

Witness (and then there were none)

Bystander Series (2011-12) focused on the social phenomenon of bystander effect, in which the majority of people, when witnessing others in dangerous situations, would merely stand back with arms crossed. The latest work *Witness: And No One Else was There* focuses on majority of people who would simply wait and remain a witness with their arms crossed or in their backs.

Before development of civilization, everyone in the society worked collaboratively. Everyone helped each other, because they knew helping each other was necessary for survival. Villages farmed together, and shared joys and sorrows of life. However, as the society developed with industrialization and machines replaced people, individuals started to realize that they can still survive without gathering forces because machines and factories were able to do what villagers can do as a whole, much faster and more precisely. As time passed, society developed rapidly and people were able to indulge in a more comfortable life. People didn't form as solidarity of a collective as before, and individuals become increasingly more indifferent towards each other.

When someone faces a dangerous situation in front of many people, most people don't help him or her out, but merely stand back and watch. They form a crowd to gain anonymity and share the responsibility with many others, and finally desert the individual. Feeling a sense of kinship with surrounding others in the crowd, people chose to remain in the crowd. They chose not to take the responsibility, blinding themselves, pretending not to see what they see and not hear what they hear. They shut their mouths and don't speak of the truth. An individual becomes part of the crowd, trying to rid themselves from all responsibilities. They chose to remain a witness, with the thought that someone else can take the responsibility.

What I wish to ask through this project is what makes people gather into a crowd and what turns them into witnesses who cover their own eyes and ears and mouth. Ironically, in the society that values uniqueness and individuality, people leave their individual selves and become a part of the crowd to become a sort of object, or a sense of invisible presence that's there but not actually there. This project also makes me think about how I would feel to be part of a witnessing crowd as if nothing has ever happened, or if I were the individual left out from that crowd.