

Time Out

New York

February 17—23, 2011

Cauleen Smith, “Remote Viewing”



The Kitchen, through Mar 5
(see Chelsea)

In her New York solo debut, West Coast artist, filmmaker and screenwriter Cauleen Smith explores contemporary relationships to land and landscape. Five recent videos—two projected onto large screens and three shown on small wall-mounted monitors—confront viewers with an array of fragmented narratives that blur the lines between fiction and documentary, earth art and garden design. All the works run simultaneously, but while *The Grid*, *The Vanishing* and the show’s title work have an identifiable beginning, middle and end, *Glossolalia 3.0* and *7.0* can be dipped into at any point without loss. The works’ soundtracks overlap, but each is sufficiently subtle that the composite effect feels quite natural, even rather lovely.

Remote Viewing is the only video in which anything spectacular occurs: A woman and boy look on as an excavator digs a trench, and then, in a moment that recalls the falling-facade



scene in Buster Keaton’s *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (itself reenacted by British artist Steve McQueen in his video *Deadpan*), pushes a small building into it so that it disappears completely from sight. *The Grid* is a more typically subdued affair—two men are shown constructing, then removing, a grid of fluorescent tape from a sun-drenched field—but is shot and edited in similarly elegant style. The artist’s aesthetic in these works is luxuriantly cinematographic, whereas previously it seemed closer to surveillance or home-movie footage. Making poetic use of ambiguity and distortion, Smith isolates moments of exchange between people and their environments, hinting at a range of attitudes and outcomes.

—Michael Wilson