggesting autonomy remains precarious in a landscape where distinctions between control and surrender have dissolved.

This infinity is neither the irresponsible openness of capitalist fantasy nor a fixed idealization, but an embodied and contingent reality. It belongs to our perceptual and spiritual world—our physical bodies, plants, roads, potentially everything around us—and the boundaries we continuously redraw. It manifests through extremely personal acts of perception, imagination, and presence, sometimes punctuated by moments of bliss and vulnerability. Sides offers an existentialist vision where the outside world, its cognitive relentlessness and frenzy of branding and other draining things alike are muted. Instead, we get to perceive our already infinite self, endlessly rearticulated through art, looping thought, and perceptual shifts.

The film culminates in a long-exposed photograph of a star-filled sky taken in the middle of the night on a remote island. Its cosmic density is overwhelming and also serene like summer nights can be. This moment gives way to Tony Soprano's raw emotionality, re-edited into Sides' "reality onion"—immersed in existential revelation of grief, high on peyote, shouting "I get it!" at dawn. This vulnerable scene encapsulates the work's core: simultaneous surrender to and rebellion against externally dictated limitations.

Throughout, Sides' layered vignettes explore perception itself. The film self-reflexively considers its own conditions of production, compressing "front end" spectacle and unseen "back end" realities. The infinite is internalized: it belongs to our perceptual world, spiritual depth, and embodied awareness—our capacity for solidarity, generosity, and imagination that we endlessly possess, dismantle, and reconstruct anew.

- Gianmaria Andreetta

¹ Quoted from Ted Pikul's gaming-induced derealisation in David Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999).