

PETER CAMPUS

ALBION, LONDON
6 MARCH – 25 APRIL

Optical Sockets, 1973 (installation view, 2009), closed circuit video installation. Photo: Ed Reeves. Courtesy the artist and Albion, London

"In the late 1960s", Peter Campus says to me, "one of the things we discovered with video was how boring it was. I think this is what interested me with closed circuit... doing something in front of the camera."

Campus's exhibition at Albion is his first in this country, and his seminal black-and-white closed-circuit videoworks – *Kiva*, from 1971, and *Optical Sockets*, *Stasis* and *Anamnesis*, all from 1973 – have not been seen in 35 years. They are a revelation, and Campus deploys them here, together with a series from 2007, to question how we perceive the world – our different viewing rhythms and behaviours.

Entering the gallery from the riverside, we are offered what the artist calls "a little chunk of landscape" – six cut-out and framed video screens installed on a structure that resembles the prow of a ship. Playing on these screens are six six-minute-and-fifteen-second high-definition looped videoworks of Long Island's Ponquogue Bay, each drawing on the landscape paintings of van Ruisdael, Constable, Turner and Monet, and on Campus's training in psychology, his ten years working in a film studio and his practice of still photography. Our visual sense is enhanced by the ambient sounds of gulls, boats, the wind and nonspecific noise pollution. In the first of these, *Land of Counterpane* (2007), Campus's professed dream of going to sea is transposed to moored fishing vessels, the water lapping to the edge of the frame, where the only action is a truck being driven away. *The Earth Is Nowhere* (2007) touches on Campus's anxiety about our destruction of the land; here a buoy, Campus's Duchampian found object, bobs in the water, at the mercy of a passing boat. In *Bridge of Clouds*

(2007) a speed-walker, cars and a truck cross a bridge as clouds slowly pass overhead. Over a three-year period spent refining these images, Campus continually revisited Ponquogue Bay, experimenting with what he calls very "rapid camera movement" and then an "assembling of static views" before reaching the solution of the fixed camera.

The blank screens at the back of the gallery enable a different viewing relationship. For all four of these 1970s works, precisely placed cameras, lighting and mirrors separate, reflect and superimpose our bodily movements through a momentary time delay. In *Kiva*, rotating mirrors in front of the camera produce fragments of the gallery space and our presence in it. *Anamnesis* is about time delay and duration: our lifesize images, projected on a wall by two video recorders operating with a three second delay, give the illusion that we can literally catch up with ourselves. In *Optical Sockets* we are surveyed from four different directions – impossible points of view retransmitted from four cameras. And in *Stasis* our body rotates around the screen, a movement recalling the space programme. Surveillance cameras are, of course, ubiquitous in our lives today, yet the experience of 'completing the work' is strangely delightful and makes one want to experiment with numerous active scenarios.

Campus maintains that when the novelty of a new medium "wear off, you are left with the art", but he is not keen, he says, on the notion of art walking round with a "capital 'A' on its chest". His art engages and stimulates our individual viewing practices, but it is also work that has kept him "alive – sitting there doing it, sitting there making it". *Jean Wainwright*

