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Crip Time and Eye Candy

At the opening reception of Van Every Gallery's most recent exhibition, *Alternative Medicine: Healing Remedies for Harmful Times*, co-curated by John Corso-Esquivel and Lia Newman, I encountered Carolyn Lazard's high-definition video work, *CRIP TIME* (2018). This single-shot, 10-minute video focuses on the artist's hands as she methodically refills brightly colored pill boxes with prescription and non-prescription medications. The unedited footage captures both the mundanity and necessity of this task for those living with chronic illness. The title references the non-linear experience of time among disabled and chronically ill people, who often require more time for everyday tasks and must navigate unpredictable time shifts caused by unaccounted, physical barriers (Corso-Esquivel & Newman 2026).

Several things stood out to me about this video installation in particular. The duration of the video felt far longer than just ten minutes, especially with so much movement happening around me, as it was the opening reception. Every time I thought the process was complete, Lazard would open yet another pill bottle. I kept waiting for something to happen, a climax, but nothing ever came of the continuous refilling of the pill boxes. I then started to wonder how many times a disabled or chronically ill person might have to undergo the task of refilling their pill boxes and how much longer it might take someone with more medications than what was featured in the video. And what if they accidentally knock over a box or lose count? How long

would it take them to sort out one of these mishaps? I realized that these were the unpredictable time shifts Lazard was trying to illuminate.

The vivid colors of the pill boxes and individual pill capsules in the video also caught my attention, as did the vibrancy of the exhibition as a whole. Beverly Fishman's large, brilliantly colored abstraction of pharmaceutical pills, *Polypharmacy: Positive Outcomes* (2025), is the first work to confront the viewer upon entering the gallery. Fishman's high-gloss rendering of pharmaceuticals complements the objective of *CRIP TIME* by suggesting a collective and excessive dependency on medication. The title, *Polypharmacy*, references the practice of taking multiple medications at once (Corso-Esquivel & Newman 2026), which is directly observed in *CRIP TIME* through the never-ending process of filling already overflowing pillboxes. Both Lazard and Fishman use color to draw the viewer's attention, treating pharmaceuticals as a kind of eye candy—vibrant, enticing, and hard to look away from—mirroring pharmaceutical companies' careful selection of pill colors and packaging for visual appeal and memorability. Both the aestheticism in *CRIP TIME* and the framing of polypharmacy as yielding “positive outcomes” mask the clinical reality of dependency beneath an attractive surface.

The number of pill capsules distributed between the seven boxes—each divided into four quadrants: morning, noon, evening, and bedtime—was astonishing. Witnessing just how much medication one person might take in the span of a couple of hours made Jean Shin's collection of thousands of empty prescription bottles, *Chemical Balance IV and V* (2017), which also comments on our over-consumption of prescription drugs (Corso-Esquivel & Newman 2026), feel far less shocking by comparison. Shin's formation of literal towers using empty prescription bottles she collected from nursing homes and individuals' medicine cabinets helped me to understand the sheer volume of pharmaceuticals out in the world today. Her sourcing of bottles

from nursing homes personally resonated with me, as my grandma currently resides in one. There, her caretakers help to administer her medications, using pill boxes eerily similar to those seen in *CRIP TIME*. The background noises included in *CRIP TIME*, with the quieter, more ambient sounds captured by subtitles, were also reminiscent of the noises my grandma might hear in her apartment—the clacking of pills against the interior of the bottles, the popping open of the top, a cat meowing, a fan whirring, and otherwise near-total silence.

Works Cited

Corso-Esquivel & Newman. *Alternative Medicine: Healing Remedies for Harmful Times*.

Van Every/Smith Galleries, Davidson, 11 February-12 April 2026.

Shin, Jean. *Chemical Balance IV and V*. 2017, Jean Shin Studio, Hurley.

Lazard, Carolyn. *CRIP TIME*. 2018, Red Bull Arts Detroit, Detroit.

Fishman, Beverly. *Polypharmacy: Positive Outcomes*. 2025. Beverly Fishman Studio,
Detroit.