

Owen Kydd

CSA SPACE, VANCOUVER

For nearly two years, CSA Space, in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant area, has provided the city with a small but ambitious independent exhibition space. Each show at CSA has been curated (or perhaps the verb "selected" is more accurate for so small a space) by one of its three proprietors: Christopher Brayshaw, Steven Tong and Adam Harrison.

As I walk into the opening for Owen Kydd's *Mission*, I see three flat-screen monitors mounted horizontally across a wall. A triptych of videos displays a series of still lifes, portraits, vignettes and tableaux, all out of sync. The piece takes its title from the city of Mission, one of the many post-agricultural communities at Vancouver's periphery. As I watch the monitors, I'm reminded in turn of Tacita Dean, Scott McFarland, Mark Lewis, Stephen Shore and early cinema. Kydd's piece moves between photography and cinematography. At times an image may appear still: one shot taken at the corner of a residential road has the feel of a still photo until a crow flies into the frame and lands on a telephone wire, reminding us that we are watching something unfolding in time.

Aside from these formal pictorial/cinematographic explorations, what is most appealing about *Mission* is how it works as a representation of contemporary landscape. One of the primary characteristics of suburbs is that they seem spatially incoherent. Not knowing how to read them, we find them confusing, ugly or depressing. Kydd's video vignettes show us a mother and son at a drag race looking at a bright yellow Camaro with the words "To Infinity and Beyond!" written on the bumper, dahlias in a Benedictine monastery garden, a parking lot at a Silver City movie complex, forest underbrush, a teenager in a camouflage hoodie, an old man with new slippers reading a newspaper, tables ready for dinner, a fisherman's tackle box. *Mission* begins to offer a way of looking at such apparently incongruous things and spaces. The videos have a simplicity that is both pleasing and deceptive. As images, they are loaded with pictorial references to photography and 19th-century painting, and yet they remain focused on their specific subjects. *Mission* is a complex portrait of a suburb and its inhabitants. It depicts a location that, in many ways, could be anywhere, yet finds particulars in that landscape. By turns stoic, humorous and precise, Kydd's video tableaux depict the spaciousness, ennui and stubbornness of the towns on the periphery of Greater Vancouver, and at the same time make a compelling triptych of short silent films.

The videos were shot over the course of a month at harvest time. There are few indications of the season in the videos, a fact that highlights the post-agricultural nature of Mission, but harvest still produces an astoundingly clear light. **AARON PECK**



OWEN KYDD *Young Monk* (still from *Mission*) 2007 HDV video
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