

TIF SIGFRIDS

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Tonite!

SPANGANGA GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO, USA

Driving through rural Suffolk County, Jo Addison noticed a series of hand-drawn signs advertising a school disco. Scrawled on the last one was the word 'tonite', written with such anticipatory verve that it threatened to exceed the boundaries of its scrap-wood support. To make it fit, its author had shrunk its second syllable so that the phrase read, awkwardly, 'TONite' and wedged an exclamation mark on the edge of the placard. Inspired, Addison later remade the last sign as her own (Tonite!, 2001).

Curated by Kate Fowle and Renaud Proch, 'Tonite!' takes a uniquely skewed view of the transcendent present-ness implied by its title. The works included in the show focus instead on anticipation, on the endless, jittery evening before the wild night. Each work seems to teeter, purposefully, on the verge of fulfilment or disaster, without ever resolving into a fully-fledged event - Joe Sola's wispy, abstract drawings of explosions from Hollywood blockbusters (Cinema Explosions, 2002) notwithstanding. The resultant atmosphere is one of stoned distraction: nervous, fascinated, paranoid, logophilic, slightly discombobulated and characterized by quirky, associative humour.

Scott Hewicker's paintings, for instance, use the techniques of late Modernist abstraction to depict out-of-kilter landscapes that reconcile Colour Field painting with its estranged cousin Psychedelia. Endless Summer (2003) uses a gorgeously layered oil-stain technique to render a trippy tropical island, remaking Abstract Expressionist presentness into dreamy, timeless fantasy. This is a trip about to go awry, though; bizarre shrouded figures with glowing eyes lurk in the shimmering water around this paradise, transforming the painting's rhetoric of lysergic fulfilment into spiralling stoner dread. Indeed, Hewicker's Agent World (Never Learn Not to Love) (2003) is more apocalyptically dreadful, showing cartoony Mission School motifs imploding into a gobby, planetary black morass in the centre of the canvas.

Armageddon similarly dominates Joe Sola's works in the exhibition, but in a filmic version. His Cinema Explosions renders the climactic explosions of films such as Jaws (1975) and Men in Black (1997) in deflating watercolour wash, undermining the intensity of the Hollywood special effects by rendering them in an effervescent hobby medium. His explosions are decorative and slight rather than spectacular; it is the strained machismo of Hollywood spectacle that is exploded here, rather than an alien spaceship or murderous shark. Similarly, his video gogogo (2001) edits together a series of Hollywood stars shouting 'go!' to fleeing crowds of extras; without the pay-off explosion their hapless efforts to pump up the suspense appear more explicitly hilarious - and histrionically overacted - than in their cinematic context.