

*Cushion
Works*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA
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McIntyre Parker
November 16, 2024–January 11, 2025

2024, digital video, sound, 25 min 49 sec

McIntyre Parker's new video exists in three parts and plays three times with three different and increasingly fast-paced soundtracks.

The action begins with the touchscreen of a Tesla. The car is displayed from above as a white hand with a tight grip on an older iPhone model is reflected in the screen; the phone's lens is visible in the car's long, dark sunroof. Digital aberrations appear and disappear around the car in thin, shape-shifting gray and orange arcs; they wiggle and warp, indicating that the car is actively perceiving.

The footage shifts to the car's interior, where a series of off-brand angles are shot in dim light; the perspective is cropped and searching. The author appears to pursue qualities not generally associated with the Tesla, like fade, blur, and fragmentation.

The soundtrack is minimal, digital, ethereal, and modestly glitchy. There's an occasional wobble. The sound feels like the air inside the car trying to right itself.

The sound continues over 10 seconds of black.

The next section begins with an abstract, multi-colored image that suddenly snaps into form as a 3D rendering of another automobile – an aged pick-up truck. While a wholly different species than the Tesla, this too is navigated on a touchscreen. Fingertips control our view as the technology does its best to depict the information captured, but the footage is defined more by negative than positive space, and the interior architecture might best be described as broken. We sometimes see the frame of the touchscreen, which may be an iPad. The images are sharp, save for the screen and phone; the sun visor resembles a blade, and the entire ride is jagged at each endpoint. We study the truck and the representation of the truck, moving from dashboard to roof to tires. Reflection emerges as an ally, the only way to plainly see what's coming, what's already here.

Another 10 seconds of black.

And then, for the only time in what is otherwise an identical visual loop, we look up and out the Tesla sunroof to a break in the clouds. This does not repeat.

Black.

We are then inside the screen, hovering in the truck's cab – the phone is gone. It's seductive and violent: One truck door is missing – hop in; the software makes a burst quilt – hop in; the driver's foot has burned through the floor mat – hop in. It's a ghost truck, the steering wheel a liquid-metal cane, hot.

Controlling the action with their fingers, the director begins to spin the content and perspective, and it's all we can do, vertigo as best bet in the face of obsolescence.

What is sustainability if technology makes shrapnel of the past?

All three sections repeat and repeat again, and each new soundtrack is like a new and different weather system. The second begins with a windy quality and gives way to a distant voice like an incantation. The elusive beat and underlying rhythm feel both hidden and natural, like the tide. Can sound be both present and elusive?

The final soundtrack is a panicked remix, fast and dark, breathless. A tone rises and falls, pulsates. It's hypnotic, in and out of sync, sometimes as fast as a fly flying. It is the sound of being forced to dance. We strain to hear the incantation, which returns, until it fades.

Overall, it may be that separate tracks have been sped up or slowed down and melded with each other. Each soundtrack is about eight minutes, and the overall length of the piece is just over 25 minutes.

Cars and trucks often have names – Civic, Escort, Tundra – but they also have titles, statements of ownership, proof of personal property. In the event a used car is sold, for example, the title must be updated to reflect its new possessor. Parker's work has no name; in place of the traditional "Untitled" or "untitled" that accompanies such an artwork, he has declared it carry no title whatsoever.

McIntyre Parker (b. 1984, Long Beach) lives in Bolinas, California. Solo exhibitions include Altman Siegel, San Francisco (2022); Kunstverein München (2021); Claire Frost, San Francisco (2020); Yale Union, Portland, Oregon (2018); and "Gracia," Odium Fati, San Francisco (2017). He co-organized the group exhibition "Cascadence," with K.R.M. Mooney (2021); and organized "O the sleeping bag contains the body but not the dreaming head," (2013), both at Altman Siegel. In 2009 he founded Pied-à-terre, an occasional off-space.