



AUTO-MOTIVE

World from the Windshield

THE ART OF COMMUTING

A Note from the Curator

I have spent decades commuting between the city and the suburban art gallery where I work. During my drive I often think about the landscape framed by the windshield of my car. It occurred to me some time ago that I am far from alone in this type of perception. In recent books, films and visual arts, a new kind of landscape—a new way of observing our world—is informing contemporary thoughts and emotions.

The exhibition *Auto-Motive* arrives at a moment when the moving landscape progressively occupies more time in people's lives. Canadians, on average, spend sixty-three minutes a day in a car, making the round trip between home and workplace. An enduring icon of contemporary culture, the car remains vitally important as a source of adventure and discovery, while its windshield permits swiftly observed views of landscapes—built and natural—on a vast territorial scale.

My carpool colleagues often comment on a mode of perception, a shift in place and time, which can be quite disorienting. The boredom of our particular drive, funnelled through kilometres of sound barriers, sometimes ends with a sudden “How did we get here?” when we arrive at the gallery and snap out of our trancelike state. We also remark on how some drivers seem to reside in private bubbles, oblivious to being on a public thoroughfare. We've witnessed drivers who cry, sing, smoke, eat, groom, read, and more. At times the view from the highway can feel uncomfortably like peeping into private lives. How do we articulate and negotiate this combination of public and private space?

In *Auto-Motive*, this translocation of place is visualized through a broad range of materials, conceptual strategies and motives. The eighteen artists assembled here challenge our customary sense of place in the

physical, geographical and psychic landscape. Indeed, it was the discovery of Christos Dikeakos's *Car Rides Street Scans* (1970–1971) followed by Roy Arden's *Citizen* (2000) that unveiled experiences and emotions clearly entwined with the everyday fabric of my life. You could say they “drove” me to a realization that other shrewd artists were responding to cultural phenomena framed by the windshield.

Auto-Motive serves as a curatorial examination of artistic representations that fuel our imaginations. The artworks assembled engage notions of speed, motion and visual effects from behind the windshield. And, in using the car as a platform, they elicit emotions: pleasure, fear, frustration, euphoria, desire, and rage. Others look to the car as a place from which to document geographic space—the ever-moving relationship between the car, driver and highway landscape—and the inherent forces of capitalism. Ranging from contemplative to surprising, amusing to dramatic, the works in the exhibition create a heightened awareness of our bodies and our senses. Their common vantage point—from behind the windshield—can be interpreted as a means of passage, a place of inter-subjective transformation or a site of transport, in the most literal sense of the word.

The essay that follows is intended as a road map to situate the art in *Auto-Motive* within broader car culture and to consider how artists can open up different vistas—tours and detours—onto emotional geographies and the production of space.

Marnie Fleming, Curator of Contemporary Art, Oakville Galleries

Overleaf: **IAIN BAXTER&**, *Highway, Northern California* (detail), 1979, Chromira print, 50 x 72 cm, collection of Beverly + Jack Creed, Toronto, © IAIN BAXTER&



AUTO-MOTIVE

World from the Windshield

MARNIE FLEMING

The vehicle now becomes a kind of capsule, its dashboard the brain, the surrounding landscape unfolding like a televised screen. — Jean Baudrillard¹

Like a magic mirror, the windshield permits the future to be seen. — Paul Virilio²

Rear Window: How Far Have We Come?

To understand just how far representations from within the car have travelled, it is useful to begin by looking at the painting *The Windshield, On the Road to Villacoublay* (1917), by Henri Matisse (1869–1954). The text on the Cleveland Museum of Art website reads:

Matisse painted this canvas in the summer of 1917 while being chauffeured by his son Pierre toward an airport on the outskirts of Paris. Suddenly, Matisse decided to paint the road from inside the car, which proved challenging, as zooming traffic forced the artist to keep the windows shut and constantly rocked the old Renault back and forth. Matisse nonetheless produced a novel view of life in the modern automobile age.³

That Matisse would “suddenly” put paint to canvas was not unusual for the artist. Matisse had a particular interest in experimenting with ambiguities

¹ Jean Baudrillard, “The Ecstasy of Communication,” trans. John Johnston, in *The Anti-Æsthetic*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), p. 127. ² Paul Virilio, “Dromoscopy, or The Ecstasy of Enormities,” trans. Edward R. O’Neil, *Wide Angle* 20 (3) (1998): p. 17. ³ Cleveland Museum of Art, www.clevelandart.org/art/1972.225



of flatness and depth, perspective and illusion. The subject of windows appealed to him, such as the one depicted in *Open Window, Collioure* (1905). Yet while *The Windshield* does provide the illusion of depth, the view from the interior to the outside landscape seems to elude his grasp.

The two-panelled Renault windshield reveals a static landscape. Matisse's attempt to create a sense of forward motion by employing converging lines of perspective, as well as his use of side windows to close in the car's interior, remains altogether directional rather than dynamic. The driver is entirely absent, and the car appears at a stand-still. The "zooming traffic" and the "rocking" movement indicated in the museum notes seem to be missing in the painting. Notions of speed and movement may have stymied Matisse, but it is important to note the artist's prescience:

HENRI MATISSE (French, 1869–1954). *The Windshield, On the Road to Villacoublay*, 1917. Oil on canvas; 38.2 x 55.2 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Lucia McCurdy McBride in memory of John Harris McBride II 1972.225



he sensed that the automobile would frame and focus the world in a new way. In 1917 the artist could only imagine how ubiquitous, how everyday, the perceptual consciousness from within the car would eventually become.

Fast-forward to the present exhibition, and we can see how the visual experience from the car window has evolved. The boundaries of space and time, so dramatically challenged by modern artists, have again been transformed by contemporary technological advances: both machine-powered (trains, cars and planes) and televisual (cinema, television and computer screens). The artists in the exhibition probe similar perspectives

JOHN MASSEY, *Silver Sunset*, 2005, archival digital print, 87.6 x 106.7 cm, courtesy of the artist and Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto

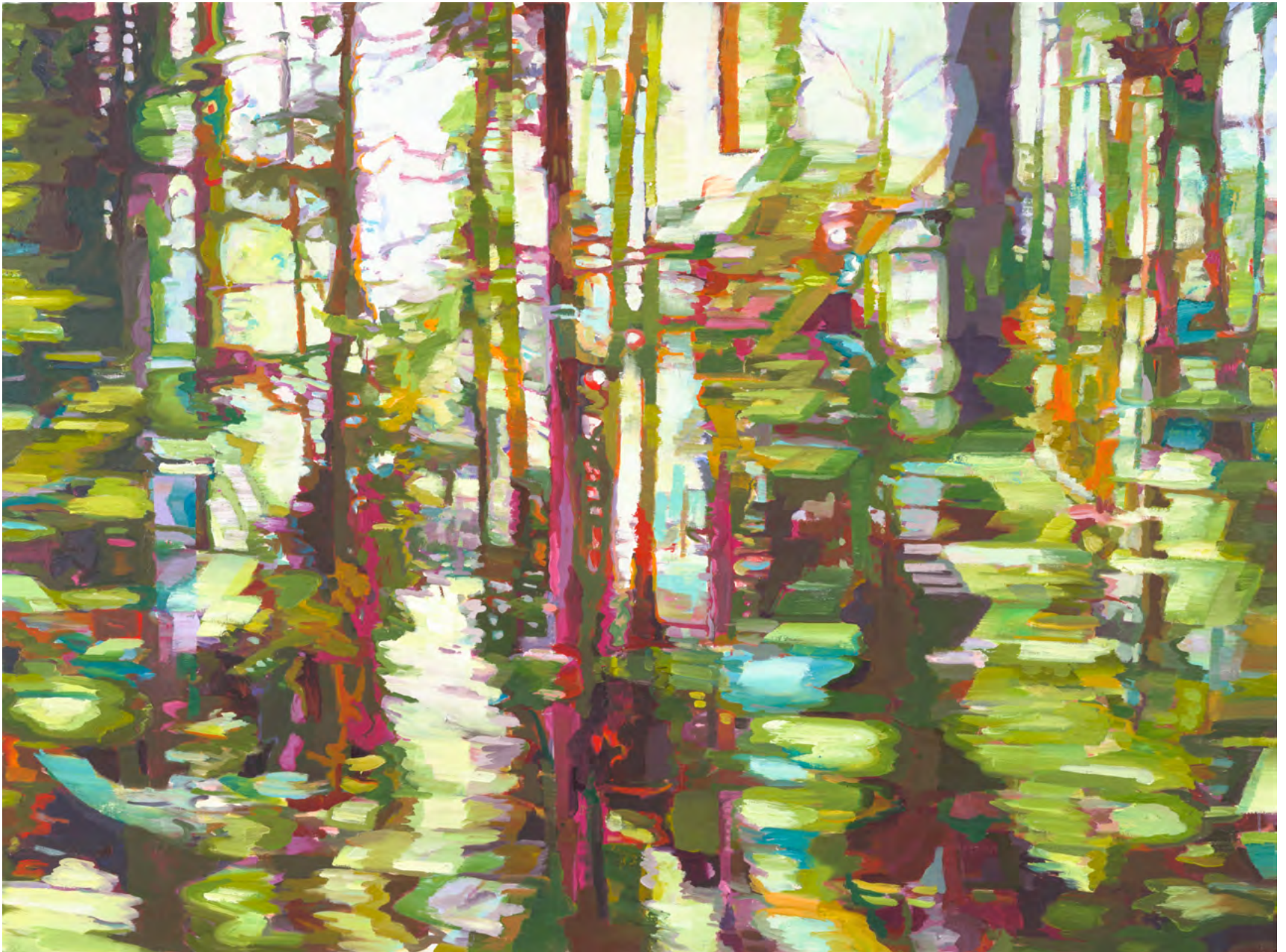
as those explored by Matisse, but their visual experience from the windshield is more fluid, focused outward to the world beyond and inward to our emotional response. Features in the landscape now metamorphose into supple shapes and receding images that strangely elude the consciousness of form.⁴ Their windshields frame what we see—and sometimes what we miss.

World from the Windshield

As in Matisse's painting, perceptions from behind the windshield have emerged from the art historical tradition of the framed view, or window. The framed view from the car, however, is compounded by other visual effects, which include a change in spatial and temporal orientation—or what in the nineteenth century was referred to as the “annihilation of space and time.”⁵

In 1986 Wolfgang Schivelbusch commented on how the development of railway transport in the nineteenth century transformed the popular perceptions of space and time because of the different modes of viewing required.⁶ His work provided a foundation for others such as Lynne Kirby, who studied the complementary experiences offered by the railroad and cinema, particularly concepts of mobility and spectatorship. As she argues in *Parallel Tracks*,⁷ both train travel and the cinema provide a collective viewing experience from individual seats, the windshield and the cinematic screen function as portals for the mobile or moving image, and both are sites for being “carried away.” Other scholars have likened

⁴ Kris Lackey, *RoadFrames: The American Highway Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 77. ⁵ This term appears frequently in many sources throughout nineteenth-century literature. David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Blackwell, 1989), coined the phrase “space-time compression.” ⁶ See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). ⁷ Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997). This book explores the theoretical and historical linkages of the railroad and cinema in light of the technological and cultural instability underlying modernity.



car travel to “a flow or current of scenes that are sequential, parallel to the filmstrip that passes through a projector.”⁸

Visual studies theorist Mitchell Schwarzer draws yet another analogy and likens the viewing experience from the windshield to how we view an art exhibition:

Unlike the cinema, where spectators sit still before a picture that moves, automobiles project travelers into the mise-en-scène. Drivers are part spectator, part actor, part artist. They are witness to the gallery of views, and they, too, become an observed object within this gallery. And drivers

⁸ Nanna Verhoeff, *Mobile Screens: The Visual Regime of Navigation* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 49.

MONICA TAP, *Borealis III (grid)*, 2012, oil on canvas, 130 x 170 cm, courtesy of the artist and MKG127, Toronto, photo: Gordon Hicks

*direct the show, steering, accelerating, and braking to compose the precise sequence, to choose the angle, and to determine the duration of the view.*⁹

The link to train travel, cinema and art is useful for understanding the perceptual process and how it alters our state of consciousness. Yet, it is the propulsive motion of the car and its speed, which conjure a mix of casual and attentive glances, that make the view from behind the windshield radically different.

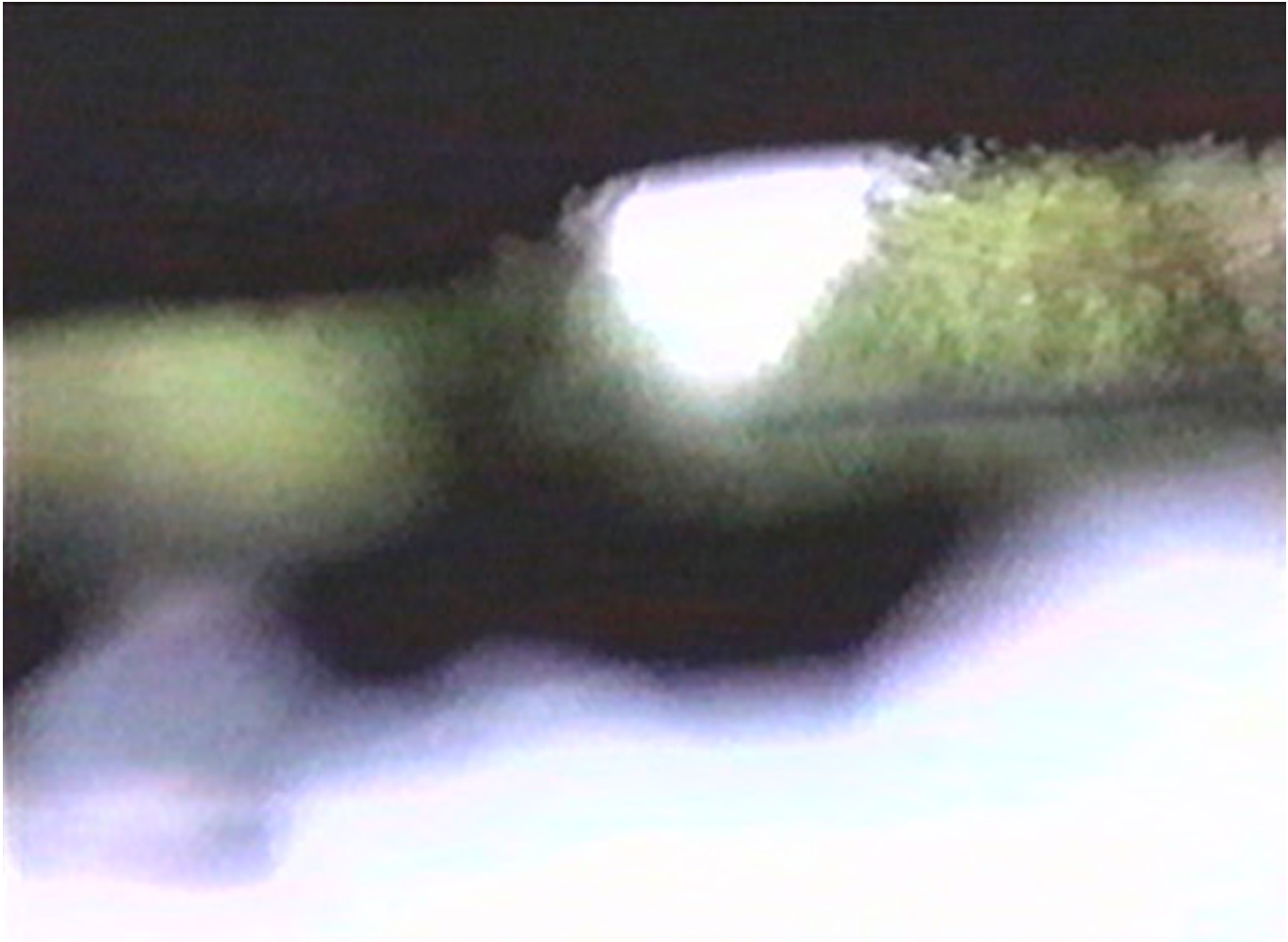
Paul Virilio describes the view from the windshield as “dromoscopy,” combining the Greek words for “road” and “field of view”:

*Let's disabuse ourselves: we are before a veritable “seventh art,” that of the dashboard. The opposite extreme from stroboscopy, which permits one to observe objects animated by a rapid movement as if they were in repose, this dromoscopy allows one to see inanimate objects as if they were animated by a violent movement.*¹⁰

Furthermore, he writes, “with its rear-view mirror, its windowed doors, its frontal windshield, the automobile forms a quadriptych where the travel lover is the target of a permanent assault, which renews the perspective of painting. The illusion is the same, but henceforth it extends itself at the surface of the world and no longer only on the surface of the canvas.”¹¹ Virilio reminds us that unlike the view from the train window, the perceptual perspective from the car corresponds to changing views—from the windshield, to the rear-view mirror, to the side mirror, to the windshield and back again.

The view from behind the windshield can also have a strange duality. Are we looking at the car's window, or at the side of the road? Is that a raindrop or a figure crossing the road, squished bugs or roadside debris? From a stance similar to those of several works in *Auto-Motive*, Roland Barthes explains perceptual ambiguities:

⁹ Mitchell Schwarzer, *Zoomscape: Architecture in Motion and Media* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), p. 98. ¹⁰ Virilio, “Dromoscopy,” p. 12. ¹¹ Ibid.



LESLIE PETERS, *for ever more* (stills), 1999, video, 2 min 30 sec, courtesy of the artist and Vtape, Toronto

*If I am in a car and I look at the scenery through the window, I can at will focus on the scenery or on the window-pane. At one moment I grasp the presence of the glass and the distance of the landscape; at another, on the contrary, the transparency of the glass and the depth of the landscape; but the result of this alternation is constant: the glass is at once present and empty to me, and the landscape unreal and full.*¹²

Hence, the windshield can offer a range of perceptions within a momentary glance, from the object outside the car to the framing of its view, from smudges on the glass surface to the larger landscape being navigated — and to the workings of our imaginations.

What is significant for our purposes is that the view from the car windshield, combined with bodily motion and propulsion, creates an integrated visual perception, a kinetic sense, with the car as “body-mover” extending experience into and across the external world. And as Virilio points out, dromoscopy accomplishes these feats in real time and real space.

Are We There Yet?

The once plaintive cry from the backseat, “Are we there yet?,” seems very real in this age of in-between: between here and there, city and country, home and office. In little more than a century, technology and perception have changed enormously.¹³ Disparate landscapes are now perceived at high speeds. The mobile view from behind the windshield can be described as “vision-bites,” snippets of collage, or what Schwarzer calls “zoomscape,”¹⁴ an ever-accumulating series of fragments.

¹² Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), pp. 123–24. ¹³ Marnie Fleming, *Is there a there there?* Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2007. In this catalogue essay, visual representations of the suburbs are examined as reflections of a larger cultural sense of suburban place. This essay and the exhibition that accompanied it laid the groundwork for *Auto-Motive: World from the Windshield*. ¹⁴ Schwarzer, *Zoomscape*, p. 14.



Speed and the onrush of sensations have opened up a succession of scenes that are often difficult to coalesce, absorb and pinpoint. The question before us is not only “Are we there yet?” but also “Where are we?” Many of the artists in *Auto-Motive* address this question by visually recording real-time sites in a state of transition, or what artists Christos Dikeakos and Jeff Wall once referred to as “defeatured landscape,” a sort of no man’s land between chaos and coherence.

This in-between environment has a banal uniformity, frequently devoid of distinguishable landmarks. The monotony of sameness, the endless looping of the roadside landscape, the constrictive sound barriers all contribute to disorienting geographies. Frequently what the artists deliver is a view of the road: a view of traffic jams, of vehicular spaces, of endless

CHRISTOS DIKEAKOS, *Scan No.8 (north towards False Creek at foot of Oak Street)* 1969–70, 2008, silver print, 40.6 x 50.8 cm, courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver



industrial parks, uneven rhythms—in short, new ways of seeing and moving through landscapes.

The view from such corridors can be perceived quite differently at different tempos. Take, for example, Geoffrey James's two polar opposite views: his photograph *401* depicts a bleak experience of busy highway transit, whereas *Inside the Car, Summer Storm* allows for the quiet, poetic reflection of rain on the windshield. These works bring to mind Schwarzer's comment that "the automobile view carries with it innumerable editing options, ellipses past dull blocks [of buildings], or deliberately slow crawls where the architectural action gets thick. The speed, isolation, and autonomy of the automobile allow the driver to see the city he or she wants to see."¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 95.

GEOFFREY JAMES, *Inside the Car, Summer Storm*, 2012, pigment print, 35.6 x 53.3 cm, collection of the artist



Certainly many works in *Auto-Motive* convey a sense of vacancy and a palpable quest for meaning, while some offer unresolved narratives: the Danish artist Jesper Just's *Sirens of Chrome* leaves us uncertain whether his film portrays reality or fiction. Indeed, the focus on urban banality and the effects of a new urban perception upon our everyday experience is evident throughout the exhibition. For instance, everything about Martha Rosler's *Routes 1 & 9, New Jersey* is vapid, from the angle at which it was photographed to the details of the particular scene. Without the title it would be impossible to determine the location of the image, attesting to the increasingly homogenized effects of global capitalism.

In *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, philosopher Henri Lefebvre rails against the new time-space relationships that have resulted from suburbanization and the necessity of the commute to the workplace. He refers to commuting as “compulsive time” and states that rapid modernization

MARA KORKOLA, *No place 202*, 2009, oil on aluminum panel, 22.9 x 38.1 cm, courtesy of the artist and Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto

has ushered in a new culture of consumption in which everyday life is lived according to the rhythm of capital.¹⁶

Indeed, some drivers choose to do away with the view from the road and the home-to-office commute altogether by turning their car into a corner office on wheels. Cars are outfitted with lockable storage cabinets, printers and screens, which, along with the standard GPS navigation system, create a “mobile command centre.” These are marketed to achieve increased productivity—all within the privacy of the vehicle. A recent *Globe and Mail* article announced that interactive windshields, already present in luxury vehicles, will soon offer a “head up display (HUD) [that] shows the driver things like speed and distance to the car in front, incoming phone calls with the picture of the caller, weather conditions, arrows for navigation, directions and warnings of looming collisions.”¹⁷

Such dynamically engineered windshields will once again drastically change the ways in which subjectivities, temporalities and spatialities are experienced. And no doubt they will also intensify the rhetoric of speed, acceleration and productivity.

French anthropologist Marc Augé, who is interested in “supermodernity,” particularly in places of transience, argued in 1995 that if Point A (home) and Point B (work) are places, then the space between them is a “non-place.”¹⁸ Yet, what we are now seeing and experiencing with greater frequency is the merging of home and office. Following Augé, some artists and theorists now find it pertinent to ask: Is a commute between home and work a mobile, itinerant place? Or could this possibly be a new “out-of-place” in the perpetual flux of the expressway?

The questions that arise from this new, dynamic sense of place—its mobile effects across different spaces and times—are intensely probed by

¹⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2000), p. 53.

¹⁷ Michael Kesterton, “Never Leave the Office?” *Social Studies, Globe and Mail*, March 8, 2013.

¹⁸ Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 77–78.

the artists in *Auto-Motive*. Some, like photographer Fred Herzog, present alternatives to, or rejections of, the repetitive driving routine and simply drive for pleasure, along chosen routes in search of new unexpected sights and places. Unscripted behaviour is a feature of camera-ready artist Paul Wong, who documents a ride through a harrowing storm while navigating to a destination unknown. Roy Arden's *Citizen* shows a particular interest in the transgression of normal behaviours and capitalist impulses as experienced in daily life. In his video the artist intentionally alters time and motion to dramatize the overwhelming impact of car culture on a lone bystander. Correspondingly, notions of place are in perpetual motion and subject to constant questioning, reassembly and reconfiguration. What's more, the view from the windshield can be a source of freedom as the car allows the driver/artist some flexibility to travel at any speed, in any direction, on any road. Whatever the motive, the view from the car offers "many instants and fragments of time."¹⁹

Motion and Emotion: The Express-ways

Not only are perceptions from the windshield about the translocation of place but they also respond to aesthetic, emotional and sensory experience. Cultural theorist Alex Wilson reminds us that in the postwar period certain roadways were substantially altered to produce a landscape of leisure "pleasing to the motorist, which involved using the land in a way that would 'make an attractive picture from the Parkway.'"²⁰ Nature was turned into something "to be appreciated by the eyes alone."²¹ In this environment, emotions are not simply felt but also invoked, regulated and managed through expectations of the travel industry. Such "nature

¹⁹ Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The City and the Car," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24 (4) (2000): p. 744. ²⁰ Alexander Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Cambridge, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 35. ²¹ Ibid, p. 37.



drives” are designed to encourage proximity to nature and to family, and to implicitly mobilize emotions.

Hence, the view from the family car is capable of manufacturing not only “Kodak moments” but also treasured family moments. Conversely, the car can be a vehicle for escaping familial obligations and the constraints of busy schedules by evoking feelings of freedom and euphoria. Such frames of experience demonstrate how deeply the view from within the car can be integrated into family life, public sociability and emotional entanglements.

Moreover, drivers and passengers—and, of course, the artists in the exhibition—feel the body in motion along with the car. Cars are above all machines that move people, but they do so in many senses of the

MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT, *O Waly Waly (leaving Suffolk) Pears & Britten* (still), 2012–2013, video, 3 min 48 sec, courtesy of the artist and Republic Gallery, Vancouver

word.²² Indeed, the Latin root of “emotion” is composed of the active verb *movere*, “to move,” and *e*, “out.” The meaning of emotion, therefore, is historically associated with “a moving out, migration, transference from one place to another.”²³ Emotions and senses play a key part in constructing inner, emotional geographies. Hence, Marian Penner Bancroft’s *Leaving Suffolk* is infused with and informed by motion and emotion—coalescing as they do behind the car window.

Certainly, the emotional economy of the car can provoke feelings of pleasure, happiness, congeniality, and kinship, but just as readily produce other extremes: fear, frustration, anxiety, and isolation. Antithetical feelings such as these are central to the vociferous arguments for and against car culture—a paradox that helps to shape the dynamics of this exhibition.

John Massey’s photographs suggest a libidinal economy around the car, in which particular models become objects of desire that are “collected and cosseted, washed and worshipped.”²⁴ Emphasizing leather seats, climate control and audio systems, these works insist that the sensory interface between bodies and cars are paramount.

Further, listening to the car radio or other ambient noise while driving can also create an affective state. Some of the artists in *Auto-Motive* interface sound with visuals to generate visceral emotions and memories, using audio elements such as a computer-generated GPS voice (Susan Dobson), various genres of music (Peters), slapping windshield wipers (Wong), news reports (Dikeakos), and manipulated sound (Arden). The audio components are employed here to tap into “an emotional palimpsest of past and future, in which events and feelings are recovered and [...] rescripted from the present moment in time.”²⁵ Whether it is a balanced

²² Mimi Sheller, “Automotive Emotions, Feeling the Car,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 21 (4/5) (2004): p. 221. ²³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. ²⁴ Sheller, “Automotive Emotions,” p. 225.

²⁵ Lynne Pearce, “Driving North / Driving South: Reflections upon the Spatial/Temporal Co-ordinates of Home,” in *Devolving Identities: Feminist Readings in Home and Belonging*, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), p. 163.

equilibrium that the artist desires, the sensation of grief or an adrenalin rush, sonorous qualities such as tempo, volume, melody, and rhythm are crafted and considered to interface with visuals, producing a deeply felt engagement with the car.

Driven

Visual representations from behind the car windshield have without doubt evolved since Matisse's time. The artists in *Auto-Motive* help redefine visual movement, sensory experience and emotional geographies, demonstrating just how entrenched the car's "lens" has become. Drawing on the phenomenology of automobiles, they manifest the embodied relations between cars and people. They direct us to the car as a space for contemplation, but one that is interconnected with the external world. The artists demonstrate that the world behind the windshield is a contested terrain where fixed meanings are not readily available. And so they encourage us to engage the much-overlooked view from the car: the prosaic and yet indispensable way of observing contemporary reality.

²⁶ Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross, "Introduction to Everyday Life: Yale French Studies (1987)," in *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 78.



Roy Arden

In *Citizen*, Vancouver artist Roy Arden directs his camera through the windshield of a moving car towards a male figure—or “citizen”—who sits on a median strip amidst heavy traffic. Like a cat-and-mouse game, the camera loses the figure to obscuring traffic only to locate him again—repeatedly. Arden has slowed down the original two minutes of footage, while similarly manipulating the soundtrack into a sustained drone. Such a strategy emphasizes suspense and the fraught dynamic between the endless economy of car culture and the lone passive outsider.

ROY ARDEN, *Citizen* (still), 2000, DVD loop for projection, 10 min, collection of Oakville Galleries, gift of the artist, 2008



IAIN BAXTER&

For Windsor-based conceptual artist IAIN BAXTER&, the car has been an important tool—a portable studio for observing ever-evolving landscapes through windshields and side-view mirrors. Since the late 1960s he has been interested in the effects of mobility and technology on perceptions of the landscape. In his work, he recognizes the speed of both his car and that of his camera's shutter to convey the rapid visual experience of car travel. BAXTER& examines not only the passage of time, but also the human eye's optics and the phenomenon of cultural memory. He has also commented, "life is just a blur."

IAIN BAXTER&, *Cows, Gaspé Bay, Quebec*, 1969, Chromira print, 107 x 148 cm, Collection of the artist, © IAIN BAXTER&



Stan Denniston

Toronto artist Stan Denniston's practice has long been concerned with depicting space—not just as something external to us but rather as a phenomenon tied to memory, psyche and emotional geography. This production still accompanied a 2003 video installation employing two proximate, opposing projectors at each end of the space. It was inspired by Michelangelo Antonioni's film *The Passenger* (1975), in which the question is posed: "What are you running away from?" For Denniston, this stretch of Nevada highway proved the perfect location to provide the experience of "rushing toward the vanishing point while driving away from it."

STAN DENNISTON, *from as far away as hope (production still)*, 2003, chromogenic print on Crystal Archive paper, 65 x 100 cm, courtesy of The Donovan Collection, St. Michael's College, Toronto



Christos Dikeakos

Christos Dikeakos's interest in socio-economic and geographic space has sustained his practice for four decades. With hand-held camera trained on the windshield, side and back windows, *Car Rides Street Scans* generates a view that approximates the scanning eye of the car passenger and the wanderings of the mind. The gritty video portrays the once raw, industrial core of Vancouver, while the sound of the radio emits the “cracklings” of hit radio and a stunning news report on the October Crisis. The artist's photographs from this period are also “attempts to record real-time sites in transition, with indifference.” They underscore the evaporation of local identity in the face of globalization.

CHRISTOS DIKEAKOS, *Car Rides Street Scans* (still), 1970–1971, Beta video on DVD, 40 min, courtesy of the artist and Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver



Susan Dobson

Simulcast represents Guelph-based photographer Susan Dobson's recent foray into video. She shot this single-frame image through a car windshield at night while traveling along both paved and gravel roads. The resulting high-definition video image is interfaced with two audio components, one analogue and one digital: Orson Welles's 1938 radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* and the computerized female voice of a GPS device. These two audio tracks create an anxious dichotomy of past and present, leading viewers along a route that ultimately questions the veracity of information in any medium.

SUSAN DOBSON, *Simulcast* (still), 2011, HD video, 19 min 30 sec, courtesy of the artist



Fred Herzog

Vancouver artist Fred Herzog has long relied on the car as a “research” tool for traveling to peripheral locations. For well over half a century, Herzog’s photography has persistently engaged with the city as a site of social interaction and exchange. Here the windshield/lens opens up onto a wet city panorama that seems squeezed between the car’s hood and interior ceiling. This particular orientation creates the feel of viewing from the car—its enclosure as a warm, dry place from which to study the play of light and reflection on a quotidian scene.

FRED HERZOG, *Hastings and Carrall*, 1971, archival inkjet print, 20.3 x 44.5 cm, courtesy of the artist and Equinox Gallery, Vancouver



Geoffrey James

Recently, artist Geoffrey James has used his camera to map suburban expansion north of Toronto, often from within his car. To examine a James photograph is to travel inwardly from a place of drudgery to sublime transcendence, no matter how commonplace his subject. In *401*, a rather banal image is transformed into a study of light and reflection. His camera maintains a carefully controlled spatial compression that captures the bleak and harrowing experience of this stretch of highway. In serene contrast is *Inside the Car, Summer Storm* (p. 14), in which James brings alive a moment of poetic recognition and a tangible sense of the passage of time: the car interior is felt in an almost visceral way. Detail, composition and atmosphere interrogate the strange nature of our present moment.

GEOFFREY JAMES, *401*, 2012, pigment print, 35.6 x 53.3 cm, collection of the artist



Jesper Just

Danish artist Jesper Just begins his film with four women silently riding in a car through the streets of Detroit, the “Motor City.” They make their way to a parking lot—the former Michigan Theatre—where they encounter a fifth woman. Dialogue is entirely absent, creating a heightened sense of drama as their interaction manifests through nuanced gestures and the surrounding desolation. The narrative—left unresolved—could be real, imagined or somewhere in-between. Deftly combining fluid camera movements with a layered soundtrack, Just plays with our expectations and disrupts our usual ways of seeing.

JESPER JUST, *Sirens of Chrome* (still), 2010, RED transferred to Blu-ray DVD, 12 min 38 sec, courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York/Shanghai



Mara Korkola

Toronto artist Mara Korkola's paintings depict banal non-places and the experience of travelling through them, which for Korkola often occurs at night. The artist regards her generous use of black not as a non-colour but rather as a carrier of light. On initial glance the paintings have a photographic effect; on closer inspection their delicate streaks and blobs of gem-like colour are revealed. Often the membrane of the windshield disappears and exterior and interior merge as one. Korkola's work slows us down to comprehend a mundane commute made thrilling when caught at a standstill.

MARA KORKOLA, *No place 86*, 2004, oil on wood panels (diptych), 18.4 x 17.2 cm each, courtesy of the artist and Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto



John Massey

With the series *This Land (The Photographs)*, Toronto artist John Massey epitomizes the desire inherent in car culture. These images suggest a libidinal economy built up around the car, in which the particular car model is a commodity, an index of social status and a carrier of style. The car interiors are ergonomically designed to surround the body in immersive ways. The digital fusion of interior with background geography conveys imagined journeys and possibilities. Much like a new-fangled accessory, the landscape can be swapped out to “drive” mood and desire.

JOHN MASSEY, *Pink Dawn*, 2005, archival digital print, 87.6 x 106.7 cm, collection of Georgia Scherman, Toronto



A PORTFOLIO OF PILES N.E. THING CO. 1968



N.E. Thing Co.

IAIN BAXTER established and worked under the name N.E. Thing Co. when this seminal series was produced featuring different piles of objects found around Vancouver's industrial locales. It has often been credited with radically expanding how city spaces are looked at, while providing an alternative to the landscapes commonly found in tourism brochures. The portfolio included sixty-four images of piles and a road map. As a conceptual entity N.E. Thing Co. showed little interest in the formal conventions of art photography and thus engaged the services of Fred Herzog for some of the documentation.

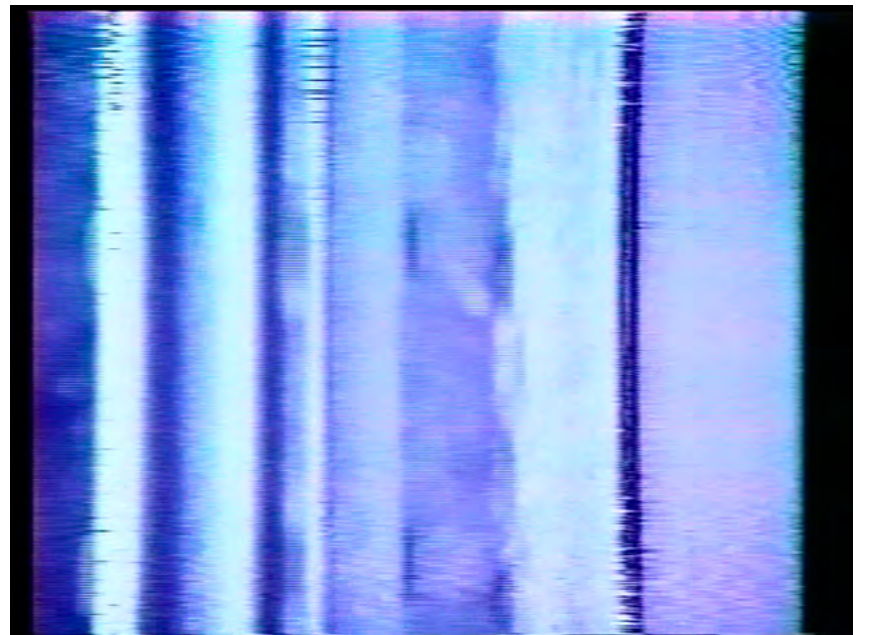
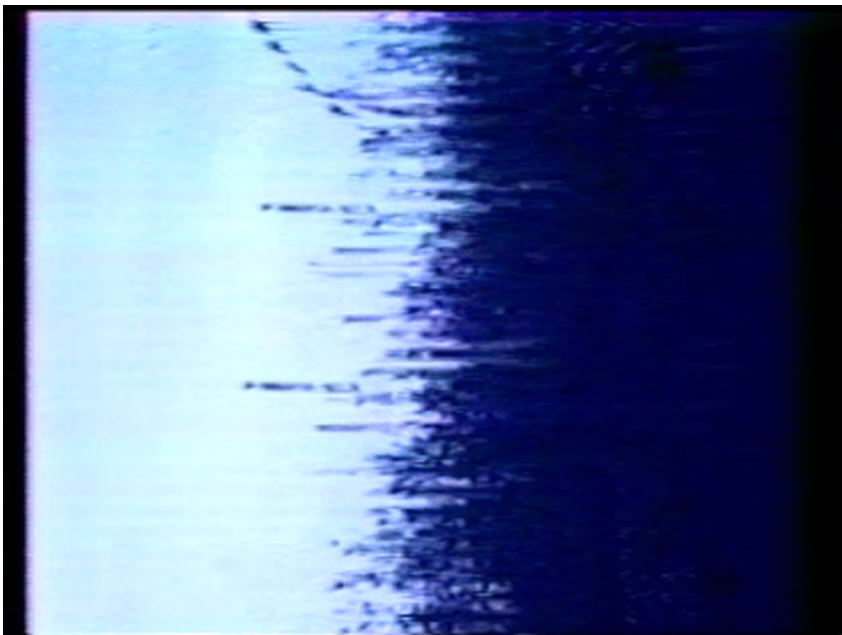
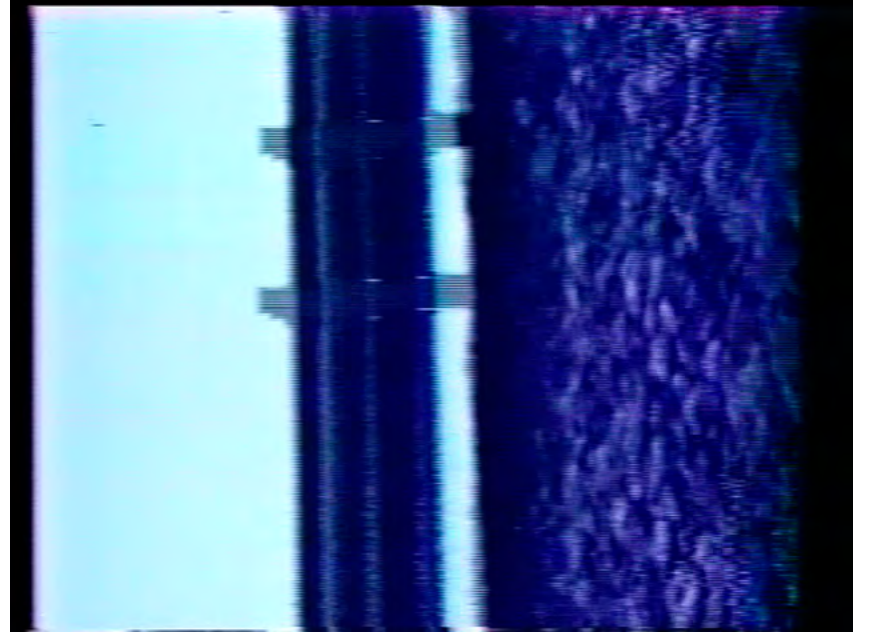
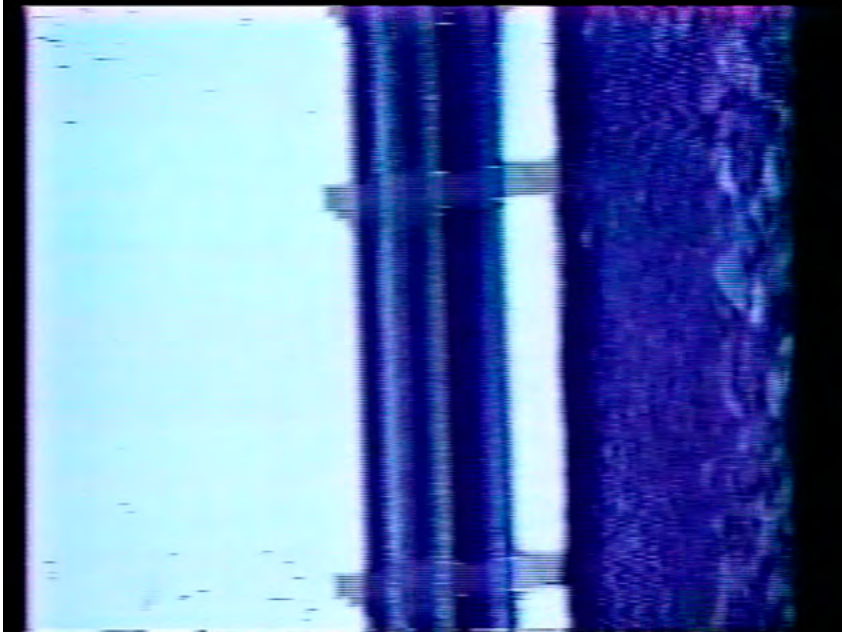
N.E. THING CO., *A Portfolio of Piles*, 1968, artist book published by the University of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery, 16.4 x 24 cm, collection of Christos Dikeakos, photo: Toni Hafkenscheid



Marian Penner Bancroft

From the back seat of a car, Vancouver artist Marian Penner Bancroft uses the rear window to frame the cinematic English countryside. She places movement and “being moved” at the core of her project. The slow pace of the music (“O Waly Waly” sung by Peter Pears and accompanied and arranged on piano in 1948 by Benjamin Britten), the speed of the clouds scudding in one direction and the blur of trees speeding by at 80 km/h in the other direction contribute to an emotional sensation that is both physical and ethereal.

MARIAN PENNER BANCROFT, *O Waly Waly (leaving Suffolk) Pears & Britten* (still), 2012–2013, video, 3 min 48 sec, courtesy of the artist and Republic Gallery, Vancouver



Leslie Peters

In 1998, artist Leslie Peters developed a project called the *400 series*, named after the numbered highways that stretch through Southern Ontario. This compilation of four titles (from a series of twelve) provides the most literal representations of what she describes as “a between state that exists between destination and time.” The artist contends that video both visually and aurally mimics the passage of time, the most abstract form of movement. Peters’s experimental works vacillate between representation and abstraction, as well as the pleasure-seeking and anxiety-provoking aspects of road travel.

LESLIE PETERS, *more and more* (stills), 1999, video, 3 min 30 sec, courtesy of the artist and Vtape, Toronto



Martha Rosler

From the series *Rights of Passage* (1993–1997) by Brooklyn-based artist Martha Rosler, we are presented with a view from the driver's seat. The image reveals a complexity of physical disruptions, signage and windshield reflections from behind the wheel, as if to contradict mythical notions of “freedom” on the American road. It also addresses Rosler's interest in the alienating “no-place” quality found in so many public spaces and systems of transport. The reflection of a skeleton hovers above the dashboard, perhaps as a portend of the daily psychic and physical grind of commuting.

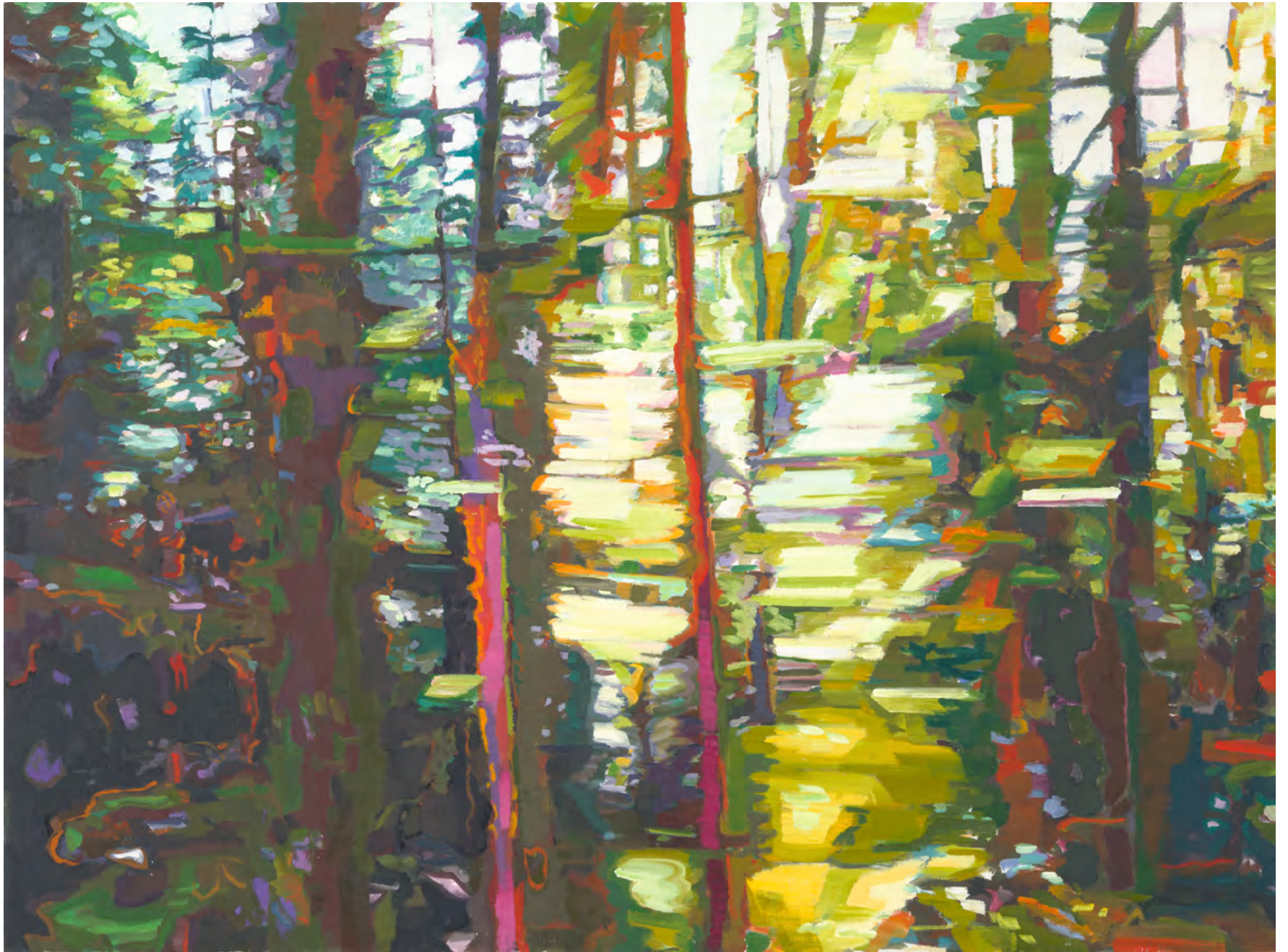
MARTHA ROSLER, *Routes 1 & 9, New Jersey*, 1995, chromogenic print, 67.3 x 101.6 cm, courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes + Nash, New York, photo: Toni Hafkenscheid



Jon Sasaki

Frequently taking futile, cringe-inducing actions as a point of departure, Toronto-based artist Jon Sasaki counters these gestures with an affecting sense of humour delivered in the most deadpan way. With methods similar to Buster Keaton, Sasaki uses slapstick to caricature human fallibility and life's hardships, using laughter as a means of reflection. Here, the driver is entirely consumed by his way-finding map rather than the pleasures—and safety—of the journey.

JON SASAKI, *The Destination and the Journey* (still), 2007, HD video loop, 2 min 5 sec, courtesy of the artist and Jessica Bradley Gallery, Toronto



Monica Tap

Toronto artist Monica Tap's work opens up a space between traditional landscape and abstract painting. Her paintings stem from still photographs—extracted from a point-and-shoot camera recording ten frames per second—shot from the window of an automobile. Translated onto canvas with the use of a data projector, Tap's paintbrush then performs a dab-and-dash description of form as it partially collapses into a blur. Thus, the artist captures a tiny fragment of a second “somewhere between here and there,” while navigating the terrain between motionless painting and moving image.

MONICA TAP, *Borealis I (split)*, 2012, oil on canvas, 130 x 170 cm, courtesy of the artist and MKG127, Toronto, photo: Gordon Hicks

Once these photographs are processed, there are several uses to which I might put them. For example, someone might be invited or constrained to hold the 36 small photographs on his lap in a moving car, flip through them as the car moves along, and attempt to "relate" them to a particular journey. I might bury them alongside the roadway or try to have them published in an automobile magazine. The car, just by its very nature & seemingly unconsciously, has created here a vast defeatured region in which all information is ren-



PHOTO 33 TIME 4:35 P.M.
SUN BREAKING

dered useless through the continuous and apparently imperceptible (at least to those not speaking this particular language) input of "energy" in the form of simultaneously continuous and apparently fragmented imagery.

In any case, whatever the process to which these small flat casebook photographs are subjected, they will comprise a basic and central factor in the structure of this ongoing analogue for real experience. As the project continues, however, it is becoming more and more apparent that this "ongoing analogue for real experience" is a great deal more "real" than much "other" experience—which is considered ceaselessly to be insistently "real". The high degree of self-consciousness in this analogical situation never detracts from its immediacy, but instead distinctly intensified that immediacy, meanwhile adding a functional precision. For art-making, this condition reduces one's needs—on all levels—to the near-zero point. (see photos attached)



attached photo—(extension) precise drawing—away inter-sections—integrated (multiple) possibilities etc.

A—possible (future) LOCATION



attached photo (reflection-extension) Note—divisions (Further projected movement within A & B

TWO CAR RIDES

The two car-rides are—in another way of speaking, two aspects of the same car ride. That is, one of the car rides is a "reconstruction" of the other car ride, using photographs, maps possibly, written accounts, film-rips, tape recordings, even verbal accounts by some of the people involved in the car rides.

The truly important factor in these car rides is the consciousness of the participants of their own ability to make real-time abstractions or to form real-time image-systems concerning their activities in the widest possible context.



pleasant tree-lined road

CAR RIDE A: a bright, cool, sunny autumn day; I am riding at a considerable speed (50 miles an hour) on a tree lined road. The road itself has uneven patches and when the car rides over them I am subjected to fairly violent vibrations—enough to make photography difficult if the goal of this photography is the attainment of a clear, unblurred image. The car comes to a halt at a red stop sign, and, after a short pause, turns right, accelerating rapidly. 35 seconds brings us—up a very slight incline—to the end of one stretch of road moving in one direction and the beginning of another stretch moving in another direction—a 90-degree left turn. We proceed along fairly level ground for 2 minutes or so, begin to reach the crest of a low hill, begin to ascend, and after 3 1/2 minutes of running time, reach a red stop sign. After another short pause, we continue along the same straight route, descending another long incline; when it flattens out again, we continue for 1 minute 49 seconds on level ground, then stop at a third red stop sign, then turn right on to another wide flat area which after somewhat

more than one minute running time, begins to slope upward. As the pitch of the incline suddenly increases, we reach a fourth red stop sign, pause on the hill, and make another right turn, and continue to climb. We run on a wide relatively smooth surface for more than 3 1/2 minutes, then slow down and make a U-turn to the left and proceed back in the direction from which we came, this time on the opposite side of a grassy median. We proceed at a steady 33 or 34 miles per hour, running between lawns, houses and sidewalks. The car is cool—the windows in each



up a very slight incline—

Note: camera locations

1. in CAR
2. in HOUSE (back to windows etc.)
3. in YARD (looking through concrete-block fence)

(future—(unspecified—unorganized??) activities etc.—cameras running simultaneously—& so including each other)

of the front doors is rolled down, and the air vents under the dashboard are wide open. The riding compartment is filled with noise—the sound of the tires on the road, the engine, the wind pouring in and out of the car, the noise of other cars passing in an erratic stream. On the back seat is a coloured service-station street-

Jeff Wall

Vancouver artist Jeff Wall's self-published manual consists of fifty-six newsprint pages and is in the same genre as conceptual magazine pieces by artists such as Ed Ruscha and Robert Smithson. The booklet contains a number of banal, urban snapshots—mostly shot from a car window in the Vancouver area. Images are accompanied by a critical narrative about urban phenomena that questions the objective gaze of documentary photography. In it, there is a palpable yearning to find meaning in the experience of the "defeatured landscape" from the perspective of taking pictures from inside a car.

JEFF WALL, *Landscape Manual*, 1969–1970, artist book published by the University of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery, 26.7 x 21 cm, collection of Christos Dikeakos, photo: Toni Hafkenscheid



Paul Wong

Vancouver artist Paul Wong's work is immediate and unscripted. Wong takes us on a white-knuckle journey that includes pelting rain, blurred and distorted car lights, power outages, and lightning. Windshield wipers slap rhythmically while Wong reassures and assists the driver with navigating safely. Here the car is a container for drama, while the windshield can be likened to a screen onto which moments of reflection and observation are projected. The artist creates a moving space and a screen for memory and emotions while demonstrating the permeability of interior/exterior space.

PAUL WONG, *Storm* (still), 2009, video loop, 6 min 40 sec, courtesy of the artist and Vtape, Toronto



Oakville galleries

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pigment print, 35.6 x 53.3 cm, collection of the artist



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