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Hans Gindlesberger "I'm in the Wrong Film"

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BY DAVID BALZER February 04, 2009 21:02

EDITORIAL RATING:

With Nicholas Knight. To Feb 14.
Tue-Sat 11am-5pm. Gallery 44,
401 Richmond W, ste 120.
416-979-3941.
www.gallery44.org.

Christie Hynde's "My City Was Gone," about her hometown of Akron, Ohio, is the Pretenders leader's well-known diatribe about the depressing, anonymizing effects of postmodern capitalism on Middle America. (Its subsequent appropriation by Rush Limbaugh as his theme song has only, as Hynde herself has grudgingly come to admit, reinforced her point.) One might, with millennial irony, sum up exhibits like photographer Hans Gindlesberger's "I'm in the Wrong Film" — the flipside of the same coin, or maybe the other side of the mountain — with the phrase "My City Is Everywhere," or "My City is

Your City."

Gindlesberger is part of a generation of photographers (the Sanchez brothers, Amy Stein), influenced by the likes of Philip-Lorca diCorcia and Gregory Crewdson, whose composite and staging techniques are intended to add cinematic and allegorical flair to the mundane. Gindlesberger's specific intention here is to create a literal Everytown, USA: the untitled works piece together shots he's taken from a variety of small towns to form sad, surrealist tableaux, in which Gindlesberger himself is the sole figure in the landscape.

The message, punched out by Gindlesberger's title ("I'm in the Wrong Film"), is alienation and discontent: if cinema lends its characters agency through the pathetic fallacy (i.e., by manipulating the environment to mirror their emotions), it doesn't necessarily make them any less pathetic. Indeed, as an artist, Gindlesberger frequently chooses ludicrously transparent metaphors. In one work he sits sullenly half-way down a slide with a line of a housing development behind him; in another he dangles a flaccid hose across the street from a succession of empty storefronts; and in another, perhaps a riff on Andrew Wyeth's Christina's World, he lies on the ground in a spotlight, some distance from a farmhouse with one, bright light on.

Such futility might be meant to spark a more complex psychological response in viewers, but it is more likely an end in and of itself: its own allegory, essentially, turning inward coyly, in a manner intended as absurdist. This, of course, can only be somewhat satisfactory. That Gindlesberger's technique woos the eye is the biggest frustration: it is indeed the language of cinema, used not as a gateway to the mysterious intimacies of the collective unconscious but in service of the theme of paralysis — as if this were the only alternative to cliché critique. Hynde might call it "parking-lot aesthetics."

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