



SZUPER GALLERY HELSINKI

it remind us of how futile our efforts are? Do we catch a whiff of impotence coming from Carpenter's paintings? After all, they leave unscratched the cool surfaces of both the ICA and Galerie Edward Mitterrand. Contrarian as these paintings are, they don't impact the world of economic transactions and information flows into which they're plugged. Cynical or sincere, it's all product someone is trying to turn into money.

The mythification of Cologne is taken to task in another trilogy. A big pink washy painting, *Unabomber*, 2006, combines a cartoon face, some doodles, and the name "Merlin" sprayed across the top. A second, smaller painting carries the name "Krebber" written in third-grade script and a worm of white paint squeezed directly from the tube. These two paintings pursue an interest of Carpenter. For a while now, he has explored the interchangeability of Michael Krebber's and his own story.

Although these two paintings could simply add to the fire of myth, a third painting is there to knock the wind out of things. Out of a muddy field and a few bands of spraypaint a silly face smoking a pipe materializes. Entitled *Kostabi*, 2006, it references that other "painter" who, in his desire to be a historical and economic powerhouse, has undertaken a series of backfiring self-mythologizing actions. Whatever one's opinion of *Kostabi*, it is certainly true that he and Krebber sit on opposite ends of the critical spectrum. One has sunk into a series of self-promotional misadventures that critics loathe; the other has emerged as painting's new hope.

So, Carpenter, Krebber, *Kostabi* smoking Magritte's pipe... This triumvirate's assembly may be Carpenter's way of letting contemporary criticism know that it has little chance against capitalism's drive to equalize everything. No matter its "legitimacy," myth always sits on a pile of dollars. Shopping and painting, critique or wolfing down burgers at the Hard Rock Café—it's all the same. Delivering this news with an unflinching hand, Carpenter may still have Philly in mind.

—Gean Moreno

Standing out as one of the few captivating summer exhibitions in Helsinki this year, Szuper Gallery's video *The Extras*, 2005 [Kunsthalle Helsinki; June 17—August 13, 2006] presented a disjunctive view of people on the peripheries of film and television production. Shot on an ostensibly impromptu film set in the atrium of a deserted industrial facility, *The Extras* comes across as a mocumentary in which sound and image rarely connect. While the narrator's voice describes a series of settings and events, the viewer witnesses dramatically different mundane performances at an impoverished site.

Projected in a gallery just off the lobby, the high volume of the soundtrack introduced visitors to the video soon after entering Kunsthalle Helsinki. The pompous and somewhat irritating tone of the narrator's voice lends a sense of overblown importance to the detailed scenes he describes in no logical time sequence. One scenario takes place on the bow of a ship in 1959, the next in an airport's departure hall in 1999, and then at an evening party in 1969. The narrator speaks of representatives of the middle class in evening dress mingling with hippies and of a partially-clad female in black military boots pointing a weapon at the floor. Yet, expectations of colorful imagery raised by the narration vanish when images unite with sound. Filling one gallery wall are the enactments of a group of amateur actors in contemporary street clothes accented by the odd reflective garment. More reflective foil forms both a backdrop and a tent, articulating their set. The extras carry signs made of this material, and drape it over themselves when they lie on the floor.

The work instills confusion. Shown as a loop, this non-traditional narrative forces viewers to grapple with its dualism. Adding to the script's temporal dispersion, the speaker offers numerous perspectives. Not only does he outline scenes, but he also speaks for the extras and about them. Though the years and settings continue to change, the extras' appearance remains constant. It quickly becomes obvious that the extensive presence of reflective material refers to their role in the production.

They enhance the story, by extending it and giving it depth. In every situation, they mirror the story and, like the screen onto which their images may be projected, they reflect light. Though their title suggests superfluity, they are essential. They exist on an interfacing plane.

While this London/Munich based collective, which consists of Susanne Clausen and Pawlo Kerestey, has staged similar performances, the work retains a feeling of coincidence. The video's disparate components effectively combine to evince the absurdities of the extras' lives. Subject to boredom and the occasional bit of verbal abuse, their faces demonstrate few emotions and their minds drift off to other things. At one point, they wonder if they turned off their stove. Later on, the viewer sees a close-up of their shoes. They lack individuality for they act as a body that assumes multiple identities. The tone of the speaker's voice—imagine Walter Cronkite's reporting style used for a Monty Python sketch—emphasizes the script's irony and permeates each segment with sardonic humor.

Mixing parody with social commentary Szuper Gallery presents an abstract view of people who work on the margins of the acting profession. The unsequential time structure of this anti-film underscores the ambiguity of their position by both reflecting and distorting the manner in which most films are made. As in the work of Dada artists, the nonsensical character of the production has a moral underpinning. *The Extras* also discloses the antipathy to which this class of workers has been subjected.

—John Gayer

ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: Szuper Gallery, stills from *The Extras*, 2005, DVD, 11 minutes [courtesy of Szuper Gallery and Kunsthalle Helsinki]