
WOJCIECH OLEJNIK is a Canadian artist and writer, currently based in Malmö Sweden. Since 2007 he has exhibited internationally, often in collaboration with Sarah Jane Gorlitz. His texts have accompanied recent exhibitions by Munan Øvrelid, Micheal Murphey and Anders Oinonen. Olejnik received a writing fellowship from New Research in Abstraction (2007-2008) and his art criticism has been published in *Frieze Magazine Blog*, *C Magazine* and *Canadian Art*.

LAUREN HALL received her BA in Fine Arts from the University of Waterloo in 2006. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally with recent exhibitions at Modern Fuel, Kingston; Peak Gallery, Toronto; Cambridge Galleries, Cambridge, and Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin. She is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including an emerging artist grant from Ontario Arts Council. Hall was recently awarded a fellowship to attend the Vermont Studio Center and is a former artist in residence at Ox-Bow School of the Arts. Reviews of her work have appeared in *Canadian Art Online*, *The Toronto Star*, *C Magazine*, and *The Globe and Mail*.

SAIL FAST CLOUD-
SHADOWS AND SUNBEAMS

BY WOJCIECH OLEJNIK

█ The author Graham Greene describes his experience of traveling as: «a number of photographs taken with an old vest 116 pocket Kodak, and memories, memories chiefly of rats, of frustration, and of deeper boredom on the long forest trek than I had ever experienced before.»¹ As traveling and tourism became more intertwined in the last century, the unpleasanties accompanying the experience of a journey have been gradually substituted for comfort, lavishness, swimming pools, cruise ships and Piña Coladas. Yet a fundamental sense of boredom remains, an emptiness that can be filled with any number of activities and experiences, perhaps just masking this boredom or perhaps not.

In the exhibition *Sail Fast Cloud-Shadows and Sunbeams*, Lauren Hall considers the industry of tourism and the experiences of the tourist as the foundational basis for her work. Using synthetically made materials, she creates sculptural installations portraying a variety of typical postcard sights, such as glaciers, sunsets and other naturally occurring phenomena. In the series *A Sea of Lustre on the Horizon's Verge* (2011) for example, she fills corrugated transparent polycarbonate moulds (ordinarily used for roofing) with coloured sand, depicting reflections of a beaming sunset over a beach. This rigid, plastic encasement, like the package of an electronic device, is efficient and cost-effective, it is egg carton safe, for damage-free shipment. Other materials, which are usually associated with shipping, such as cling wrap from pallets, or pieces of polystyrene foam also appear in her scenic installations. The tourist is often treated like a piece of merchandise: pampered, catered to, shipped from place to place. Tourism is based on the «package deal,» on fixing the price, fixing the vacationer's schedule. In most extreme cases, this industry attempts to program the vacationer's very experience, reducing it to a moldable, fashionable

substance. This substance is measurable, marketable, sellable and resellable, it is constantly adjusted and fine-tuned.

In front of the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas, a replica of a volcano erupts sporadically, accompanied by a soundtrack of a real eruption, with corresponding light, fire and volcanic gases. Fittingly, the foul smelling methanethiol gas, has been substituted for the aroma of a Piña Colada. This particular smell is a quintessential holiday flavour and in *Mirage Bay, (Pina Colada)* (2011) it is brought right into the vacationer's quarters, into their most private space. This piece, composed of numerous blue translucent specialty soaps, shaped like glaciers and smelling of Piña Colada, shows Hall's interest in not simply forming a critique of the tourist industry, but in utilizing and harnessing its methodology. This work has a lightness about it, a sense of humour and irony, like a cleverly designed set for a high school play. Yet it also shows a sincerity and profound interest in tourism, in the exploration of its inner workings, as is evident in the studied handling of the imagery and in her research excursions to popular vacation destinations, in search of the tourist experience.

But often, what the visitor experiences hardly matters, for leisure activity is generally blanketed with a quality of boredom. The vacationer's interaction with the surrounding environment is usually mediated through the tour guide or a car window, preventing an intimate relationship with the surroundings—one sees the scenery as if watching television, from the comfort of one's living room sofa. In the series *A Sea of Lustre on the Horizon's Verge* (2011) each individual panel takes the form of an airplane window, itself a small opening through which one can view a limited amount of information. Behind the window the features of the outside blur into a repetition of shapes, into repeating mountain peaks and (in this case) sunsets. As objects pass by they abstract

into geometric forms, individual features simplify to a general overview, becoming barely distinguishable, seemingly the same.

When caught up in a daily routine, every activity, every moment can feel the same, and what can be more predictable than watching a sunset? As the closure of the day approaches, the tourist stands at the shore, waits in idle time for a drawn-out spectacle, watching time go by, like beads of sand falling in an hourglass. *Clouds Edged with Intolerable Radiance* (2011) is created by pouring coloured sand into polycarbonate moulds, shaped into peaks. Lined with bands of gold aluminum, they glisten like snowy tips of glaciers in the sun. This triangular form is reminiscent of the shape of the lower half of an hourglass when it is completely filled with sand - its other half empty and invisible, as if there was no more sand to drip in, as if there was no more time to pass. In this still moment, the coloured sand presents a false reflection of a sunset, a sight normally only visible on sand saturated with water. But here the sand particles are dry, packed down, no longer shifting, but fixed like earth's strata, as if through some overexposure or radiation they have faded, imprinted accidentally into a photographic image. Composed of millions of sand pixels, this image is exposed and readable like an ant farm behind glass. The tourist's experience is marked by such accessibility, with every blink of the eye the tourist takes a snapshot, documenting, preserving, making theirs. The snapshot is the documentation of travel, millions of these recorded sunsets sit in drawers, photo albums, in slide carousels, on computer hard drives. Like beads of sand, they are almost identical yet unique, recycling the same imagery, the same experiences, but each time a little differently.

Hall's body of work is also a series of smooth transitions from one piece to the next, as she recycles materials, imagery, colours, certain geometrical shapes. The blue polystyrene foam mountain peak in one

work reappears as a coloured blue sand peak in the next. The goal of her methodology is to explore different possibilities, to isolate and bring attention to a broad and general, yet singular, easily digestible vision. Such explorations open up their own worlds, half real, half synthetic, half imagined, worlds like those experiences of the tourist, which are not completely your own and not completely fabricated for you, full of contradictions and bizarre desires, from barely distinguishable perspectives, each programmed just a little differently.

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