

# NEXT

A SERIES OF ARTIST PROJECTS FROM THE PACIFIC RIM

Owen Kydd is the tenth artist presented in *NEXT: A series of artist projects from the Pacific Rim*. The series highlights work previously not seen in Vancouver and seeks to engage the diverse practices of Pacific Rim artists. *Owen Kydd – Mission/Night/Joshua* is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art.

## LIST OF WORKS

*Mission*, 2006, three channel video, collection of Monte Clark and Wylie Rauch, Vancouver  
*Night*, 2007, three channel video, collection of Helen and Barry Smith, Toronto  
*Joshua*, 2009, three channel video, collection of Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft, Vancouver

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

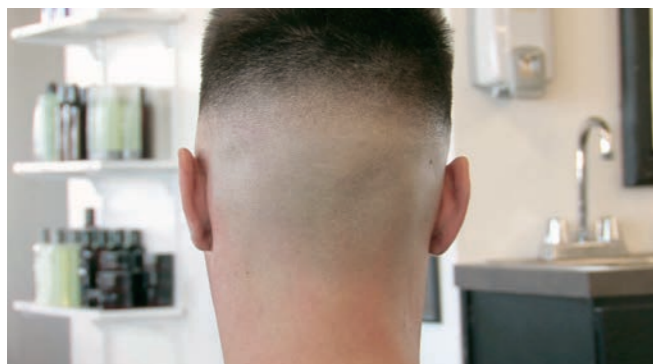
Owen Kydd (b. 1975, Canada) holds a B.A. with a joint major in Fine Arts and Literature from Simon Fraser University. His work has been exhibited in group and solo exhibitions in Vancouver at Anodyne Gallery, Contemporary Art Gallery, CSA Space, Monte Clark Gallery, Vancouver Art Gallery, Video-In, and in Toronto at Clark & Faria. He lives and works in Vancouver.



(Top) Owen Kydd  
*Power Box, Night*, 2007  
video still

(Bottom) Owen Kydd  
*Marine, Joshua*, 2008  
video still

(Front cover) Owen Kydd  
*Cafe, Joshua*, 2008  
video still



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**Vancouver**  
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# OWEN KYDD

MISSION / NIGHT / JOSHUA





Owen Kydd, *Table Setting, Mission*, 2006, video still

## OWEN KYDD

MISSION / NIGHT / JOSHUA    October 3, 2009 – January 3, 2010

*Even the demonic is not so much something conveyed by the photograph as it is the impression of the moviegoers who experience the original on the screen.*<sup>1</sup>

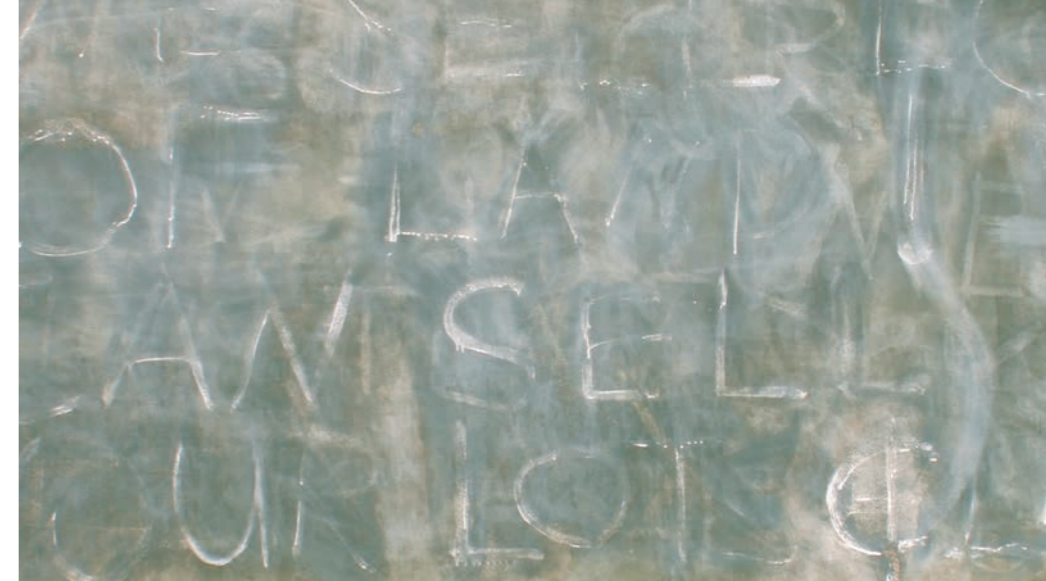
In the three video works that make up this exhibition, *Mission*, *Night* and *Joshua*, Vancouver-based artist Owen Kydd investigates the pictorial intersections of photography, video and film. Evoking the descriptive capacity of still photography and the temporal presence associated with the moving image and cinema, Kydd's works are rigorously direct in their structure. Each consists of three discrete image sequences, about 6 minutes in length, that are presented on adjacent flat screen video monitors arranged in a cruciform pattern on the gallery wall. Each sequence is comprised of a set of vignettes produced with a stationary video camera and each is configured so an image appears on the screen for about 40 seconds before it fades to black and the succeeding image comes into view. The sequences that make up each work vary slightly in length and, as they repeat in different durational cycles, their deliberate evasion of synchronization produces ever-changing combinations of pictures.

Kydd's trilogy turns the viewer's attention toward liminal zones in which the urban encroaches on the rural, in this case the often incongruous spaces located on the geographic periphery of Vancouver and Los Angeles in which the collision of histories and cultures that characterize North America's version of modernity are readily visible. The markers that define this suburban terrain — strip malls, gas stations, drag-strips, cine-plexes and fast food outlets — emphasize the lack of social status associated with these places, while also evoking the unceasing processes of homogenization at work in the larger culture. While this same trajectory can be seen in almost any North American suburb, Kydd's measured depictions of his subject matter — *Mission's* luminous still life of a modest place setting, carefully arranged in anticipation of a meal's serving; *Night's* incandescent, richly detailed portrait of a blinking parrot with a partially plucked chest that suggests some kind of nervous tic; *Joshua's* rustic diner, complete with a mural of the surrounding desert landscape, in which a pre-adolescent boy pleads with his tired mother to buy confection — also allude to the specific histories and the particularities of lived experience that have physically and psychically shaped these places.

The structural rigour of *Mission*, *Night* and *Joshua* is echoed in the precise construction of the individual images from which they are formed. Each contains references to a variety of pictorial traditions; each picture can, for example, be readily situated within traditional categories of representation such as landscape, portraiture or still life. The subject matter and composition of some bring to mind the work of nineteenth-century painters, such as Gustave Courbet or Paul Cézanne, while others recall photographs



Owen Kydd, *Parrot, Night*, 2007, video still



Owen Kydd, *Real Estate Sign, Joshua*, 2008, video still

by Eugene Atget or Walker Evans. More importantly, each image is marked by an uncanny fusion of the divergent temporal configurations associated with still photography and film. As they initially appear on the monitor, many of the vignettes evoke the character of a still photograph. There is often no visible movement and Kydd frames each image to appear self-contained and discrete; the viewer's attention is drawn toward detail contained within the frame — the texture of a folded napkin, the not-quite-legible writing on a worn blackboard, the stubble on the back of a freshly barbered soldier's head — so that what lies outside the camera's view also lies outside the viewer's consciousness. This sense of stillness is regularly disrupted as a car drives across the landscape, weeds rustle in the wind, lights flicker or a human figure passes by a previously empty window; the contained sufficiency of the frame dissipates and what was discretely fixed in stillness becomes registered as temporary and conditional through movement.

Roland Barthes, among others, has argued that the still photograph is essentially associated with the moment in which it was made, that it carries an intractable framework that places what has been photographed in spatial proximity to the viewer but also emphasizes its temporal distance, its attachment to a specific moment in time that continually recedes into the past. The photograph, therefore, persistently asserts the absence of what it depicts. On the other hand, as Christian Metz has asserted, this link to the past is broken with the moving image of cinema. The representation of movement, Metz argues, situates the experience of film in the present tense, “the spectator always sees movement as being present (even if it duplicates a past movement).”<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the still image's assertion of absence, experience of the filmic image is an affirmation of presence.

The fascination Kydd's work holds lies in the way his images embody these two different experiences of time and the associated tension between absence and presence. In this respect, his work finds an affinity with that of artists like David Claerbout or Tacita Dean. However, unlike these artists, Kydd maintains an affinity with a documentary idiom, through his subject matter and his working method. His work argues for the significance of description as a means of knowing the world, while at the same time drawing attention to the shifting temporal configurations within which that knowledge is formed.

Grant Arnold, Audaín Curator of British Columbia Art

<sup>1</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, “Photography,” in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, translated and edited by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995): 54.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Metz, “On the Impression of Reality in Cinema,” in *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974): 8.