



L. Cauleen Smith, *GLOSSOLALIA 7.0*, 2011; single-channel HD video; 6 minutes 30 seconds; courtesy the artist and The Kitchen, New York

R. *Remote Viewing*, installation view at The Kitchen, New York; (left) *The Grid*, 2011; single-channel HD video, surround sound; 15 minutes 13 seconds; (right) *Remote Viewing*, 2010; single-channel HD video, surround sound; 15 minutes 13 seconds; courtesy the artist and The Kitchen, New York; photo by David Allison

NEW YORK

Cauleen Smith The Kitchen

In *Remote Viewing*, Cauleen Smith shakes up the generic video installation format by combining two, full-wall projections with a third wall of standard-size monitors mounted at varying heights like oddly placed windows. Comprised of five discrete works playing simultaneously (cumulative duration of one hour), it takes time to settle in, with the two large projections dominating the experience. Parallels in the *mise en scène* of the large pair suggest narrative intersections that viewers can tease out if they take the time. The first projection, *Remote Viewing* (2010), presents a formally static shot of a one-room schoolhouse in front of green-draped scaffolding, a low-tech and humorous allusion to the film industry's "green screen" technique for transposing actors and settings.

For the first half of this fifteen-minute video, an excavator digs a square hole in front of the schoolhouse, with occasional cutaways to a young boy and woman dressed in '50s era clothing. These figures survey the work and pose formally, like the schoolhouse, in front of another, smaller green screen. While the video is alternately tedious and mesmerizing to watch, one is nevertheless shocked to see what should have been anticipated—a tractor, hiding behind the schoolhouse, pushes the building into the hole, a roaring act of violence that is swift and precise. The plaintive cry of the jolted school bell is heart-stopping. The second half of the video shows a burial of sorts as the dirt is neatly replaced.

Calmer, though no less inscrutable, the other projection, *The Grid* (2011), frames a majestic oak in a field of golden grass. In the foreground a man and woman in contemporary dress hammer stakes into the field then carefully string pink surveyor ribbon to form a grid. Halfway into the fifteen-minute video, they stop and methodically take up the tape. There

is a time delay in the overlapped presentation of the two videos, creating a looping visual cycle of creation and destruction in the room.

The three small-format works on the third wall, *GLOSSOLALIA 3.0*, *GLOSSOLALIA 7.0* and *THE VANISHING* (all 2011), play like grace notes on the periphery. The first two show B-roll style footage of helicopters overhead, handheld commotion around a vehicle, and a pixelated view of a figure in a pink shawl watching a passing group of horseback riders. *The Vanishing* is more polished and evocative; set in the same field as *The Grid*, the video fixates on brightly patterned textiles that completely cover figures who appear and disappear as the man from the earlier video erases words from a chalkboard—"Girl, Boy, Tree, Shape, School, Tomb."

Though enigmatic, the installation never fails to engross. Beyond the gorgeous HD video, there is a lush soundtrack of natural and man-made elements, including garbled foreign radio broadcasts. Working off a clue found on Smith's website, an Internet search uncovered the factoid that in the 1950s in the forcibly segregated town of Sheridan, Arkansas, a schoolhouse was buried rather than be used to educate black children within the city limits—a historical footnote that radically informs the reading of Smith's videos and their use of all-black casts. But this illuminating detail was an accidental discovery. Clearly, whatever viewers come to glean from Smith's project is left entirely (and intentionally) up to them.

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