

Alexandra Navratil Àngels Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain



Everything You Rearranged/ Everything You Left the Same (The Rain) (2008)
Courtesy of Àngels Barcelona

Alexandra Navratil's curious exhibition at Àngels Barcelona prompts a filmic response throughout – each element, including drawings and two videos, might be read as parts of the same arcane, deconstructed movie production. Yet which bits of which are the 'script' and which might function like her director's commentary? And, as the title of one video, *The End of High Pastiche* (2008), provocatively suggests, can we distinguish knowing self-referentiality from an artful hodgepodge? It's deliberately obtuse and delicately balanced in the end, yet with the portentous title of the show – 'The Eternal Return of Difference' – weighing in with philosophical references to both Nietzsche and Deleuze, Navratil might threaten to over-egg the pudding before we've even started.

Everything You Rearranged/ Everything You Left the Same (The Rain) (2008) is a large-format photograph depicting a car by night which has been rigged up to apparatus used by film productions in order to simulate rain falling on the windscreen. Its twin, *Everything You Rearranged... (The Forest) (2008)*, which shows two spotlights seen through leafy film-set branches, similarly suggests a concern with the non-diegetic, those elements of production that are necessarily external to an in-narrative story-world.

Here the internal structure of the 'in-exhibition' fiction – whatever story might be behind these broad driving-along-a-forest-road-at-night-in-the-rain genre scenarios – is as yet unavailable. Deliberately isolated and suspended in production-time, Navratil's bipolar scenes obstinately refuse to either suspend one's disbelief, or to disclose any really revelatory technical sleight of hand. And this, I suspect, is the very point of these two 'opening sequence' images: as their self-cancelling titles suggest, they prelude a kind of null diagram of cinematic space and filmic analysis.

Judging by the series of modest pencil drawings in the following gallery ('Now, Disappearing (Possible endings for a Road Movie)', 2008) what we might surmise as the speculative fate of the photograph's vehicle-in-the-rain is sketched out. Various arrangements of upturned car and tangled branches are shown like alternative framings of a key shot. Meanwhile, the aforementioned video, *The End of High Pastiche*, shows a

turntable-landscape of burning scenery cut-outs, like a mock-up for a dream sequence seen in the rear-view mirror in our putative road movie – Mount Rushmore, Swiss chalets, skyscrapers and Oscar Niemeyer’s Niterói Museum included.

Downstairs, Navratil edits in something like a wrenching flash-back into her fictions’ fabric. Or, more convincingly, she schematically turns the fictional camera fully around to point at us. We, the audience, are summarised in the figure of a lone figure standing in the middle of an outdoor ice rink by night in a 14-minute video tellingly entitled *Movie-Goer* (2007). As the protagonists of a pointedly artificial and almost frictionless realm (in the video, an ice-cleaning truck sweeps around the unmoving person), what we might witness in Navratil’s show is ultimately a mise-en-abyme of cinema’s inertia, yet with a faith that its magic is nevertheless polished-up anew every time the lights go down.

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