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## ART PREVIEW ARCHIVES

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### Public Images

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As a child of a musician I learned early that what is important is not only the notes you play, but the space between. Though the audience listens for the notes, it's the silences that they *feel*.

Three exhibitions at Carnegie Mellon's Regina Gouger Miller Gallery -- David Robbins' "Ice Cream Social," Michal Rovner's body of recent work, and the New Museum's "Point of View: Anthology of the Moving Image" -- utilize film and digital imagery to investigate those spaces.

In different ways, each show blends staged and actual scenarios -- blurring reality and fantasy somewhat like "reality" television -- to represent and question social realities. The cutting and splicing of images (and ideas) to represent often-overlooked complexities rather than simply reporting the Obvious (think news coverage of War in Iraq) raises questions about the framing of what's real in contemporary society.

Conceptual artist Robbins' clever "The Ice Cream Social" was one of 4,000 film shorts selected by Sundance Channel TV LAB competition. Using a classic variety-show format, the film features an unimaginably happy group of young people with just the right mix of cultural diversity typical of the 1990s, dancing and talking with each other in the type of distracting cocktail-party chatter that mimics conversation.

Supplemented by an on-screen band -- singing there's "always room for one more in the mainstream" -- and a "stand-up poet" who recites a humorous poem (something about lost puppies), "Ice Cream Social" parodies utopian ideology for mainstream consumption.

Though the nearly empty gallery feels far from social -- no gathering of people or confectionary treats -- the film's lively music conjures memories of first crushes and grade-school dance parties; innocence (when I believed in happy endings); and, naturally, the sweetness of good old-fashioned ice cream (before non-fat, unsweetened and carb-free).

Michal Rovner offers a less viscerally stimulating but still interesting investigation. Though the exhibition fails to tell us, Rovner creates her images from actual scenarios she records with a photographic and video camera; she alters the source material to reflect everyday, often unobserved complexities. "Culture Plate" is a series of projected digital videos presenting human beings as microscopic organisms, connected in a chain and simultaneously in motion, with those at the end of the chain running even faster to keep up.

Together, the three "plates" illustrate varying levels of determination and organization, with one of the three showing a disconcerting image of

scattered/scrambling movements, seemingly without thought or emotion -- a quintessential commentary on contemporary life.

"Point of View: Anthology of the Moving Image" features new works by 11 leading artists ranging widely in age and cultural perspectives.

Among the highlights is South African artist William Kentridge's inspirational "Automatic Writing." In 2 minutes and 38 seconds, Kentridge's animated black-and-white drawings brilliantly illustrate the process of artistic expression -- getting ideas from within to paper, from concept to reality. Using surrealist techniques, with a beautiful musical score, he reveals that ideas have many "chains of associations."

British filmmaker Isaac Julien's "Encore" amazingly captures the complexity of the African Diaspora. Julien produces a color-saturated work with a rich musical score, enhanced by the voice and poetry of Derek Walcott. More poetic than didactic, the film opens with a panoramic view of the Atlantic Ocean before moving to a lush tropical Caribbean plantation and contemporary, urban London. Julien's use of narrative and visual beauty conjures ideas of diaspora: origin, movement, adaptation and transformation.

The Anthology -- also including prominent artists such as Joan Jonas, Paul McCarthy and Pierre Huyghe -- features 11 DVDs, each including brief interviews, biographies and images. The gallery is rotating the film clips, showing three per day. Visitors can also request a specific DVD.

**Exhibitions continue 11:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesdays through Sundays through March 13. Regina Gouger Miller Gallery, CMU campus, Oakland. Free. 412-268-3618.**



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