

FOXY PRODUCTION

MICHAEL BELL-SMITH

FOCUSED, FORWARD

Dates: April 27 – June 3, 2006

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 11.00 am - 6.00 pm

Foxy Production presents Michael Bell-Smith's awaited first solo exhibition, *Focused, Forward*. Bell-Smith mixes original and appropriated digital imagery to create idea-driven and highly crafted video. He collects digital images - from the earliest videogames to contemporary Internet files - to create video that investigates its own means of production. He makes the cell of the digital image, the pixel, apparent, and sets in relief the constituent elements of the moving image: tempo, perspective, frame, and figure. With destabilized narratives and endless loops; figure and gesture, rather than character and action; and 3D continually collapsing into 2D, his work disorients and entralls.

Evocative, lyrical, and astute, Bell-Smith's work investigates the increasingly mediated nature of everyday life. From the portrayal of war and tragedy as spectacle, to the existential effects of corporate architecture, Bell-Smith poses deft and difficult questions about representation, design, and information technology. He examines "progress" and the anxiety and pleasure it can engender in us all, as well as its centrality to Modernism and the experience of contemporary culture. His scrutiny of digital forms reflects and refracts our paradoxically controlled and controlling, gratifying and stress-inducing, encounters with the computer, the cityscape, and the world at large.

Focused Forward includes projection, video sculpture, multi and single-screen video, and a digital print. *Continue 2000* (2005) is a digital animation with minimal movement that poignantly combines childlike awe with a disturbing, apocalyptic landscape. Recalling Friederich's visions of a simultaneously beautiful and threatening natural world, the work keenly expresses the dread and wonder than can be inspired by the sublime. Shaped like a videogame console or war-room radar display, *Birds Over The Whitehouse* (2006) contains a simulated surveillance video that is at once playful and profoundly disconcerting. With a complex combination of light and dark notes, the work uses custom programmed software to allude to the contemporary political scene. *Some Houses Have Pools* (2006) is an aerial view of suburbia that unnervingly becomes obscured by Hokusai-like clouds and smoke from a house-fire. The work reflects upon uniformity and divergence within a formal examination of perspective, abstraction, and movement. *Sparkler Set* (2006) is a multi-screen video of virtual fireworks that wryly presents a spectacle that pushes the boundaries of the figurative. *Up and Away* (2006) is a beguiling video of landscapes and cityscapes rolling down past each other, at different speeds and with differing perspectives, to create a dizzying yet alluring fantasy of travel, place, and nature. *Self Portrait, NYC* (2006), both a portrait full of pathos and a humorous riff on the genre of portraiture itself, depicts a lone figure, frozen as city crowds stream by him. As day turns into night, the hubbub encircling him becomes increasingly manic and abstract. *Proposal* (2006) is an inkjet print of a Tower of Babel-like structure, where a multitude of colors and patterns come together to resemble a city contained in a single building.

Michael Bell-Smith (East Corinth, ME, 1978) holds a BA in Semiotics from Brown University, RI. Selected exhibitions include: *Vilma Gold*, London (upcoming 2006); *BankART*, Yokohama, Japan (2006); *Drake Hotel*, Toronto (2006); *PROJEKT 0047*, Berlin (2005); *Smack Mellon*, Brooklyn, NY (2005); *Tate Liverpool*, Liverpool, UK (2005); *[plug.in]*, Basel, Switzerland (2003); *Foundation for Art & Creative Technology*, Liverpool, England (2003); *Pacific Film Archives*, Berkeley, CA (2003); *University of Washington Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media*, Seattle, WA (2003); *Eyebeam Gallery*, New York (2002). His work has been reviewed in *Time Out*, New York, and the *New York Times*.

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