

CRISTIN TIERNEY

Opticks, Peter Campus at the BFI South Bank Gallery

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Peter Campus

Opticks

BFI South Bank Gallery

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The BFI South Bank Gallery is currently presenting in *Opticks* new work by Peter Campus alongside with his best-known videos from the 70's. In effect, this is a mini retrospective of his work.

In *Kiva* (1971), *Stasis* (1973) and *Mem* (1975), the visitors activate the work; once they enter the field of the video camera, the piece takes life and is animated. For example in *Kiva*, the camera, positioned on the top of a video monitor, is focused onto two suspended and constantly moving double-sided mirrors, recording a perpetually moving image in which the viewer is reflected. This perception of a multidimensional space is also experienced in *Stasis*. The outcome is once again operated by the viewer entering the field of the video camera, their representation on the screen appears as a double image, one bending and turning and one remaining static. These works are only fully realised through the movements of the visitor. The physical engagement becomes unsettling, an awareness of their own reflection and their displacement in the space as well as on the screen.

Through his 70's artworks, Campus investigates, the self through spectator's relationship to film. Using the video and its relation to the space the artist initiates a psychological search. In *Mem*, the camera records the viewer and projects a distorted image at an angle onto the gallery wall. The more the spectator approaches their

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reflection, the more it diminishes to nothingness, exemplifying Campus' constant existential questioning of what is a true image.

His commissioned piece *Inflections: changes in light and colour around Ponquogue Bay* (2009), states a significant change towards new technologies. Here Campus couples his interest in technological experimentation with a concern for composition, intending to refer to painting. This piece is shown on six videos screens presenting an abstract landscape taken originally from the south shore of Long Island. This technical transformation remains a secret. Campus considers this new piece as a refutation of using a more nostalgic medium as such as painting to portray Nature. This engagement with new media and technology makes the artist's work more appealing and interesting.

The choice of the pieces shows a contrast with the minimalist aspect of his earlier work, focusing on the experience of a space within a representation, and a composition created digitally; the latter, something he has been increasingly interested in his recent work. After having dropped video work, Campus returned to it in the 90's, using digital images superimposed on video footage. His practice is now more focused on the editing, the sequencing, and relationship of the images to one another. Even though these works are from the 70's, their experience and interrogative impact still work. Campus had an important role in video art, and in *Opticks* the BFI shows how his practice is relevant.

By Anne Duffau

http://www.bfi.org.uk/whatson/bfi_southbank/exhibitions