

Tim Hyde
MAX PROTETCH

Tim Hyde uses video to examine architecture—a relationship between media that brings to mind Dan Graham's ongoing investigation of public and private space, as well as Doug Aitken's *Sleepwalkers*, 2007. But Hyde is less interested in contrasting the time-based quality of one with the space-based element of the other than in using these complementary practices to examine the psychological result of inhabiting a body inside a built space.

These concerns are most profoundly explored in *The Keeper*, 2006, in which the camera focuses on an elderly woman's back. Hyde set out to film the repeating concrete arches in a former KGB building (now a fast-food restaurant) in Ukraine but found an unexpected collaborator in a woman who felt compelled, for unknown reasons, to block his camera with her body. So, we end up focusing not on the architecture but on the weave of the woman's sweater, the strands of white hair escaping her prodigious bun, and her brief suspicious glances at the camera. It is a reversal of a Warhol screen test—inadvertent, inverted, obstructing rather than revealing—but every bit as compelling a psychological slice. It's impossible to know the motivation for the woman's vigilance; she might just as well be objecting to the invasion of privacy in a public space as thwarting the artist in a curious conflation of former-secret-police tactics, a kind of throwback paranoia—it is tempting to imagine—leaching from the building's very walls.

Suspicion and anxiety are also the prevailing moods of *Invisible City*, 2005, a five-minute six-second video that Hyde shot on his first night in Belarus. The mood is partly due to familiar B-movie techniques—the quick, paranoid pan across the frame, the looming close-up of a dark tunnel—but there is a feeling of strangeness and newness that transcends cinematic cliché. The surfaces featured are those of mute, ugly concrete buildings, illuminated by the insect-filled halos of harsh streetlights. A group of men rounds a corner into darkness; their laughter lingers after they disappear. Dogs trot across a courtyard. A young woman crouches, smoking a cigarette, flirtatiously repeating what seems to be a question in Russian, but whether she's flirting or apprehensive is hard to tell. The work is imbued with the conditions of its filming; its mood is curious and wary and feels very much like a first encounter.

The filming conditions are also the subject of *Video panorama of New York City in March 2006 during which the camera failed to distinguish the city from a snowstorm* (2006–2007), in which we watch the action of the title across seven small screens showing the storm as recorded by a single camera that Hyde moved through a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree sweep over a period of seven hours. Like a nineteenth-century panorama, the work is invested in dissolving a perceptual boundary between viewer and object, as well as in dissolving a psychological boundary between viewer and medium. As the camera's autofocus struggles to separate the metropolis from its natural environment, in shifts that are sometimes minuscule, sometimes nauseatingly drastic and abrupt, we identify with it, struggling as well, relieved occasionally by bursts of clarity: a crenellated bit of roof, a bird careening across the frame. This view is sublime in Burke's sense, diminished a bit by the small scale of the work but nevertheless palpable, reminding us that some events do not, in spite of all our advanced technology, give themselves up to our manipulation. We are still, it turns out, defenseless against the terror they inspire.

—Emily Hall



Tim Hyde, *The Keeper*, 2006, still from a color video, 6 minutes.

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