Nicolás Guagnini, Dan Graham
Opening Sunday, Sept. 10 6–8
Nicolás Guagnini, *The Middle Class Goes to Heaven (2005-06)*
Dan Graham, *Death by Chocolate: West Edmonton Shopping Mall (1986-2005)*

September 10–October 22, 2006 Opening Sunday, Sept. 10, 6–8pm

Orchard's opening show of the season premieres two pieces by Nicolás Guagnini and Dan Graham.

Guagnini's *The Middle Class Goes to Heaven* (2005-06) is comprised of 80 slides and an audio component. Artist and writer John Miller described the work (*Bomb no. 96* [Summer 2006]): "It is a slide show coupled with a looped litany spoken in French, English, Spanish and German. Fragmentary views of Brutalist architecture convey the impression of rationality, order and an overarching administrative logic, as well as their incipient breakdown. These places house—regiment—the eponymous bodies. The litany samples a blasé, managerial lingo: *health insurance, couples therapy, medium term goals, long weekend, mutual funds...* Despite—or perhaps because of—its international character, the effect is relatively uninflected, matter of fact, even deadening, tinged with vague foreboding. Fade to white. Currently, it is impossible not to see Guagnini's work through the lens of U.S. domestic politics. As the lower middle class sinks deeper into poverty, financial elites consolidate ever-greater reserves of capital. If the middle class goes to heaven, forget paradise on earth."

A new essay by artist and writer Stephan Pascher will accompany the piece.

Dan Graham's *Death by Chocolate: West Edmonton Shopping Mall* (1986-2005) is an eight-minute video of consumers having diverse experiences in their leisure time in a Canadian shopping mall. Graham's preoccupation with the shopping mall dates back to 1980, when he realized his *Video Project for Two Shops Selling the Same Type of Goods and Project for Mayfield Mall.*

Graham's simultaneous critique and celebration of conditions of consumption presented as entertainment falls in line with his overall analysis of urbanism. In his 1979 essay "Art in Relation to Architecture/Architecture in Relation to Art," Graham referenced Robert Venturi's reading of popular culture as a model for negotiating the quotidian experience of the middle class: "This means, for commercial buildings in a capitalist society, taking the syntax of the commercial vernacular seriously... What Venturi appropriates from the Pop artists is the understanding that not only can the internal structure of the architectural work be seen in terms of a relation of signs, but

that the entire built (cultural) environment with which the building is inflected is constructed from signs."

Death by Chocolate: West Edmonton Shopping Mall (1986-2005) is shot and edited in Graham's classic deadpan and straightforward manner as set forth in his seminal photographs for the 1966 magazine piece "Homes for America" but the overall effect is inflected with humor and love for his subject.

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