

visual arts

Jul 13, 2006

Art Review : Amy Hicks: Suspended Series

When I planned to check out Amy Hicks' **Suspended Series** of videos, I thought I knew exactly what to expect. The artist and I have a school chum in common who told me about the project last year. Imagining Hicks' four short films as 16mm footage shot while driving across Bay Area bridges brought to my mind's eye a pretty clear picture of a grainy view from a car moving across the monumental spans that connect our counties. "It'll be just like those virtual reality rides, right?" I thought to myself. Wrong.

Had I not known what Hicks' footage was derived from, I would have guessed the first film **1** was a microscopic view of mitochondria floating around a blue Petrie dish, or maybe a stowaway fly's perspective from a speeding car's windshield. The images are mirrored, making it difficult to discern what you are seeing. Every once in a while, a glimpse of the road is offered, but **1** mostly made me feel like I was watching lampposts float about in the atmosphere through a kaleidoscope. Because of the mirroring, the images passing you by seem to fold in on themselves. Hicks' driving footage is more like a Stan Brakhage painted film -- not so easy on the retina, but fascinating and begging to be figured out. People observing the films would occasionally emit an "Ohhh!" when, for a split second, they saw a detail of a car or landscape that they recognized. It seemed the audience was searching for the satisfaction of attaching meaning to what they were seeing.

2's images are bathed in white and the backs of cars are visible (mostly SUVs -- I figured we were headed to Marin). Eerie music sounding like a mix between screeching brakes and a very slow samba is heard while footage shot out the back window of the car and played in reverse gives the appearance of an automobile army preparing for attack.

3 was my favorite because it's so gritty and unrecognizable with its stripes of muted colors -- like watching an animated Rothko painting. My mind raced, "Am I looking at a road? The wall of a tunnel?" I had no idea. I felt as though life was passing me by, and I was watching it through a dirty lens, or maybe a filter of stucco siding. Strategically placed tail light flashes and the sound of a car horn brought me back to reality, but without those subtle hints, one could get lost in what appears to be a dream sequence -- only this dream happens to occur when you're asleep at the wheel. It wasn't until the end of **3** that I realized the blue stripes streaming across the screen were a mirror image of a familiar skyline.

4 was the darkest of the films and featured the most recognizable bridge in the series. Hicks employs a delicate use of light as the bridge's metalwork fades in and out. The screechy audio returns -- layered with the beat of a locomotive -- enhancing the ominous mood of the final piece.

There's one thing I was right about when anticipating this series -- it should be watched on an empty stomach -- it will make you feel like you just got off of a roller coaster, though it's a thought-provoking ride. If you're the type who prefers in-home viewing, all four films are available in a fabric-covered boxed set complete with an archival print of a well-chosen film still. So, Velcro that FasTrak to your windshield, plan on a late dinner, and head downtown to check out a local girl's gallery debut of video trickery.

Amy Hicks: Suspended Series is at the [Catharine Clark Gallery](#) through July 29, 2006.

Posted by Kristin Farr at 11:00AM

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- [Visit Amy Hicks' web site](#)
- [Catharine Clark Gallery](#)

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Three galleries in downtown San Francisco: Modernism's show featuring Jacques Villegle and Sheldon Greenberg; "Three to the Third" at Varnish, featuring Brian Elliot, Kevin Evans and Liz Orleans; and Christopher Irion, "The Photobooth Across America" and Michael Garlington: Portraits from the Belly of the Whale at 111 Minna Street Gallery.

[KOED: Gallery Crawl - April 2006](#)

Two galleries on Potrero Hill in San Francisco: the "Photobooks Now" show at San Francisco Center for the Book and "Thomas Hirschhorn: Utopia, Utopia = One World, One War, One Army, One Dress" at CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art.

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'Looking History in the Eye' at Portrait Gallery

Portraits are more than paint and canvas. They're a chance to look history in the eye. Marc Pachter is the director of the newly refurbished National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. He joins a conversation about how we picture the people who have shaped our society.

Designer Tobias Wong Tweaks the Rules

Tobias Wong is an up-and-coming industrial designer with some radical ideas, among them a bulletproof rose corsage and rubber-dipped chandelier. The artist has been hailed as one of the design world's "merry pranksters" who hopes to provoke people to ponder what they truly value. Marianne McCune of member station WNYC reports.

The Comic Adventures of 'Tintin and I'

Director Anders Ostergaard talks about Tintin and I, a cult comic that delves into the mind of artist Hergé, Tintin's Belgian creator. Ostergaard's new film about the comic premieres Tuesday on PBS at 10 p.m.

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