

NOW AND THEN

Veronica Gonzalez

Time present and past

Are both perhaps present in time future

And time future contained in time past.

If all time is eternally present

All time is unredeemable.

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Nothing sorts out memories from ordinary moments. Later on they do claim remembrance when they show their scars.

Chris Marker – the Narrator, *La Jettee*

Greetings From LA #1-10, immediately places us in the receivership of some strange time-travel postcard. And, as when we receive postcards from places we have also been (today I found one in my kitchen from Tulum), the pang of recognition moves swiftly from the image at hand, to thoughts of the person who has sent us the card, flits quickly then to our own experience in those places depicted, perhaps to the music we listened to while there, the books we read, the people we met, and then back and forth over all of this many many times. Motion is such an essential part of George Porcari's photography – it is impossible to be still as you look at his work – that all of this movement, time travel included, is not a surprise. Yet that cheery title of this series of work carries such an air of the melancholic (though not nostalgia,

certainly not for the good old days – for LA in the 70’s was not such an interesting place) does catch us off guard. Is it that Porcari is a transplant, as so many of us here are, and that Greetings From LA carries in it’s off-hand cheeriness, which refuses to proclaim anything, some of the underlying weight of the alien eye observing a strange land? We can only imagine that eye’s immeasurable leap. In 63’, the decade before the pictures were taken, George, the boy, traveled from Lima to Los Angeles. We all know the shock of such change, the difficulty the mind has in grasping those shifts, magnified when there is no going back. And we imagine Davos Hanich, the protagonist of *La Jetee* lying on the table under a mad scientist’s hands desperate but unable to run to his beloved, to glimpse her as he left her, in a museum, one more time... Because that alien eye reminds us in its very otherness that for all of us there has always been something, or someone, left behind.

*On the tenth day images begin to ooze like confessions – **La Jetee***

By Porcari’s tenth image in this series we feel the ooze, and we hear the confessional susurrations to (perhaps) a pretty cousin left behind. *Greetings...* the image proclaims, this is what I’ve left for: and we gaze with the solitary figure from inside his car, through the windshield, a blurred rear-view mirror (where I have always just come from, and so the immediate past) cut off on one side. The vast California sky is grey and heavy before and above us, in the distance the 50’s futuristic building – a diner, the spaceship rising up above it and fronted by antenna streetlights – figures a mock future, a mid-century cartoon world of possibility; a

huge blank canvas, this Los Angeles of the 70's, cut up by the great divide of its large boulevards. This odd expansive place #10 proclaims, is where I now am.

It is remarkable in looking at these photographs that so much of what would come to be George's lexicon is already present. It seems as if, after thirty years of looking and thinking about looking, he has ended up close to where he began. Past and present and future all coming together here in this showing of old and current work, at one time. The reflections are astounding. The shots through windshields. The strange framing, so much confusion, so many edges, the fragments caught carrying the weight of all that is cut off, all that is left unsaid.

In looking at these images from the 70's to 00's we are forced to think of reflexivity, the subject dismantled into so many viewings that the point of a center becomes moot. In between these 70's pictures and the photography of the last ten years Porcari went through a period of making images that communicated motion in a much more literal way. This made sense; he is a man obsessed by film; a man who loves to read. He had to wrestle with motion, with the variable point of view. Experiment with different ways of bringing these qualities into his work. In the eighties and early nineties he made long strips of images, some consisting of as many as sixty photographs mounted together on steel. More clearly filmic, you have to move between each photograph, make sense of the placement somehow. There are pangs of recognition there too, for he used many appropriated images, from films, books, magazines, other's personal caches, as well as his own private photos, snapshots of friends or family. And the familiarity of certain shots (is that the rear-

view mirror from Alice in the Cities? The view out the car window from Solaris”
Glenn Gould’s hand caught floating in mid-air? Jorge as Hamlet holding a skull?)
serves to confuse our search for meaning further. Though there is a sense of
possibility mixed with regret in these long strips...for all these images exist in the
present, the present of the work, a desire for cohesion, perhaps enacted there.

What might have been and what has been

Point to one end, which is always present.

Footfalls echo in the memory

Down the passage which we did not take

Towards the door we never opened

Into the rose-garden.

T.S. Eliot

He has since gone back to single image photography, though the reflections (in
windshields, mirrors, windows) he implies the same kind of motion, restlessly
shifting point of view, and this motion, of course, carries the weight of time. The
same thing in tiny variations, like Gertrude Stein. Tremulous like Walter Pater or
Virginia Woolf, the boundaries between the objects in the frame slipping into each
other, sometimes becoming so confused that you don’t know where the center is, to
imply something larger than the thing itself. There is no me any longer, I’ve been
shattered and re-arranged, de-centered and thrown into process, my eye not able to

light for more than a few seconds on anything, and yet I send you greetings, these images proclaim, with my shifting questioning eye. And in searching the surface we join in, are implicated, in that falsely easy and jocular note to that pretty cousin left behind.

Time past and time future

What might have been and what has been

Point to one end, which is always present.

T.S. Eliot

In *La Jettee* the moment of knowledge, the moment of merging time is also the moment of death. It is as if, Chris Marker proclaims, the movement is the point, the search, the attempt at making sense. It is not Meaning, but the search for meaning that makes us who we are. And though memory is a scar, it is a scar that we are forever compelled to run to as well as from.

This was the aim of the experiments: to send emissaries into Time, to summon the Past and the Future to the aid of the Present – *La Jettee*

Veronica Gonzalez - 2006

