

Machine as Metaphor

By STEPHEN MAINE

The image of a machine in the landscape is a potent metaphor for the intersection of nature and culture, earth and artifice. Current exhibitions by Holli Schorno and Andy Graydon, artists of vastly different material means, consider technology's imprint on the environment, mindful of the impact of modern media on our sense of place. Neither would seem to be a Luddite; in fact, both exhibitions suggest a guarded optimism regarding the anxious interpenetration of natural and technological structures. In her diagrammatically precise and spatially sweeping collages, Ms. Schorno crafts a compelling illustration of just such a jumble of systems, while Mr. Graydon provides the viewer with a memorable experience of the real thing.

Fraught yet exuberant, the 14 works in "Landed," Ms. Schorno's second solo outing at Pavel Zoubok (where collage is the specialty), conjoin disembodied found imagery and conventional landscape space. Snippets gleaned from the fecund visual wilderness of textbook illustration and scientific periodicals — topographical maps, cross-sections of geological strata, perspectival construction drawings, exploded views of household appliances — are spliced together in these works, spreading like a virus across the open expanse of paper. As in "Signal Hill," many are connected by collaged rods or spindles, and evoke communications satellites, broadcast equipment, and radio astronomy.

In this new body of work, Ms.

HOLLI SCHORNO: Landed

Pavel Zoubok Gallery

ANDY GRAYDON: Untitled (Ground)

LMAK Projects

Schorno situates these sprawling hybrids of technical illustration in fantastical landscapes, developed from roughly mountain-shaped cutouts of maps and photos of varied terrain. "Rock Fields," with its robotic foreground figures, blank white mid-

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dle ground, and distant jagged hills, evokes the Bonneville Salt Flats, a bizarre and fragile freak of nature familiar to many through advertising media, primarily as a venue for automobile racing and fashion photography. "Thistles, Drumlin and Kettles" marshals botanical, geological, and domestic forms typifying the combination of linear and lumpen that propels this show. Dada collage and the Surrealists' "exquisite corpse" undoubtedly feed this work, particularly in the ambivalent dominance of component parts and pictorial whole. While every scrap is appropriated, the

artist's bristling concatenation of them is very much her own.

If, at heart, Ms. Schorno is a clever graphic designer, Mr. Graydon is a poet. He makes no claims of mastery. His show, "Untitled (Ground)," is a subtle, elliptical, haunting meditation on the inadequacy of the tools we use to come to grips with our environment, and our comic mishandling of them. He works primarily in sound, as well as film and video, and he is keenly interested in how the machines he uses — cameras, audio recording devices — color any attempt at "documentation" of his source material. This show includes work in these genres, plus photography, sculpture, and an arresting hybrid of object and video projection called "Free Verse." In it, footage of a bunch of fluorescent bulbs, one of them flickering, is projected onto its physical double, bringing the inert pileup to life. In method, if not effect, this work is reminiscent of Robert Whitman's combines of film and sculpture in the mid-1960s.

Images of Mr. Graydon's native Hawaii feature in "Untitled (aina)," a 26-minute-long video loop that is derived from Super 8 film. Flickering, grainy footage of that otherworldly landscape is interspersed with extended views of a murky sunrise, a mining operation's digging equipment and conveyor belt, the ocean's horizon, and a treeless hill with an orange banner flapping madly in the foreground. The sequence is seen in two versions, side by side. At times, they are nearly in tandem, while at others they diverge, as one channel lingers over a particular motif or jumps ahead as if to promise a narrative that never

emerges.

Meanwhile, through a quartet of speakers is heard the rumble of a bus and a tour guide's comments on the Hawaiian landscape, processed almost beyond recognition. At times it is barely audible, leaning toward guttural and abstract. The audio works, called "Untitled (letter to Peter Giles)" in a nod to Thomas More's "Utopia," are delivered via three one-of-a-kind phonograph records. They are just a few minutes long, and the repetitive white noise of the turntable's needle stuck in the inside groove hangs over the exhibition until the gallery staff changes the record, contributing a pedestrian element of performance.

The exhibition checklist indicates various works as discrete pieces, but with ambient audio in the dim gallery, "Untitled (Ground)" is easily read as an installation. All the work rests on the floor. Meandering power lines, cables, and wires constitute a landscape of its own and blur the distinction between the art on view and the equipment used to produce it. Four 12-inch-square photographic transparencies, each called "Untitled (inflection)," are crudely backlit by a pair of naked fluorescent bulbs. They are shots of a lush forest floor with a ghostly line of light embedded in the emulsion. Lying flat on the floor, the fifth in the series depicts an astronomical observatory, a machine for seeing.

Schorno until June 7 (533 W. 23rd St., between Tenth and Eleventh avenues, 212-675-7490).

Graydon until June 7 (526 W. 26th St., between Tenth and Eleventh avenues, 212-255-9707).