

CRISTIN TIERNEY

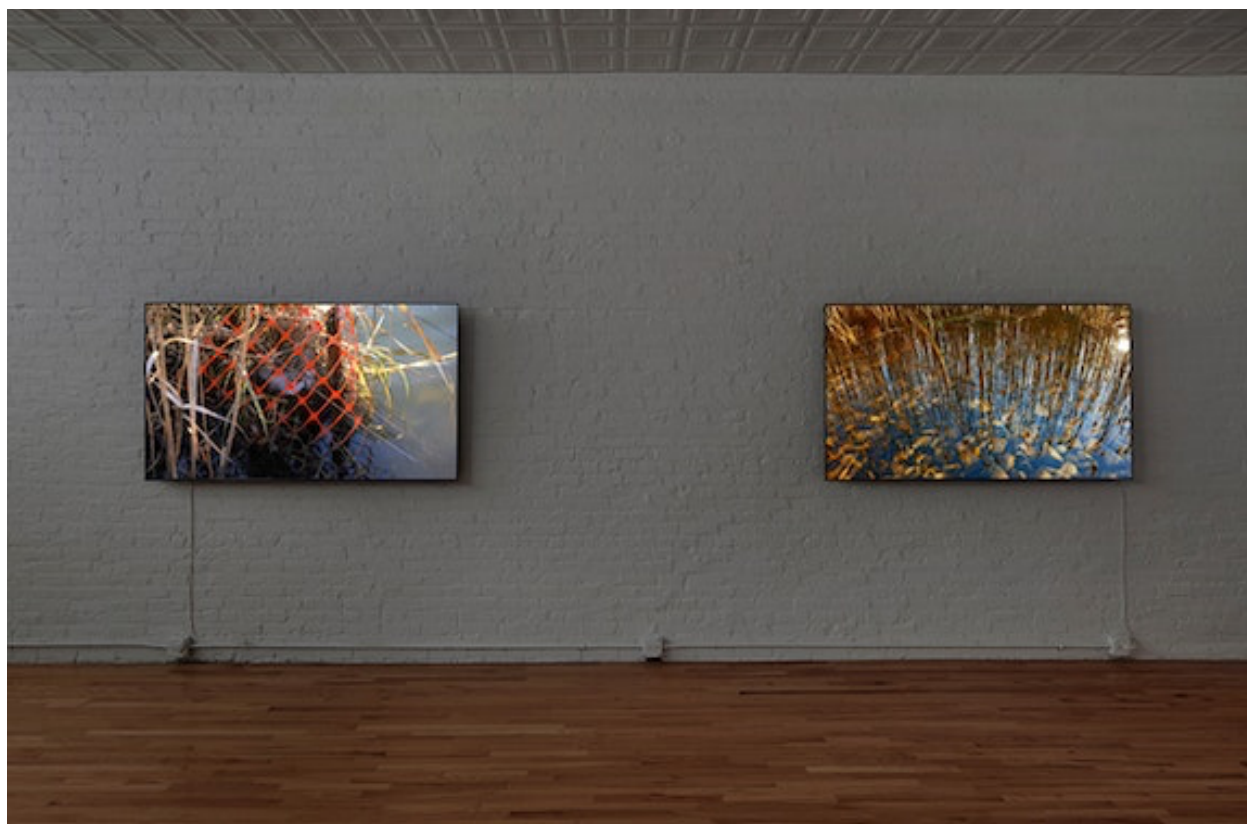
BROOKLYN RAIL

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

ArtSeen

peter campus: *meditations*

By **Hearne Pardee**



Installation view: peter campus: *meditations*, Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York, 2023. Courtesy the Artist and Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York. Photo: John Muggenborg.

ON VIEW

Cristin Tierney
March 10–April 22, 2023
New York

At Cristin Tierney, two of peter campus's darkly introspective Polaroid portraits from the 1970s, installed in the office, remind us of the brooding romanticism of his early black-and-white landscape photographs. In an interview, campus calls landscape “a face inside out,” emphasizing his emotional projection into the scenes he records. As the videos in adjoining galleries evoke

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Monet in their translucent simulation of reflections on water, they remain intensely personal, recalling the observation of Rosalind Krauss from 1976: “The narcissistic enclosure inherent in the video-medium becomes for [campus] part of a psychological strategy by which he is able to examine the general conditions of pictorialism in relation to its viewers.”

Titled *meditations*, the new works extend the poetic compression of everyday images campus began in DVDs from the 1990s, incorporating the prolonged, stationary shots he calls “videographs,” which encourage contemplation. Those first exhibited in 2010 involved slow-moving, enlarged pixels that abstracted his images and recalled, in their visual discipline and focus on coastal scenes, the paintings of Georges Seurat. In subsequent works, campus adopted high-resolution 4K technology to create large, immersive projections without abstraction. The new images displayed here, mostly on 75-inch flat screens, reintroduce abstraction by moving closer to the subject and exploiting the camera’s capacity to intensify movement and color. Their rapidly shifting patterns capture the eye but place great demands on its capacity for attention.

The videos invite consideration as pictures, insofar as they involve conventional compositional concerns. Like Monet, campus focuses on pools of water, conflating their reflective surfaces with the plane of the image, with rocks and weeds visible beneath the surface and clouds and foliage reflected there. Yet the electronic medium is crucial: dangling blades of grass in *post morrow, winter* (2023), for example, dissolve into colored light amid undulating, saturated fields of orange and blue. Video editing orchestrates these rhythmic oscillations in multiple registers—incoming waves in *sinusoid* (2021), fluttering branches in *four oh two* (2023), and wind-ruffled tassels of sea grass in *squassux puddle* (2023). Above the water, suspended leaves with crisply defined shapes of light and shade, as though painted by Alex Katz, shift more gradually.



peter campus, *four oh two*, 2023. Videograph, 8:39 minutes, looped. Courtesy the artist and Cristin Tierney.

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Over all looms the time frame of the loop, which imposes its serial repetition on the natural scene. Marked in most cases by a simple pause in the constant motion, in *post morrow, winter* it involves a delicate meshing of frames, revealing a shift in the camera's position over time. campus uses a monopod, so such shifts gradually occur, mostly visible along the margins. Varying from around four to eleven minutes, the loops are determined less by conceptual design than by campus's intuitive decision to stop recording. This casual attitude reflects a deeper openness to the everyday world in his process, but if the subjects seem humble, they are hardly insignificant. Most dramatic is the passing of a Long Island Railroad train in *four oh two*, which evokes Futurism and introduces an unplanned element of spectacle. It recalls the Impressionists' interest in the railroad and Thoreau's interrupted pastoral reverie, quoted by Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden*, which embodies the tension between America's arcadian dreams and industrial progress. It's interesting that such a technologically driven artist focuses on a low-tech environment of old industries and timeless occupations.

Other "events" are less dramatic but telling. The vinyl fencing in *post morrow, winter* injects industrial construction, while the glare of the sun included in the upper right corner of *squassax puddle* introduces an expanded scale of light; floating over submerged rocks, it situates us in the realm of global warming. In *sinusoid*, incoming waves evoke the pressure of rising seas against the central sandbar and its lagoon of delicately rendered grass that resembles a Japanese rice paddy. Such interventions lend distinctive pictorial identity to each video and open up spaces for subjective vision and sustained contemplation, reinforced by a quotation from Rilke.

After viewing Monet's late paintings in the artist's studio at Giverny, Ellsworth Kelly was inspired to paint *Tableau Vert* (1952), a virtual monochrome, in which layers of blue and green evoke submerged grasses. campus doesn't press his involvement with color to such an abstract level, but his work calls to mind the legacy of late Monet in American art. For Clement Greenberg, the transparency of Monet's pond suggested the dematerialization of painting he detected in Pollock's "powdery mists." Based on the churning reflections of *four oh two*, Campus would have more in common with the entangled gestures of Joan Mitchell. His videos, of course, consist only of light, and *meditations* harks back to his early, somewhat mystical, definition of "durational perception" as an enlarged awareness fostered by his video installations and the mechanical, "surrogate eye" of the camera. Here, the term extends further, situating subjective experience in a technologically evolved landscape.