For this exhibition I have selected Erik Wesselo and Clifford LeCuyer, two artists who utilize the landscape and the body to explore notions of existence and discovery.

Wesselo’s Delftse Molen, a 16mm film made in 1997, begins in medias res. Erik Wesselo is bound to the sail of a windmill rotating swiftly counterclockwise. The movements of the camera are gentle, smooth, and strangely hypnotic. Initially the camera follows him closely with only his body and a section of the sail visible. There is no sound. Slowly the camera begins to zoom out revealing the windmill’s monumentality and the vastness of the surrounding landscape. In the final minutes of the film, the camera returns to close position, but this time the movements are aggressive and disorienting. The film concludes with the blades of the windmill coming to a stop.

By binding himself to the windmill, Wesselo is simultaneously empowered and powerless. Flying through the air at great heights, he experiences the rush of being able to survey his surroundings from a new perspective. At the same time, Wesselo’s movement is dictated by the forces of nature. Using camerawork to parallel his psychological experience, Wesselo interchanges the particular and the infinite conveying a range of internal emotions. Not only interested in paying homage to his native landscape and to Holland’s history of painting, his gesture also establishes his position within the context of Dutch art.

Los Angeles-based artist Clifford LeCuyer makes photographs of table-top maquettes that he constructs with wet porcelain. Like Wesselo, LeCuyer sets up images for the camera while leaving the
meditative details of his preparation hidden from the viewer. His process involves moving back and forth between working with material and looking through the lens of a 35mm camera. The final images are a sort of photographic drawing. Shot and printed in black and white, his images are soft, grainy, and often seem out of focus. To that end, they lack the simplifications of traditional photography, almost appearing to be antique Dutch still-life paintings or delicate charcoal drawings on paper.

The content of LeCuyer’s images is nearly as elusive as the media; his intuitive landscapes are reminiscent of the body, the pyramids of Giza, the surface of the moon, and Smithson’s Spiral Jetty. Working from memory, LeCuyer doesn’t create images, he recovers them. Attached to the monumental and its psychological power, he utilizes landscape, diving in elemental form and deep illusionary space.

LeCuyer’s work mirrors the self, complex and unexplainable. It deals with an array of disturbing, including ancient and modern, interior and exterior, infinite and particular, masculine and feminine, and real and artificial. The unique combination of monumental space and perspective recession work together to pull the viewer inside his sensuous and spiritual work.

Both Vessels and LeCuyer are concerned with personal existence within a broader context. LeCuyer’s “Self-Portrait” depicts the inner landscape of his body and indirectly speaks to his own mortality. At the same time, Vessels claims his place within a vast continuum of time and space. The two artists also focus on rediscovering the familiar. LeCuyer marries his subconscious to discover original form. Vessels, on the other hand, alters his vantage point to discover new things about both the landscape and himself.

Derek Eller
October 2001

Being a Dealer and a Curator necessitates doing studio views as much as you can find the time to do them, which means you normally see more work in artists’ studios than in galleries or museums. For 222, we were able to visit a studio*, an artist whose work we’d seen most recently at a studio visit that had made the biggest impact on us. In the case of Amy Kao, I’d been to her studio once and was almost instantly hooked by my partner Larry Waldzik had been following Santeri Scanlan’s work and it had maintained a simmering in his mind over everything else he’d seen during that time. Working with a partner, in the case of photography means bringing two distinctly different aesthetic visions together. In 222, it resulted in work that represents different extremes in today’s photographic art world. Amy Kao’s work is concerned with seeing and how she can manipulate us into being conscious of this process with her visual psychodramas. On the other hand, Santeri Scanlan’s work is obsessed with the idea of forgetting the viewer and by artfully altering the text, understand what it is actually saying. The more obvious connection between the two, that will strike anyone who walks into the gallery and sees the work is that they have in common two-dimensional results that hang simply on the wall with pushpins. The combination of these two artists emphasizes the fascinating range of intents and stylistic approaches that coexist in the very simplest of formats.

Amy Kao’s M/M pieces are elaborations of perceptual emergence achieved through light. They consist of incisions, made with a razor blade, to create an aggregate of a singular motif, achieving a spatial volume through a play of shadows against the translucency of material. Volume defines mass and opacity. Here, volume is light, voluminous light, as a conversion of shape of various kinds of light. Luminosity is defined as soft, hard, transparent – the diffused reverberating, reflection and emanation of light.

An equally compelling imperative is the permutation of a geometric motif. In each of the Vessels pieces, a simple motif systematically populates (mathematically symmetrical) within the confines of a rectangular field. Geometry dictates its underlying structure, in whole adherence to an inherent grammar of the material and immaterial. What we see in these M/M pieces is the issue of de-materialization. Negation is transformed into emergence – a becoming through transfer (transference and shadow phenomena). It is at this juncture where the work is situated, in the threshold between negation and emergence, the tangible and the intangible.

However, these works are not exclusively, a pure investigation of the optical, for they deal with the whole experiential, perceptual event. At this juncture the viewer is engaged in a video inspired dialogue with the work. The viewer’s physical position and proximity to the pieces, either formed or perceived, alters the pieces completely.

In the LIFESTYLE Series, Santeri Scanlan confronts the impact of advertising on social behavior by “hijacking” advertisements, altering the text and enlarging them. While maintaining the advertisements’ originalness and aesthetic appeal, he turns the concept of text against itself making hilarious, and thought-provoking statements, satirizing, exposing and questioning the Message of advertising.

The level of Scanlan’s ideological commitment to his work becomes apparent when you read his Artist’s Statement, which reads more like a manifesto than the usual artist’s thoughts on his or her work. Scanlan declares, “The ultimate goal of branding consists of a tool of cultural colonization with modifications, and objectives beyond simple economics. Globalized campaigns no longer advertise the mere object exchanged for currency. If the image is memory, the marketing of the imaginary inclusion in the elite who can appreciate the setbacks of a constellation made of objects that implicate a life style. No longer just incidental to the medium, the message is the medium.“

Annie Heron
June 2001