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The Art Of Being Downsized

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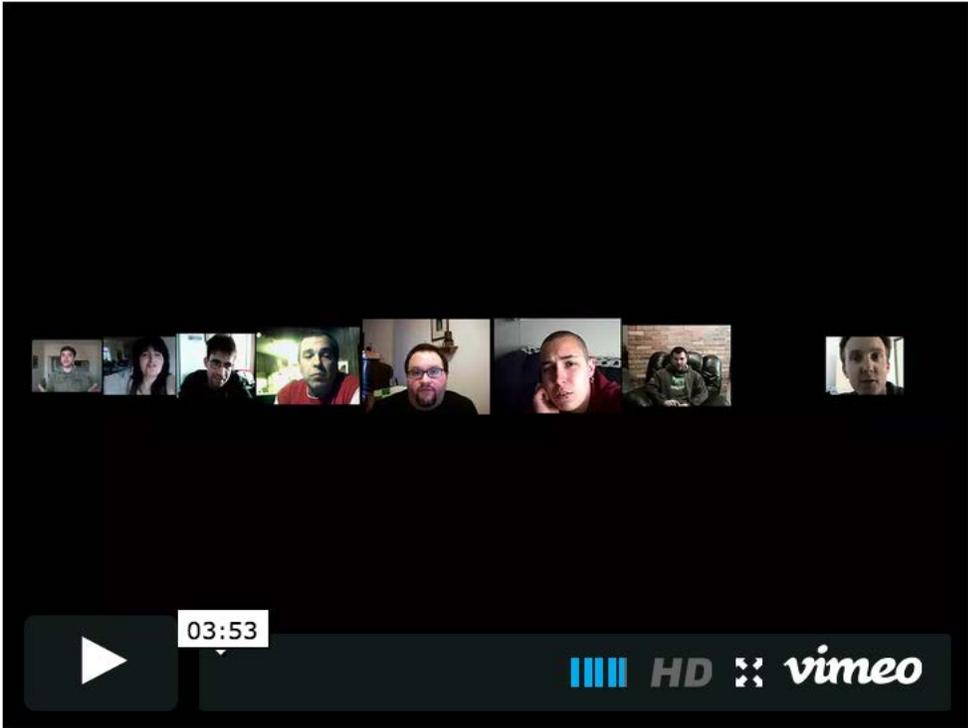
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I write about media consumption and the commercialization of culture.

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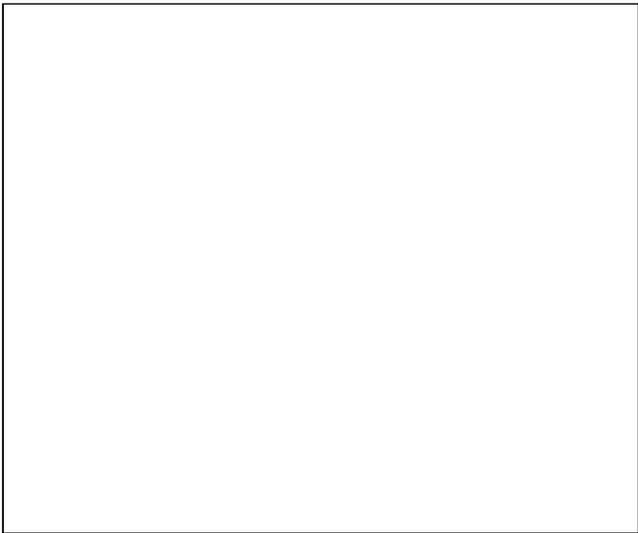


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HD vimeo



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In June of 2009, [I lost my job](#). I was informed by phone while on vacation with my wife and three-year-old son. We were staying at a cabin in Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands and the news punctuated what had been a great trip. Within seconds I made the swift transition from employed to unemployed, and that moment when reality came crashing remains unmatched.

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Digesting that type of news is difficult. You experience anger, sadness, self-pity, and relief all at once. It's that unraveling range of emotions, and the personal stories it creates, that artist [Natalie Bookchin](#) tackles in her video installation "Laid Off" (view above), which is part of her [Testament](#) series:

- “ Testament is an ongoing series of video installations made from fragments from online video diaries, or “vlogs” that explores contemporary expressions of self and the stories we currently tell online about our lives and our circumstances. Clips are edited and sequenced like streams and patterns of self-revelation and narrative that flow and dissipate over space and time. As in a Greek chorus, individuals echo, respond to, contradict, add refrains, iterations, and variations, join in, and complete solo narrations. The project reflects on the peculiar blend of intimacy and anonymity, of simultaneous connectivity and isolation that characterizes social relations today.

Bookchin's idea to thread together confessionals from strangers who all lost jobs, and essentially have them

speak to one another in a disembodied narrative, is both jarring and emotional. And there's are a few interesting subtexts at play here, not only narcissism and shifting notions of entitlement, but the all-consuming value too many of us place on work. Americans in particular thrive on allowing ourselves to be defined by our work, it's a distinction we welcome, a way to distinguish our identity among the masses. But when it comes down to how and why we lost that work, the experiences are painfully similar, no matter your professional field. Loss of income, and the inability to provide for yourself or your loved ones, is a callous equalizer.

[Video via [William Ball](#)]

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