

The Work of Memory - From a Great Distance

Finola Jones

09.05.08 - 31.05.08

Finola Jones' installation at Oonagh Young gallery, *A work of memory - from a great distance*, deals with the business of making art and how it does, or does not fuse with the less poetic business of daily life. How, why and what does the artist make art about and what is its role and function in day-to-day existence. Much of Jones' lifestyle revolves around travel and this is directly reflected in the scope and diversity her DV footage, acquired from disparate global locations. However, Jones' lens poses questions to the reliability of camera veritas by counterpointing the street 'real' with TV 'reality'. Jones patiently captures people doing things that border on doing very little, then posits this footage against people doing even less, epitomized by the celebrity non-celebrity, Carol sleeping 'live' on TV with snoring recorded from the reality show *Big Brother*.

In *A work of memory - from a great distance*, things exist in a world dictated by their own inner logic, combinations of images, objects and structures sit side by side, taxonomically determined either by abstract aesthetics or more concrete cultural classifications. They are in turn further emotionally manipulated by an overlay of emotive soundtracks. In this sense Jones employs classic modernist bricolage counterpoint, positing schismatic realities against ever-so-familiar images and objects, forming conjunctions that make all known things seem somewhat new or unfamiliar - a standard old fashioned TV sits upon a classic 'modern' side table, while screening a 'minimal' bright moon, slowly passing across a dark countryside (uncontaminated by light pollution) night sky. Jones' conjunctions are not only extremely elemental and elegantly simple, but they are also very human - the sublime awe of nature is brought down to size by her introduction of the niggling reminders of human presence and domestic inevitability.

In the largest single work in the installation, a DVD projection of *Steam*, (2007) the sublime visual beauty of a freezing Nordic river and glowing back-lit billowing smoke/steam stack is heart-wrenchingly underscored by an equally sublime - but half broken by age - rendition of Bellini's aria *La Sonnambula*. Ironically the recording was made in the sultry heat of Naples some seventy years previously, when orchestral and vocal performances were artificially speeded up to increase the perception of the performers' virtuosity. The recording has been re-slowed and deepened to contemporize the bass and to emphasize passion over technique. The only visible signs of life within the projected scenario are birds - literally freezing their butts off (comically) in what remains of the semi-liquid river. A lone bird braves the freezing air temperature at altitude. These ducks, appearing as tiny dots in the landscape, provide the only markers of scale, a determination once again brought into question by a dome covered, wall mounted dinner plate illustrating more ducks in a less harsh, but far from 'natural' habitat. There is also another deliberate ambiguity of intended meaning, as the belching chimneys, have their own beauty, but are they contributing to the global warming of the planet, or are they indeed themselves innocent steam victims of the extreme cold - mere heated air transforming into steam.