

back to the essential nature of form, and of the interstices of movement and stillness that define any object. The languorous titles of McCracken Kumar's works (*Quiet Ardor*, *Evocative Stillness*, *Steady Ripeness*, etc.) indicate the paradoxical nature of form itself. Like traditional Buddhist art, these works arouse quiet contemplation. It takes excruciating patience and skill to simultaneously capture the stillness in motile phenomena, and the volatility and kinetic potential in stationary states; in the end, it is perhaps this juxtaposition of seeming opposites that makes McCracken Kumar's work so tantalizing and so viscerally immediate.

—Nirmala Nataraj

Molly McCracken Kumar: *Ethereal Realities* closed in May at Aftermodern, San Francisco.

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Southern California

'From A to B' at the Fellows of Contemporary Art

It's hard to imagine the city of Los Angeles without driving, including long journeys a few miles across town that invariably weigh into one's decision about whether or not to attend any less-than-compulsory event. Whether managing a repetitive daily commute or balancing an erratic work schedule, the vast majority of Angelenos are affected by traffic patterns—the general process of getting to and fro—on a regular basis. On the invitation of curator Donna Conwell, six Los Angeles artists put the idea of the commute at the center of their artistic investigations. The result is *From A to B*, sponsored by and exhibited at the Fellows of Contemporary Art (FOCA) in downtown Los Angeles and included Bulbo, Bia Gayotto, Elana Mann, Vincent Ramos, Linda Samuels and Jane Tsong. Between them, they explore commuting from multiple perspectives including family history and personal reflection, ecology and cultural connections, and time and space. At the outset, the selection of works seems typical of a certain kind of post-conceptual work. But, in fact, each work in this grouping of videos, photos and paper pinned or taped to the wall, is uniquely compelling for its personal and/or politi-



From A to B, installation view, at the Fellows of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

cal honesty, and together the works create an insightful, warm and surprisingly generous exhibition that invited reflection, memory and camaraderie.

The Commuter, by Ramos, is made from photographs taped to the wall and ceiling, labeled with pencil, and connected by colorful strings. A long-time resident of Venice, Ramos endeavored to trace the commuting history of his own family from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. In the process, he has painted a portrait of the fluid geographic and sociologic history of Los Angeles. The photographs are current, and yet the labels indicate what was formerly on each site, at the time when Ramos's family members were living or working there. We learn that the upscale Venice restaurant, James Beach, was formerly a Venture Inn; a Target on the Westside was once the Fantastic Four. As much as the locations have morphed and changed, Ramos's family, like most families, seems to have stayed put. Symbolic of the few adventurers who stray from home, a couple of strings lead across the wall, one to downtown LA and another clear across the room, representing his father's army experience in Berlin. This sense of the personal within the geographic resonates throughout the exhibition. In *Xing LA: From Altadena to Long Beach*, Gayotto takes it upon herself to navigate her commute via three distinct forms of transportation: on foot, via the Metro, and by car. Her three-tiered journey is presented in three videos, each of which catches distinct perspectives of beauty, dereliction, reverie, architecture and passersby. At once formal and sociocultural, Gayotto even-handedly presents viewers with disparate experiences, subtly pointing to variables—economics, social status and choice—that can inform and even dictate one's experience of the city.

The works of four artists extend beyond the exhibition space and into the world at large. Mann's *Shifting* is a CD created to be played during one's car commute. Her gallery installation consisted of two worn black car seats, headphones and a stack of CDs, enough for each viewer. Sitting in the gallery, or in your own automobile, listening to *Shifting* creates connections between

artist and viewer and between Americans and Iraqis. Featuring recordings from eleven commuters in Los Angeles and in Iraq, the sound map lasts twenty-nine minutes, the length, according to the artist, of an average commute in Los Angeles.

Tsong's *Everything is Still Alive* also includes a take-along in the

form of a small packet of California poppy seeds stapled to an orange strip of paper which offers a brief history of the flower and instructions for planting. Tsong planted the seeds along her own commute from Highland Park to Pasadena. Winding from a working-class neighborhood in transition to an area of middle-class stability and finally into a wealthy enclave, this route encompasses a slice of Los Angeles's changing history. In the gallery, Tsong loosely drew a map on the wall to trace her commute and illustrated it with photographs of the flowers in various stages of growth. Though ultimately the residue of a more interactive and performance-based piece, these photos of greenery peeking out from under sidewalks and bright orange blooms set against buckling asphalt have a circulatory function and serve as an introduction to the artist's process.

Samuels's also uses photography, though of a different form, to both document and invite participants into her piece, *During My Commute*.... With a pinhole camera, Samuels took long-exposure photographs that encompass the entire duration of a commute in one image. From these, she created shiny black-and-white postcards, available in the gallery for viewers to take with them and return with comments about their own commuting activities. Viewer contributions include references to singing aloud in the car, listening to self-help tapes, and looking through car windows in search of everything from landscaping ideas to traffic news to inspiration. Together, these create a kind of shared space out of solitary experience.

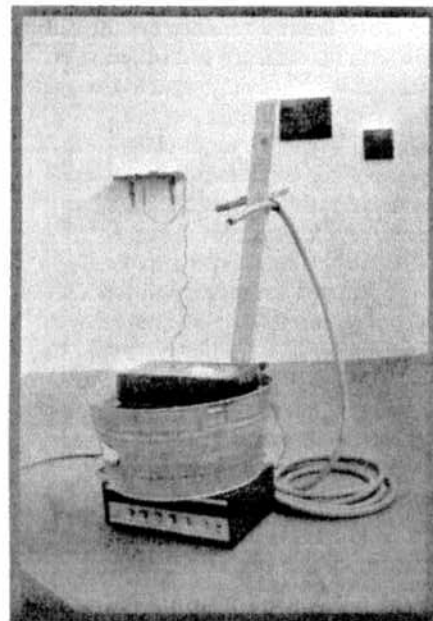
An examination of the city's commute would not be complete without the immigrant experience, and the collective Bulbo's evocative art-meets-document *Ty to LA* thoughtfully addresses this issue in another work that moves beyond the gallery. Bulbo's bilingual (English/Spanish) streaming video features men and women discussing the experience of moving from Tijuana to Los Angeles. The participants' varied perspectives create a work that is, like the immigrant experience itself, less a statement on the subject than a confluence of ideas, challenges and pleasures.

Ultimately, *Ty to LA* is a kind of meditation on the relationship of place to identity, both personal and professional, and the resilient yet fragile nature of humankind. While discussing the pros and cons of living in LA, the subjects invariably refer to the comforts of what was left behind, and equally as often, the enticement and allure of the new and unfamiliar. Their mobility and attachment certainly resonate with movement across lands and cultures, but also strike a chord with the day-to-day process of the local commute.

—Annie Buckley

From A to B closed in May at the Fellows of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

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Aaron Sandnes, installation view of *The War is Over*, 2008, at See Line Gallery, Santa Monica.

'The War is Over' at See Line Gallery

What do pirate radio, Molotov cocktails, headless bodies, torture and 1970s disco music have to do with one another? Not much, but these sundry subjects chip away at the cracks in a foundational discussion of politics and aestheticism, and the social functions of the artist as interlocutor, in an exhibition *The War is Over* at See Line Gallery. Featuring the work of two Los Angeles-based artists, Aaron Sandnes and Liat Yossifor, the show (intentionally or unintentionally, it is not clear) confusingly skated alongside a postmodern conscious-