

The Response

The Land of Plenty



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Issue 01

The Response is a volunteer lead, quarterly publication, funded by Fabrica, Brighton's leading contemporary art gallery. It is comprised of works which have been produced in response to the current exhibition *Land of Cockaigne*, by Rachel Reupke. Reupke's video installation shows a rolling image of the South Downs taken from the camera obscura at Foredown Tower in Portslade.

You may be forgiven for thinking that Reupke's latest work exhibits all the trappings of modern life. However, this piece draws heavily on archaic references that, without guidance, could easily be overlooked. For example, the title has been lifted from a 1567 painting by the renowned Dutch artist, Pieter Bruegel. The way in which 'the land of plenty' is depicted in this piece is somewhat moralising. This theme is reiterated in Reupke's work when the camera reaches its 360° cycle, *Heaven* by the Talking Heads plays in the background; a song that describes a slightly unfulfilling vision of heaven.

Another influence on the *Land of Cockaigne* is the scholar Giambattista della Porta who would manipulate a landscape, with the use of a camera obscura, for the amusement and entertainment of his guests. This manifests itself in both the medium and the subject matter of Reupke's work. Choreographed figures positioned around the South Downs are testament to della Porta's camera play.

The works displayed within this second issue of The Response are all defined by the themes set by the *Land of Cockaigne*.

Sophie Costin
Editor

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Land of Cockaigne
Rachel Reupke
Video Stills
2007

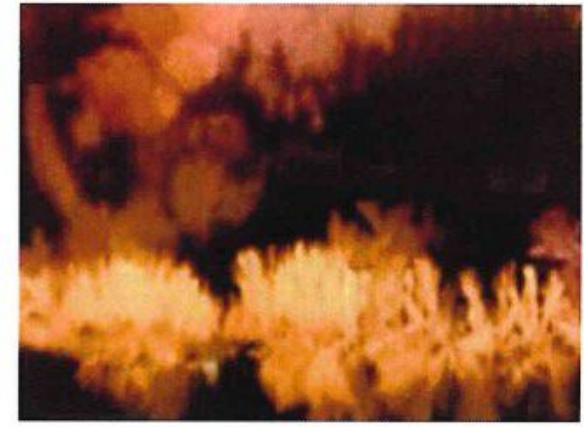


12th November
Ambar Past
Photograph
1988

The Big Rock Candy Mountain

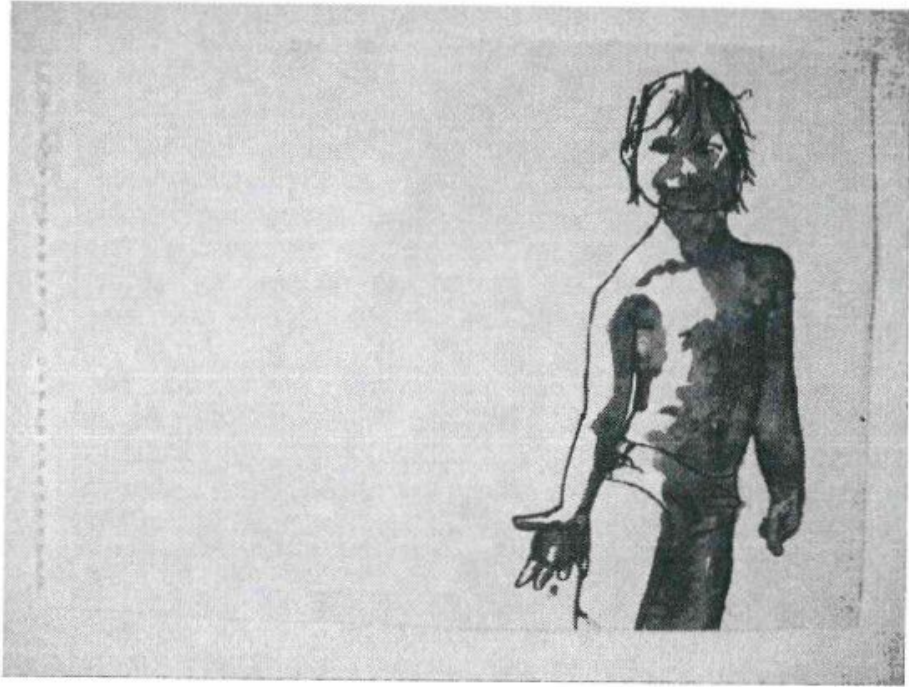
Oh the buzzin' of the bees
In the cigarette trees
Near the soda water fountain
At the lemonade springs
Where the bluebird sings
On the big rock candy mountain

-Harry McClintock

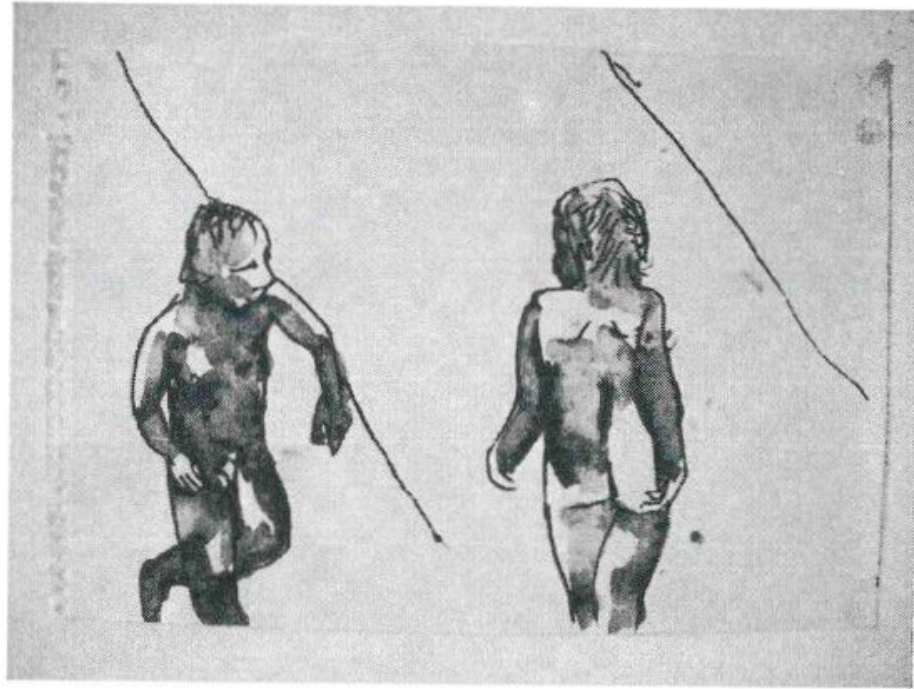


Dream Interpretations: Gardens
Tila Rodríguez-Past
Photographs
2007

(tilatila@hotmail.com)



Left Hand Kid
Sam Marsh
Ink on paper
2007



Two Walkers
Sam Marsh
Ink on paper
2007

(marshysam@hotmail.com)

Fictional Landscapes

Cockaigne is a fascinating imaginary landscape, and is also a term that can be considered as being extremely significant in relation to our modern lives.

The title of Rachel Reupke's video installation *Land of Cockaigne* appears to have been adopted by the artist as a means of directly referencing an earlier 16th century painting. *The Land of Cockaigne*, painted in 1567 by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525/30-1569), depicts a fictional Flemish landscape inhabited by peasants.

Cockaigne is the name that 'people in the middle ages gave to an imagined land filled with all the things their own lives lacked.' For example, at the right-hand side of the scene Bruegel has painted a running pig that is roasted and ready to carve with the knife in its back. The everyday realities of medieval life, such as labour and hardship are absent from this mythical land of plenty.

After visiting Italy between 1552 and 1555, Bruegel adapted the fashion for Italianate landscapes that depicted the realm of Arcadia. He created a utopia that is far less poetic than Arcadia and rejected the modish Italian style. Within this realm more realistic representations of farm labourers can exist, rather than idealised figures from mythology, such as Titian's *The Pastoral Concert* (c.1509), for example.

The Land of Cockaigne cannot only be considered as a depiction of an idealistic land, abundant with the fantasies of medieval European labourers. The painting and the notion of Cockaigne can also be interpreted as a moralising image. The idea that gluttony and, above all, idleness are to be considered immoral is clearly expressed through the paintings various elements.

It is proposed that a landscape almost always assumes a symbolic role within an image. No landscape, whether filmed, painted, or otherwise, is 'natural'. The concept and symbolism of nature shares the same opposing interpretations as Bruegel's painting of Cockaigne. The countryside has a double identity. Nature either reflects the idea of the Garden of Eden and a perfect heavenly world, or it represents a wild and corrupted world, after the fall from grace.

To consider the relevance of Cockaigne in our modern day lives is interesting. Are the fantasies of the Medieval Europeans still appealing? Or, are fantasies only relevant to the time and culture in which they appeared? Does the moral message of Bruegel's painting still strike a chord?

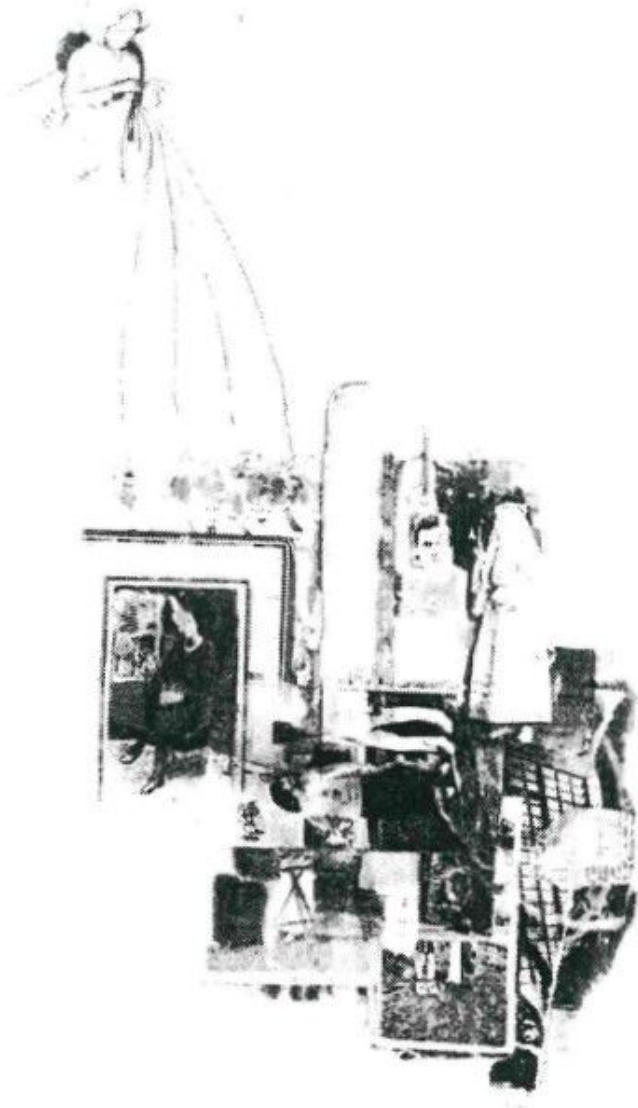
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(24/09/2007)

metmuseum.org/toah/hd/brue/hd_brue.htm (24/09/2007)

Helena Copsey
(helenacopsey@hotmail.com)



*Untitled *family* red*
Cristina Sitja
photocopies, pencil, tea.
70x110cms
2006



*Untitled *city* blue*
Cristina Sitja
photocopies, pencil, tea.
70x90cms
2006

THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

On first sight of the desolate islands, America and Scotch could clearly see how immeasurably superior to all wild imagination it would be. One could not have wished for a more truly incredible discovery.

In looking at the view they could see snow-capped summits, and absolute deserts, with the same beautiful diversity as the surrounding virgin forests. But on looking closely, the most beautiful view in the world could be seen on the edge of the desert.

'We behold the face of nature bright with gladness!' America observed following a song-thrush in to the forest. Scotch followed, striving to keep up, clothing entangled in several kinds of trees now growing up all round them.

As they came up a bank, and out of the trees, there was a large and extremely beautiful heath, which had never been touched by the hand of man, with the exception that the land had been enclosed, so the pair could not enter. Still more striking were the birds and beasts, all feeding on seeds and seedlings, or on the other plants which clothed the ground. The heath was frequented by hundreds of native animals. There were cattle and horses, partridges, grouse, elephants, and rhinoceros, in vast numbers, tiger cats, bears, ostrich, condor, swallow, missel-thrush, mice, insects, moths and bees. The ground was already thickly stocked with plants, red clover and variously coloured sweet-peas, springing up in multi-tudes, amongst the crowded animals. Scotch could hear the birds idly singing in the trees wafted by the gentlest breeze.

'Look at that!' said America, as a young elephant tried to raise its head above the enclosed structure as if it came to play.

The pair found several villages and small towns at a point several hundred yards from the heath, but were much surprised to have found each area barren with no other inhabitants. Here they would make their new homes in one of the old ruins, with a few clumps of native vegetation and feathers imported from the heath, for nests to keep them from the cold. But to have a better chance of surviving the first real importance would be food and water. No one treated this subject with

Struggle for Existence

Carolyn Thompson

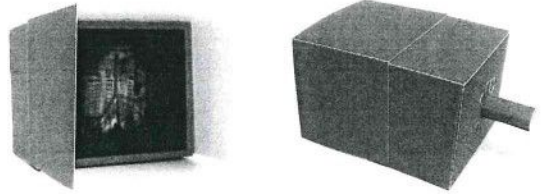
Text (taken from Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*)

2007

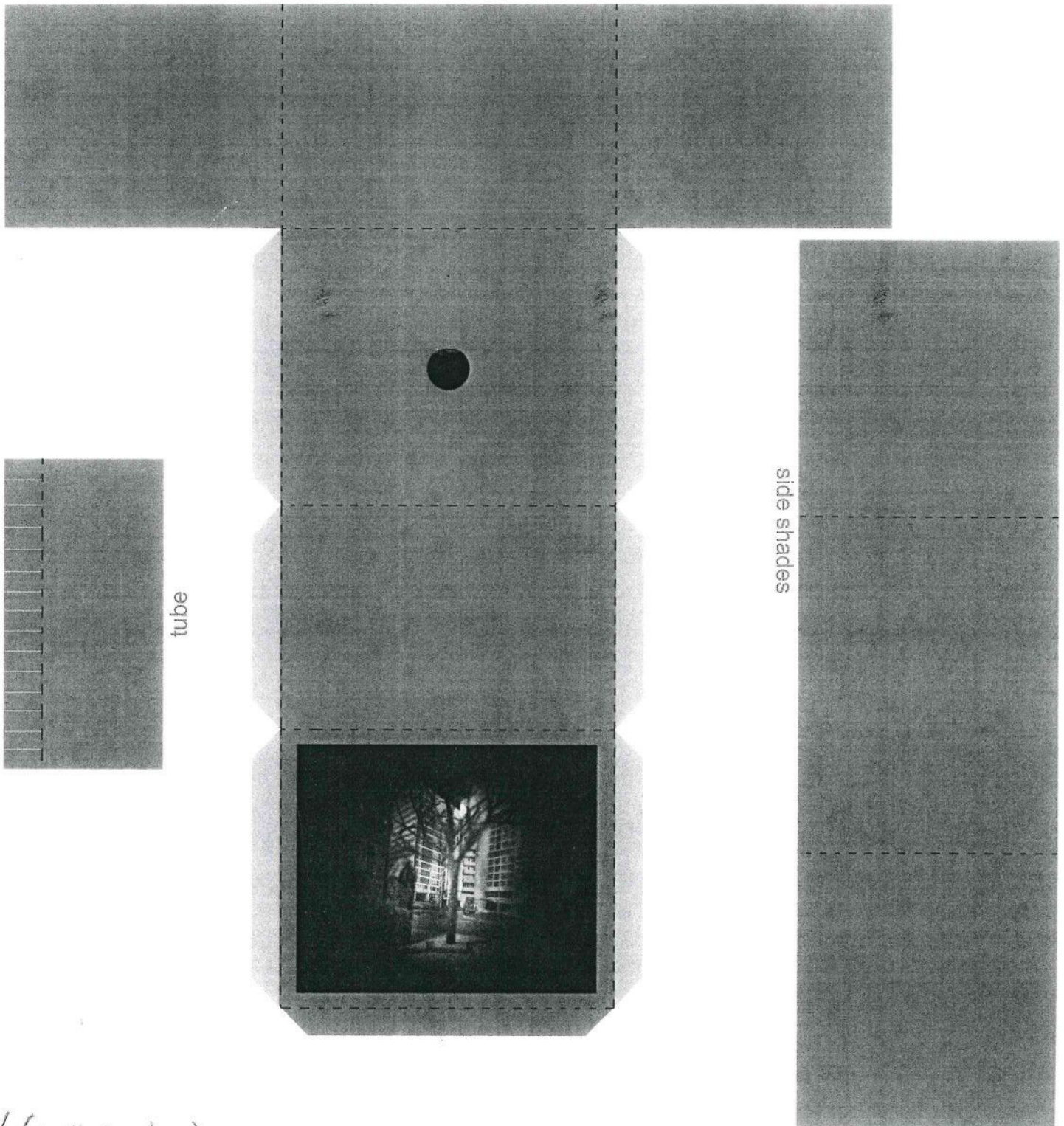
Cut-out Model Camera Obscura

Instructions

1. Cut out the 3 pieces below.
2. Bend along the black dotted lines.
3. Glue the turquoise tabs on the box in place to form the main body of the Camera Obscura.
4. Cut the tube along the turquoise lines to form glue tabs.
5. Roll the tube round a pen and glue to form a tube. Then bend the glue tabs back and stick the tube in place on the black hole on the Camera Obscura box.
6. Glue the side shades onto the main body.
7. Your Camera Obscura model is now complete!
(Remember - the image appears upside down)



Main body of Camera Obscura



tube

side shades

R. G. (1994)



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STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

more spirit and ability than Scotch, convinced that an existence chiefly on slugs and insects would not be a profitable one.

The hand of Nature stocked the heath with a superabundance of food, but the two would be exposed to the dangers of the innumerable animals there, so they searched for eggs and seeds in the grounds close by their home, so as not to be seen. The two dug and cleared a piece of ground three feet long and two wide, growing peas and beans on the little plot, and in a different yard, (three feet by four) plenty of corn and rape-seed, and other fruit-bearing plants.

The efforts of America to attack a number of birds and very young animals with manifold force, produced inordinately feeble results, but they mixed the seeds in due proportion, with a couple of eggs, apple and a vegetable or two and found the amount of food for each of them on which to feed would suffice.

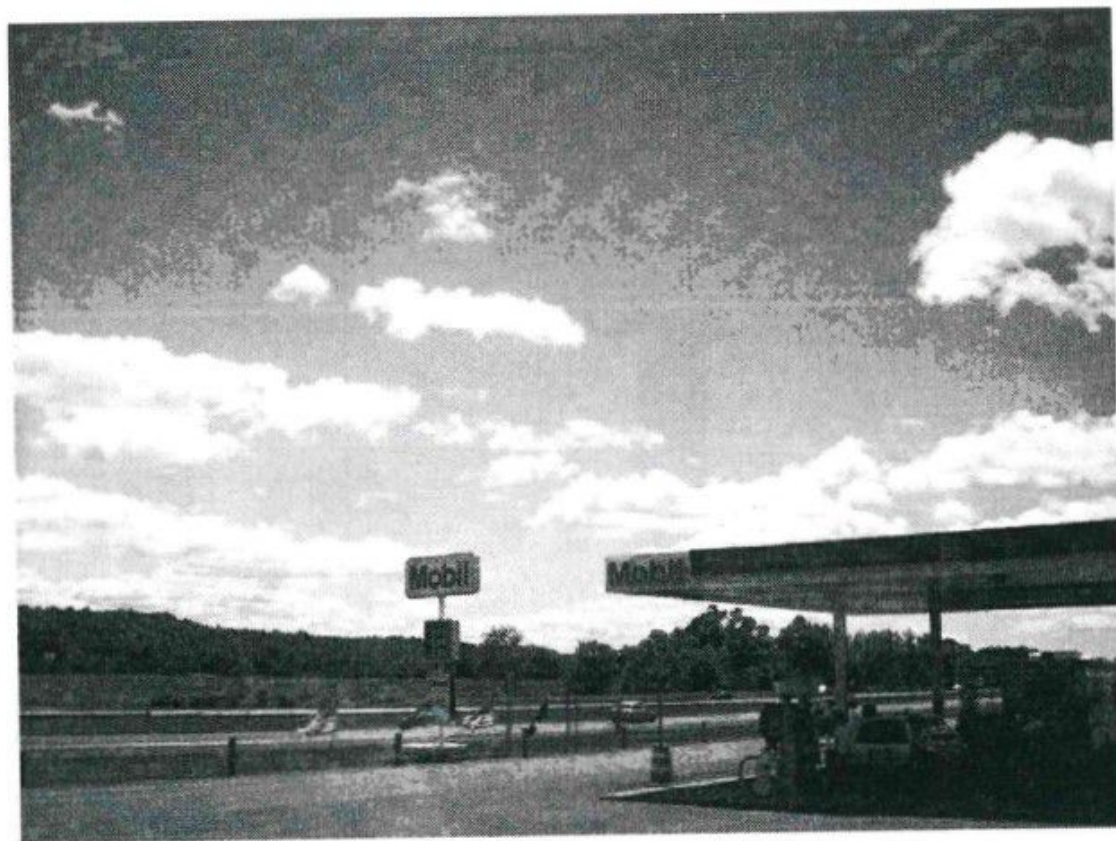
Yet with the advancing winter, the two saw the distant hill-tops quickly become Arctic regions, and it became difficult to endure the extreme cold. With no further food to store during winter, they had to hunt for food that had not been sown or planted in the confines of their range, and to escape serving as prey to various enemies; now competitors for the same food.

A tiger began to frequent the same districts, passing to and from the heath in the long grass, teeth and claws ready for the kill. So hidden down in their nests in fear, for long periods of time, the pair failed to protect the structure of their home against the incessant blows from half a dozen falling trees. America had to admit that with no food or residence, there could be little doubt that they would languish and starve, or may be killed by hawks or beasts of prey.

The two could withstand little more dampness or cold, but gradually the seasons changed and in time the region changed from damp to dry. A multitude of seedlings were germinating and the heath had again an abundance of plants animals and birds. The two would survive and be happy and healthy, growing strong on the food of the new season.

Struggle for Existence is one of a series of fictional short stories created by reducing and reconstructing a single chapter of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. The words from one chapter (entitled *Struggle for Existence*) are re-ordered and placed in their original format creating a new storyline, yet showing the source of the text through chapter headings. The piece portrays the discovery of a seemingly perfect, bountiful land of flora and fauna, yet goes on to highlight the fragility of abundance, and the instability of nature and human reliance upon it.

-Carolyn Thompson



Lost series
(gas station, Utica, NY)
Adam J. Smith
Digital Photograph
2007

'Uniform travels within a space in which Wal*Mart and strip malls are the bellies of the beast. Middle America is lost unto itself; blighted by the endless consumption of trash television and chemical-saturated products; people are left lost with side-walk-less super electronic highways and the standardization of ones personality.

We are here to witness the demolition of the human spirit.'

Adam J. Smith
'Journal' extract

(adam_smith_350@hotmail.com)



Lost series
(road system, Kissimmee, FL)
Adam J. Smith
Digital Photograph
2007

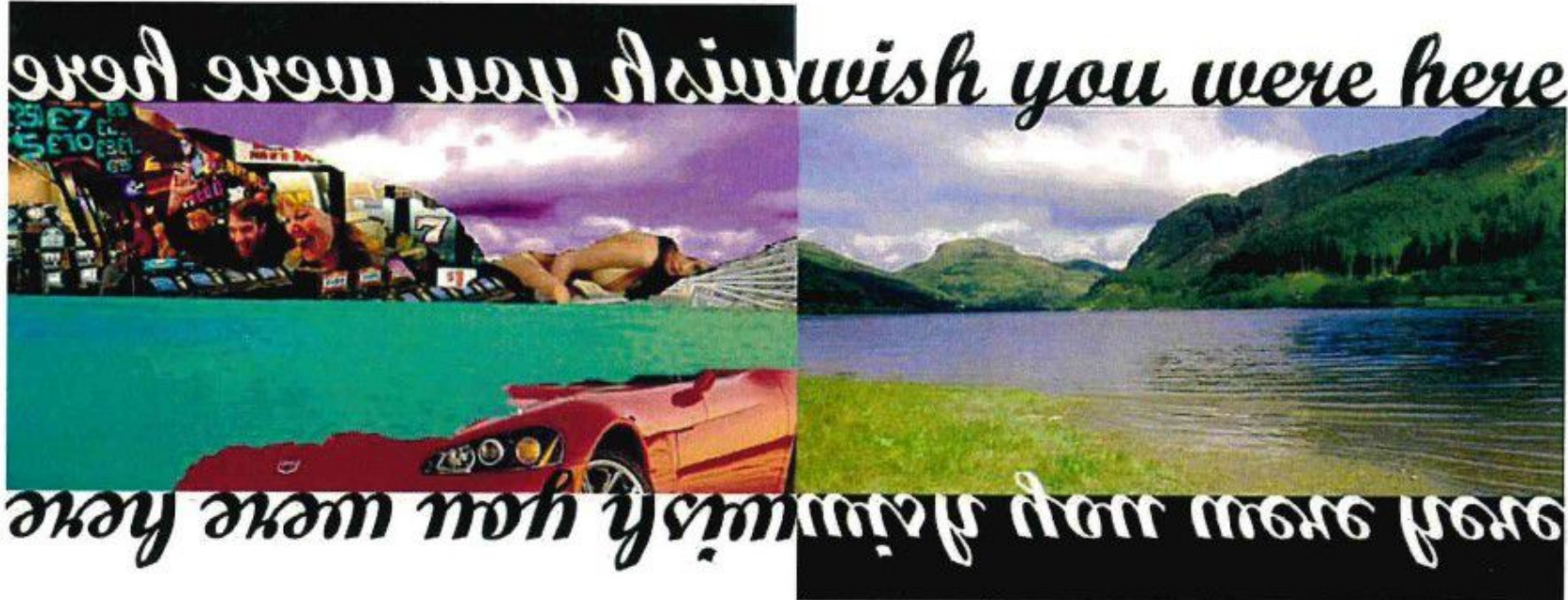


16 mph Train
Laura Harling
Oil on Canvas
2007

An exploration in the difference of what the idea of perfection is, to find yourself alone in a perfect moment that you cannot share.

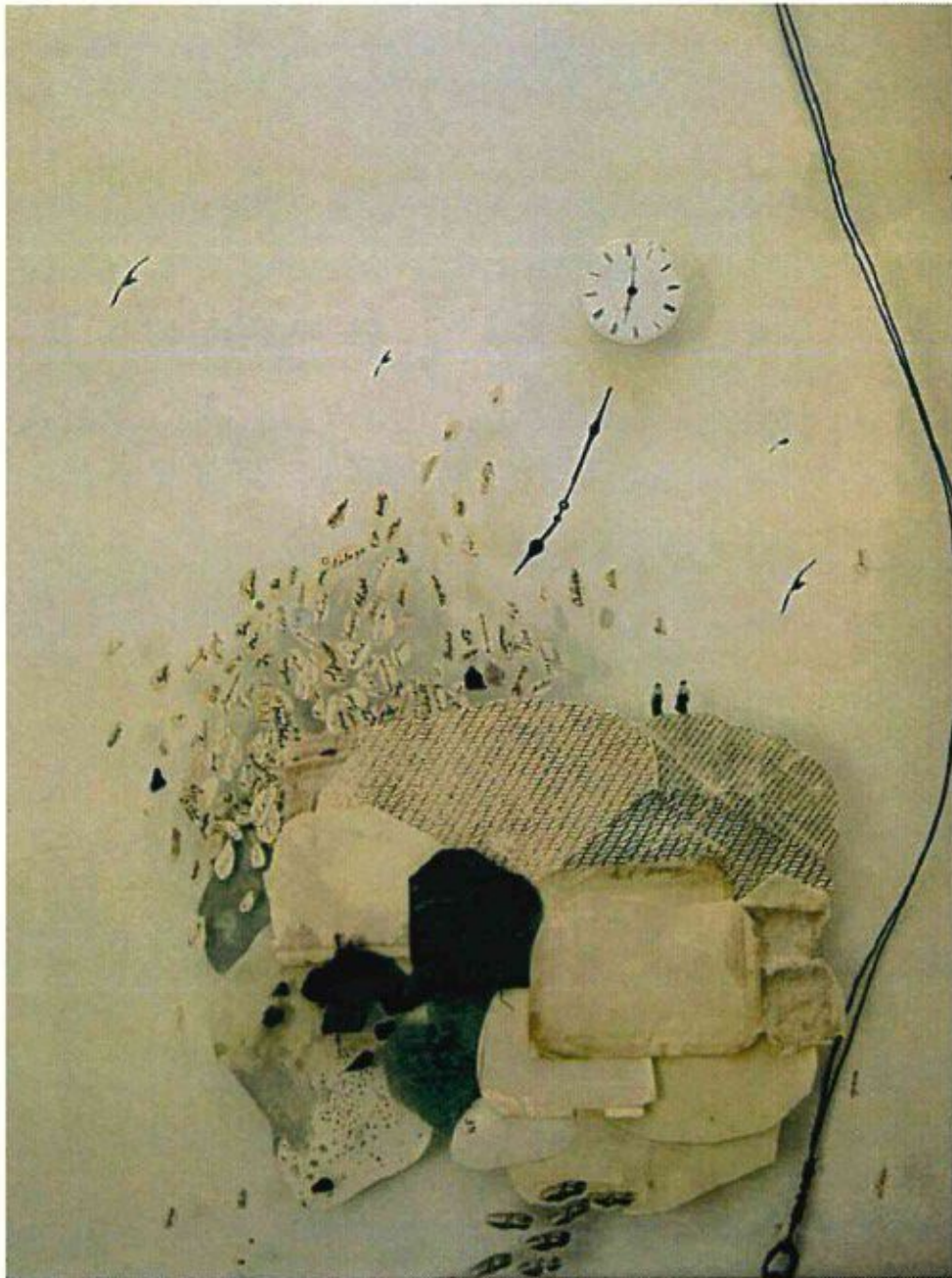
-Laura Harling

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Wish You Were Here
Pablo Perzzarate
Digital Collage
2007

(eatyourstrawberry@yahoo.co.uk)



Walking On Paper
Louisa Oats
Mixed media collage
2007

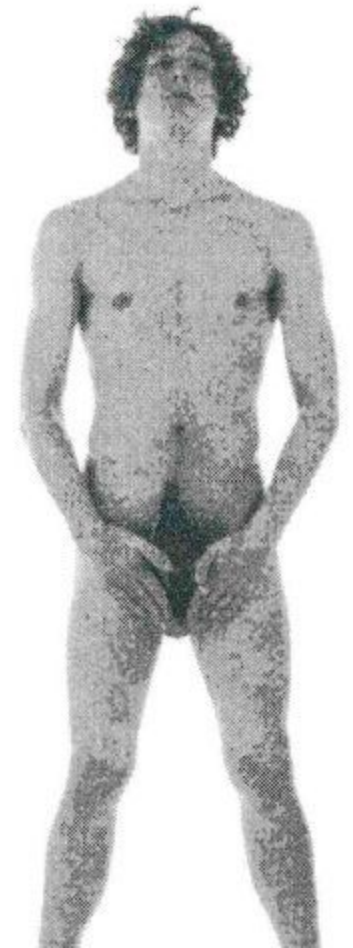
louisaoates@hotmail.co.uk

Just a Shoe
Michiel Henneman
Photograph
2006

Commodities in today's society show others what you stand for. Brands have influenced the way we see and approach other people. Image related advertising has led us into the fetishisation of lifeless objects, simply through the process of clever marketing.

-Michiel Henneman

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