

# Art Review:

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*Tim Hyde*

BY JOHN WEICH

It is perhaps unwise to celebrate too quickly a recent Columbia University MFA grad whose first exhibition is two months down the road (December, at Chelsea's Max Protech). On the other hand, it is hard to pass up an opportunity to talk about an artist without having to pay lip service to his past or his personality, neither of which are overly familiar to me. All I have to go by is a small body of inky utopian/dystopian landscapes: a Nevada Wal-Mart disrupting complete darkness on a New City periphery; the angry eruption of leaves intruding on the luminescence of a suburban parking lot; a large, whitewashed satellite dish rising above a patch of overexposed flora; a light-drenched facility at the foot of a barely-visible desert ridge.

Artificial lighting is Tim Hyde's thing – not just as a technique, but also as a protagonist. Lightposts return time and again in his photographs, so much so that even when not actually photographed, their presence is felt: they are lingering just beyond the frame, battling the encroaching darkness outside empty Wal-Marts, underneath silent urban overpasses, inside lifeless factory warehouses and at the abandoned entrance of a nondescript high school. All this manmade lighting injects a bit of humanity into these landscapes, creating environments that are satisfyingly counter-intuitive to their created intent.

That's one way to read them; the other, simpler, conclusion is that Tim Hyde is on a mission to beautify our blight, to seek out our urban eyesores and give them a faith of their own.



It's only when you tumble upon *Untitled 'New York City'* (2004) that you realise Hyde might not so much be avoiding people as he is scouting out their most popular stages so as to be able to photograph them, eventually, at their most unsuspecting, untainted by the social pretension of opening hours. This work offers up all of Hyde's structural fetish and moody, war-like lighting, but adds to the fray a single, vaguely outlined individual in an upper-floor window. It is neither surprising nor ironic that this image, the only one featuring a human being, is in fact the loneliest of the set.

*John Weich is Editor in Chief of ArtReview*

Picture credit:  
Tim Hyde, *Nature Scene*, 2002, C-print, 80 x 103 cm.  
Courtesy Max Protetch Gallery, New York