

take on the appearance of abstract, anomalous and sometimes strangely fleshy objects.

The relationships between the gallery and our normal living spaces provide the impetus for Katherine Clarke's *Untitled* at the Towner in Eastbourne. Three video monitors present aspects of the daily activities that are part of Eastbourne life: a cat licks itself, cows are milked, men repair groyne on the beach and caterers prepare food in the hotels' kitchens. The monitors, analogues of the television sets we have in the home, present activities that though more widespread and, it could be argued, more crucial to the town's continued existence than the presence of the art gallery, rarely find themselves evaluated or privileged in the hallowed spaces of the gallery (though the Towner's Museum, it must be said, has much in its collection that focuses on local history).

Across the three galleries Jo Stockham has gathered sounds of the sea and juxtaposed them with images garnered from paintings in each gallery's collection. Different 'containers' have been used for sounds collected from the shores of each town and presented in counterpoint to selected and isolated elements of paintings, details of which have been photographically enlarged and presented apart from the originals. Meditations on the efficacy of memory and the means by which one maps out one's life through the scattered remains of experiences and desires are proposed by the containers' references to the selected paintings, the relationships that are formed by their selection and the texts that Stockham has written to accompany them.

Narratives – apocryphal, imagined, incidental or otherwise – await discovery or invention in John Kippin's triptych of photographs installed in all three venues. Var-

ious objects arranged in front of a window in each of the galleries hint at a story or stories that may or may not have some sequential form. Items from each gallery's collection have been pressed into service to form what at first appear to be conventional still lives but ultimately defy any substantive analysis. As Kippin himself says, 'One can always provide the conditions for interpretation, but never the interpretation'.

Throughout 'Triplicate' there are a number of works that appear to overlap in some way: the narrative paths of Jo Stockham's *Different Seas* at Eastbourne and Katherine Clarke's audio gallery-guide at Southampton cross at certain points, and preoccupations with travelling, the way that people and stories can move from place to place, are common to a number of the artists. That the gallery-going audiences are implicated throughout the show, as active or passive consumers of culture, cannot but raise questions concerning the responsibilities of artists and gallerists to provide not just a platform for debate but an intelligible model for interaction and communication. If the artists draw comparisons between themselves and the nebulous body of strangers known as the public (which Stockham, Stewart and Eggebert do), then the problems inherent in articulating the nature of the relationship between the two must be spelled out in a language that does not exclude the larger party. It would be neither possible nor desirable to deliver the entirety of an artwork's meanings to the viewer on a plate – it is after all the difference between a simply delivered piece of information and a complex piece of art that gives the latter interest and value – but if the nature of Eastbourne's daily life is to be made a feature at the Towner (pace Katherine Clarke's *Untitled*), then simply showing footage of the outside of the gallery does not address the question of how difficult contemporary art fits into the lives of the town's populace.

It would be unfair to single out 'Triplicate' for criticism, however, as the show is interesting and generally works well and the accompanying gallery literature is, bearing in mind the difficulty of the task it faces, of high quality. ■

\*Tate St. Ives part of the show has not been featured here due to its later opening.

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## ■ Evident

The Photographers' Gallery London  
November 8 to January 11

Since the days of Land Art, when Robert Smithson filmed the Utah desert or took pictures of the desolate New Jersey coast, photography has proven the great ally of artists working within the contemporary landscape genre. Like hippie versions of Claude Lorrain or John Constable, the Land Artists were no longer reliant on painting and elaborate gardening for their work but, in addition to bulldozers and complicated rigging systems, were utterly dependent on photography. Later descendants of this long line of photobased artists working with the landscape – from Paul Graham's shots of war-torn Ireland, to Jeff Wall's computer-manipulated cibachromes of malign suburban Vancouver, to Peter Fend's satellite photos of Ocean Earth – have all cherished the land (though not necessarily *nature*) not merely as a political or pictorial solution to their art but – and here

John Kippin  
*The Enigma of Space*  
(detail) 1966



**Catherine Opie***Landscape #5 (Beverly Hills) 1996*

photography becomes crucial – as a kind of accurate, reflective mirror of our collective identity.

In 'Evident, New Landscape Photography', curator Andrew Cross sees recent photography as having adopted an uncomplicated, direct means of representing our familiar surroundings – with all its contradictions, its cultural constructs, its complicated memories. The title, 'Evident' – like 'evidence', or perhaps an anagram for 'I need TV' – underlines the 'objective' materiality of photography, its potential to produce images which speak for themselves, which do not need to have their subtle surprises or ordinariness pointed out and pinned to the velvet. The six photographers of varying nationalities and generations – Joseph Bartscherer, Martin Cole, Stefan Gec, Axel Hütte, Catherine Opie and James Welling – document the world not merely as a 'strange and beautiful place' but, more realistically, as an urban/rural hybrid layered with generations of economic interests which are then filtered through memory, through distance, through the media. Noticeably void of any people, unlike traditional Western landscape paintings where the minute, shadowy figures accented the predominant field and forest and cloud, all the images in 'Evident', despite their differences, have one lone witness – the viewer/photographer – examining the picture as if it were forensic proof, the aftermath, the scene of the crime.

In his *Railroad Pictures*, James Welling presents an un-nostalgic picture of the railways – not merely a hackneyed symbol of expanse and hope but proof of pre-industrial artefacts co-existing with a digital world. Whether they transport cattle or micro-components, they persist in symbolising a suburb-less America, when the vastness and availability of space, as Simon Schama has put it, 'lent itself perfectly to this vision of democratic, terrestrial paradise'. Catherine Opie's filmic images of Californian suburbs, all pools and *faux* Mexican haciendas terraced into the fire-infested, trembling hills, instantly bring to mind the backdrops in such films as *ET* or *Short Cuts*. Shot from the just-above-eye-level vantage point used in traditional landscape paintings (meant to broaden the distance between the landscape and the observer, making the vista all the more awesome), Opie's lovingly detailed photographs are like looking out of a window – a

scene you never tire of because in Southern California, you move house long before the view grows overfamiliar.

New Yorker Joseph Bartsherer follows the bold strides of Smithson, Heizer, De Maria out West, as if landscape only really exists where it is raw and roomy. His series, 'Pioneering Mattawa', documents the forcibly created agricultural land – wired apples and strained vineyards – in the barren Nevada desert, a site invented out of nothingness, like cyber space. These still life-like, black and white photographs turn nature into some tortured, miserable land, the atmosphere as pastoral as an empty, littered lot. German Axel Hütte, a student of Bernd and Hilla Becher, sees the contemporary landscape as an infinitely pliable receptacle of human activities, which can be coerced into formally resolved, even traditional, compositions. And finally British photographers Martin Cole and Stefan Gec both delegate image-making to an intermediary; Cole acknowledges our TV connection to a worldwide mediascape by taking pictures directly off the



**Axel Hütte**  
from 'Landschaft' series  
1996

Central Saint Martins College of  
Art & Design Library  
107-109 Charing Cross Road, London, W1D 6BS

screen, while Gee's aerial pictures are actually snapped by homing pigeons carrying a self-release camera. Replicating an early form of military surveillance, his photographs turn eerie when we learn that they are of a wartime airfield, a place otherwise only known to him through the memories of his father.

In his text 'About Making Landscapes' from 1995, Jeff Wall speaks of the 'rural pathos of underdevelopment', claiming that 'the most striking feature ... in modernity is its unevenness'. Indeed the ragged edge – at times imperceptible, at times violently abrupt – among urban, suburban and rural settings, or between past and present, is what Cross is particularly after, but the dichotomies here are richer than those. The blurry overlap between the deliberate and the reckless, between expectation and reality, between the inviting and the inhospitable, are the kind of contrasts these photographers cull from their pictures. They are obviously intrigued with the ordinary landscape of their lives and of their past – the way Smithson was fascinated with his hometown Passaic, New Jersey – but with a less monumental, more familial vision. The images, nevertheless, are almost always beautiful, and in this respect, 'Evident' is a somewhat anachronistically idealistic exhibition. 'You know', Robert Smithson once said, 'one pebble moving one foot in two million years is enough action to keep me really excited'. The landscape genre, post-Land Art, seems to have jettisoned this patient, legendary, primeval vision, opting for something closer to home: plain and beautiful pictures – there for the 'taking'. ■

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**Torbjørn Rødland**  
*Landscape with  
Breakdown 1996*



## ■ I am Curious

### How the Land Lies

**Hales Gallery** London October 9 to November 9

### These Days

**Cubitt Gallery** London October 11 to November 3

### Come and See Us

**Independent Art Space** London  
October 10 to November 2

### Stay on Your Own for Slightly Longer

**Transmission Gallery** Glasgow  
October 15 to November 9

This Autumn brought a profusion of Swedish art to Britain. Four independent galleries, three in London and one in Glasgow, mounted exhibitions of young Swedish art. This project, entitled 'I am Curious', was coordinated by Swedish critic and curator Maria Lind, who had invited British exhibition organisers and artists to come to Sweden to sample the scene and work with their Swedish counterparts, in order to generate an art season that would represent contemporary Swedish art to a British audience. So what did a British commentator such as me, with little previous experience of the Swedish scene, make of the result?

'How the Land Lies' (Hales Gallery, London) was selected by the British artist and curator Jeremy Millar. To my mind the most successful piece in the show was *A Landscape Study*, 1994, by Annika von Hausswolff, a work which consists of five identical enlargements of a photograph, mounted on large boards and displayed in a row. The image shows the head and shoulders of a young man looking out over a landscape, but all we can see are his cropped hair, reddened neck and a glimpse of trees over his shoulder. Faces and landscapes are usually the easiest things to interpret, but here our view of both is blocked, and the repetition of the image seems to emphasise this blockage.

Our desire to annexe images and space was a theme developed by other works in Millar's show (which also included pieces by Roger Andersson and Henrik Håkansson), most notably *Royal Fertilization*, 1996, by Leif Elggren and Carl Michael von Hausswolff. These artists have declared a global utopia (of which this work is just one manifestation) and the piece consists of a ceremonial bed surrounded by framed invitations to the queens of the world to participate in 'a private and intimate act of fertilization', in order to 'bridge the crevices and let the old royal families unite in a neutralising affinity'. I like the combination of intelligence and wit in such work – qualities found in the best of recent British neo-conceptual art.

'These Days' (Cubitt Gallery, London), selected by the British writer and curator Simon Grant, also reflected these qualities, although this show was further distinguished by an interest in narrative. In the photographs of Torbjørn Rødland (who is actually Norwegian) the artist depicts himself as a romantic figure in a lonely landscape, creating scenes that could have come out of Caspar David Friedrich but which also feature sunglasses and other conspicuously modern props. Rødland's work manages to establish a complex tone, both capturing