

CRISTIN TIERNEY

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“peter campus”
By Rebecca Shiffman

PETER CAMPUS

BY REBECCA SCHIFFMAN

meditations

Cristin Tierney, New York
March 10–April 22, 2023

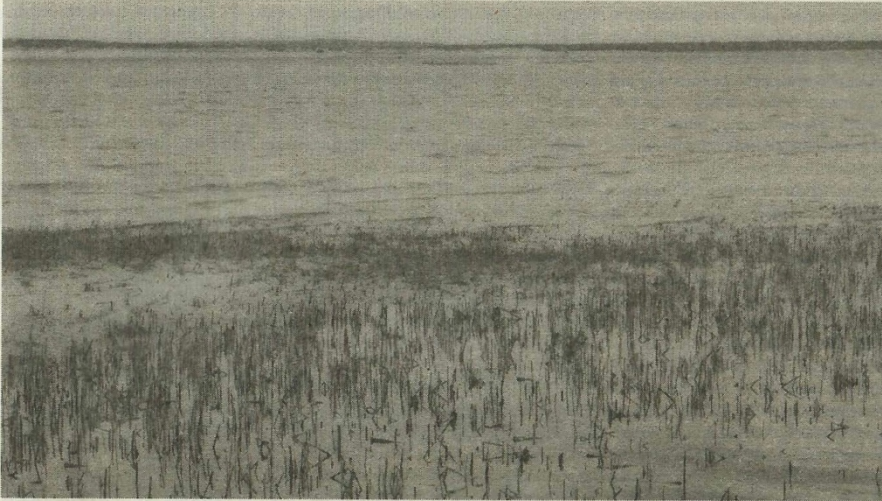
Tucked away on the second floor of a building on Bowery is peter campus’s latest exhibition, *meditations*. The show is exactly what its title denotes: a moment of peace, tranquility, introspection, and refreshingly, a deep breath. I stopped by on my way to visit a relative who was in the midst of serious surgery and I was admittedly distracted and stressed. But as soon as I stepped into the small, slightly dark gallery, my worried thoughts drifted away. Four flat-screen TVs mounted at eye level, feature short looped videos of familiar nature scenes taken in Bellport, on Long Island’s South Shore. As a Long Island native, I recognized the coastal dunes, dark green algae, and grey-tinged light with a sense of nostalgia.

A photographer for many years, campus has devoted the last two decades to capturing the light and life of what is left of the natural environment on Long Island, through what he calls “videographs.” To create these moving pictures, campus sets

Artseen

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peter campus, *sinusoid*, 2021. Videograph, 6:10 minutes, looped. Courtesy the artist and Cristin Tierney.



up a 4K camera along the coastline and records hundreds of uninterrupted hours of his chosen sites from dawn to dusk. The artist edits this down to just five to fifteen minutes to create the videographs that are on view. Unlike films, these works do not have any narrative, peak, or climax. Instead, they force viewers to take notice of the small, minute shifts of the quotidian life in these untouched natural zones and ecosystems.

After recording and montaging clips together, campus alters the light, brightness, contrast, and saturation of the video works. The final pieces become dreamlike episodes of a natural world, drifting serenely across each frame. In *sinusoid* (2021), an ordinary winter coastal scene is transixed into a cartoonish landscape painting. The blacks and browns that make up the dead shrubs and small trees in the dunes are so strong and vivid in color, that the closer one looks, the more

they appear to be hieroglyphics or encoded messages in the sand. The ocean waves sway and ripple toward the shoreline at the midline of the screen. The waves, wind, and flora that create this scene go on like this for over six minutes. When the video finishes, there is a slight pause, before it begins again.

The work has a hypnotizing effect in which time passes a little slower and one can meditate and completely envelop themselves in a scene. In *squassux puddle*

(2023), light shines onto a body of water where rocks shimmer underneath the surface, and reeds that blow in the wind are reflected over the puddle. While watching the videograph—all of which, by the way, are silent—it's easy to imagine what the scenes sound like: the small trickles of water washing over the rocks, the plants rustling against one another, wind howling, perhaps even fish swimming toward the surface, or a fly buzzing and vibrating nearby.

The quiet and stillness of the exhibition is only possible if the viewer truly focuses and allows themselves a chance to feel these works. Viewing these works is a complete act of meditation: one must train their attention and awareness to achieve a clear and calm state, as simply as the babbling brook in *strafe* (2022) on the south wall, or the plastic orange fence that dangles over the stream in *post morrow, winter* (2023).

These are by no means fantastical landscapes. They are the ordinary, suburban scenes that are often overlooked in favor of the great beyond. But what we receive in campus's exhibition is the invitation—and the urging of the artist—to see the ways in which the dreary views of our own daily lives can be beautiful if we are ready to see them that way.

Rebecca Schiffman (she/her) is a Brooklyn-based writer, editor, and art historian.