



BIG PICTURE

Cable car by Suzanne Moxhay.

Suzanne Moxhay produces unsettling photographic work that occupies a middle ground between the staged picture, the tableau vivant, the dream-like unreality of a film still and the hyper-reality of reportage. This tension between a highly controlled artistic process, and an end result that leaves the viewer with a narrative urge to understand and interpret the image they are confronted with, is a trait shared with much contemporary art photography. From the mock realism of British photographer Hannah Starkey to the highly elaborate filmic work of American Gregory Crewdson, a manipulated 'reality' plays with the audience's expectations. Moxhay's work is often rooted in an imaginative, dream landscape where civilisation is at once present but simultaneously absent from the work. They call to mind the visionary writing of J.G. Ballard or genre films, like the western or horror movie, parallel worlds with their own rules and conventions. These constructed landscapes seem to exist outside of a specific history, yet offer ambivalent and very knowing versions of the apocalyptic. In a sense they have a link to a Ballardian sense of science fiction: a fantastic story that speaks in the present tense to make the most of its closeness to the folk tale and parable, providing a bridge between the private psyche and the public world.

Moxhay has made work by building miniature 'flats', similar to early film sets, which are then incorporated as layers through various processes of digital manipulation. The resulting photos blend illusory and real space, leaving the viewer uncertain about scale or depth, which she says "appear to hover between the miniature and the epic". By using archaic source material from her vast archive of images collected from travel brochures and adverts, as well as the National Geographic Magazine and photographic journals, the work has a familiar yet destabilising relationship to the present. Often from the 1950s to 1970s, their obsolete colour palette adds artificiality, while the quality of the printing, without contemporary sharpness, gives a sense of temporal distance. Moxhay started out on her art career as a painter at Chelsea School of Art, and her current work developed whilst at the Royal Academy Schools and in residency at the Florence Trust, retains a strong painterly quality.

Perhaps inevitable for someone whose work is so filmic, the artist has started experimenting with moving images. However, even here the movement has a strange recurring dream-like quality. Aeroplanes swarm across the desert sky; more biblical plague of locusts than precision military strike. An endless tracking shot through a totally fictitious forest feels like a queasily foreboding sleepwalk to nowhere.

The work exists in a world of its own though the links to current conflicts and apocalyptic visions of the future are not hard to find. What gives the work real power is its ability to sidestep reductive readings and persist in the memory: These are less about real spaces; much more about the psychological landscapes we all inhabit.

Paul Bayley is Director of the Florence Trust.

Suzanne Moxhay (b. 1976, Essex) lives and works in London. After completing a BA (Hons) in Painting at Chelsea College of Art she went on to The Royal Academy Schools where she graduated with a Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Art in 2007. She was selected for a residency at the Florence Trust Studios, London where she developed her series of photographic works *Borderlands* from which *Cablecar* is taken.

Moxhay has exhibited widely, both nationally and internationally since 2002 and her work is held in many significant public and private collections including the University of the Arts Collection, The Cooper Union New York, the FSC and the Lodeveans Collection. Recent exhibitions include 'GSK Contemporary: Earth Art of a Changing World' at the Royal Academy of Arts, and 'The Wild as Will and Mediation', Wiebke Morgan, London. Her animation work has been shown on BBC public screens across the UK. She is currently a Print Fellow at the Royal Academy Schools.

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Suzanne Moxhay, *Cablecar* (from *Borderlands* series), archival digital print, 105x97cm, 2008.