

Paterson, Carrie. "Pat O'Neil at Rosamund Felsen," *Artillery*, Sept/Oct. 2008.

Pat O'Neill's summer exhibition, featuring projections, objects and installation, was a variegated and lyrical filmic experiment, extended into material metaphors. O'Neill is a Los Angeles based experimental filmmaker famous for his use of the optical printer, which allows strips of film to be segmented and recombined in a process similar to darkroom photography.

The visual lexicon for the show is the beautiful 35 mm film transferred to video *Horizontal Boundaries* (2008). It stutters and skips through landscapes familiar and not, over the rooftops, across the water, the snow and into the air. O'Neill composes short non-narrative chapters using a visually stunning montage where images in contraposto – for example, the driving snow on pine trees and a black and white suburban community – alternately sift down and blink across an axis. It's like the horizontal and vertical holds have both developed epilepsy and are taking turns breathing. Not that O'Neill's work is claustrophobic. Quite the contrary – it's like wind for the eyes. The rapid-fire images morph at times at the edge of perception: TV "snow" is suddenly light glinting off the water. The landscape of our imagination surfaces.

Born in 1939, O'Neill could be described as "old school." He seems to have absorbed one of the critical realizations of the process, and from performance artists who were his contemporaries: the gift of materiality is in its temporality.

There is a question as to how much of his formal vocabulary also echoes some of those key artists. Is it Eva Hesse's *Hang Up* (1966) that we see reiterated throughout his work? His title for a Minimalist series of log cuts *Dimwit I-IV* makes this more difficult to believe, though the forms are delicate, lit hauntingly from behind so they glow, are translucent, and have small finger-sized grooves pushed into their surfaces as if they were skin or paper. I would like to think it is an homage; her spirit is there and palpable.

In *Wooden You*, wooden wooden clogs from a portal in a wall projection to a moving image behind. I was transported by the suggestion of O'Neill's conditional "wouldn't you" to the amethyst Shoes for Departure (1991) of Marina Abramovic that were meant to be worn by the audience "into" another realm facilitated by the material. In O'Neill's case the shoes are to be looked through; our eyes are asked to "ground" our experience.

*Wooden You* is one half of a diptych with multi-dimensional projections. Its twin is *London Marble*. An object installed here on a slowly-spinning textured image throws a shadow that defines the perimeter of a hole cut into the wall. The hole is so irregular and exactly matched as to be invisible. Another projection of lighter tonality and texture – marble statues – defies out initial perceptions of space. The object in *London Marble* is a burl from a tree, the irregular knot formed by environmental stress. A register up from the geologic processes where molten stone bubbles emerge from the twisting mantle, both seem perfect metaphors for the visual conflict O'Neill engages in film. Hanging from the burl, in awkward fashion is a Hesse-like appendage, perhaps an index or sign at this border crossing.