

*Video #2 Bonding on the Backseat*

My commentary for Kim Engelen's *Video #2 Bonding on the Backseat* (from the Series: *Words don't come easy*), 4'40 centers on the restrictions and possibilities found within the video's non-verbal spatial language. While the video establishes the universality of music as a device for emotional communication drawing the viewer in through cheery pop-beats, it offers a complex reading of the relationship between audio and visual signifiers. As the two protagonists playfully mirror gestural dance moves in the backseat of a small car, the Golden Gate Bridge looms in the rear window. By drawing attention to the two distinct frames of the video, one inside the car and the other outside, we engage with the video's binary messages. Those binaries include cultural difference and assimilation, static signifiers and moving images, music and language, dance and gesture, and tourist and resident. Each of these holds significance to the video's main topic of human communication and understanding. Of specific interest to me are the relationships between what is presented as universal and the flattening of global distinctions of place as brought forward in *Dean MacCannell's The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Commentary would include excerpts from MacCannell that specifically relate to the way that we build expectations around experience into the touristic. The Bridge, a spatial device of arrival and departure, offers mixed symbols of failed communication—so many people jump because they can't communicate—and hope. The backseat confines communication yet unifies its possibilities. The global tourist, as MacCannell notes, is always arriving and departing prefigured scenarios. Engelen's Dutch and Brazilian women reflect this state with ease. While the Bridge, as a site of this communication, suggests joy and vulnerability.

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