

Adam Martin

Automatic World

Adam Martin fences specific experiences, narratives and sets, opening them outward as scattering spores. Precise subcultures, locales and the experiences of one, and many, are transferred in multitudinous individual parts that, like the god particle and emotions and social mores, can be conceived as a greater whole. At its core this is work about growing up and it does this in explorations of social class and popular media and heteronormative values and the industry that we call culture. Here, a childhood home is returned to and reinhabited, re-observed. It's distinctly American and rural, calm and repressed. In the hundreds of small moments that Martin flashes and pauses and flashes again past our eyes we are given looping seasons of transitional spaces and banal events. With their rhythmic pacing and scattered score, they feel singular to the artist and to us - escaping their base reality. The consistency of ambient storytelling, not with a plot but a focused feeling, is the goal. Beneath all of it are subtexts that announce themselves without name. The photos and staging and sound all speak to desire and a question: how can the documentary be atmospheric, changing, unfixed? The way Martin composites time, from a long game of observation to a new negotiation of an ambient event, is one of small intimate nudges. It speaks to regret and sorrow, the ways these are fixed through time and the way in which agony gets entrenched because of it. Perhaps the pinnacle contemporary depiction of repression boiling over the peace of midwestern America is the Coens Brothers' *Fargo*. In Martin's broad portrait of place and time he allows a darkness, a politics, a personal reading to push against the undulating skin of his work without penetration or leaks or the Coens's cool cynicism. There's roadkill, hunting, built abandonment, but the woodchipper remains in our minds. The cadenced timing, the moving air, the dazzle of a peripheral cross and the refreshments on offer trick as a transport here. For Martin, 'Automatic World' refers to an expected life lived, one decidedly not cinematic nor notable, but central and average to a sizable chunk of citizens of the privileged world. What Angela Hayes in *American Beauty* so fearfully called 'ordinary'. Here that fear is maturely respected and carefully looked past. Martin understands that the possibility of titillation lies within oneself, whether we observe broken dreams or conceivable longings in the observation of any home anywhere.