

FOXY PRODUCTION

MICHAEL BELL-SMITH

BOUNCING LIGHTS FOREVER

January 10 - February 16, 2008

Opens January 10 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

BOUNCING LIGHTS FOREVER, Michael Bell-Smith's second solo exhibition at Foxy Production, comprises a series of screen-based works that simultaneously establish and dissolve the sense of a digital sublime. Opposing features - flatness and limitless perspective, color and monochromy, motion and stasis, repetition and singularity - coalesce in visual fields that question the image's hold on truth. Bell-Smith's new work is very much concerned with contemporary image production, yet it recalls Romanticism's transcendent landscapes and early Modernism's struggles with form and content.

Glitter Bend is a digital animation, depicting a cityscape at night, stretched across an arcing horizon, as if viewed from above the earth. The work minimizes landforms and features, leaving a stark, almost symbolic configuration of line, color and motion. Each twinkling light is a "handmade" GIF - a small motion file found everywhere on the Internet - that has been distributed using algorithms that fragment any electronic uniformity. Building Across From Glitter Bend, the reflection of Glitter Bend on the surface of a glass tower, is likewise a combination of still and moving elements that creates a compelling yet refracted whole. The grid of windows imposes a frame on the work that denaturalizes and abstracts one's grasp of a recognizable landscape, while never completely overpowering the vista's beauty. The two works together, placed one across from the other in the exhibition, produce an environment that is at once immersive and disorienting.

Lighting Affects 1-3 is an animated triptych of light in motion. Depictions of light forms - lasers, fireworks, spotlights, lightning, and streetlamps - are redrawn from TV cartoons and then rendered by hand, frame-by-frame using drawing software, to produce composite moving images. These boldly dynamic elements never develop into a figurative or narrative whole, leaving the viewer in a kind of ontological limbo. In a similar sense, Starfields 1 and 2, a pair of four-screen works that play with the representation of movement through space, detach conventions from their original referents. A vortex-like action - with no destination in sight - is rendered with differing speeds, directions, effects and colors. In both works, Bell-Smith cannily undermines representational traditions, while investing in the visual pleasure they provide.

Moving, Endless (Samples) is a series of still color gradations presented on digital screens. Not unlike an electronic Color Field painting, each work displays subtle but emotionally evocative shifts of color. They all incorporate pixelation - the patterning that lies beneath the surface of a digital image - as if subliminally revealing the inner-workings of the construction of an abstract sublime.

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