Behind the High Grass

Soft Turns is the creative partnership of Sarah Jane Gorlitz and Wojciech Olejnik. After finding a post-war travel book by Czech travellers and filmmakers Jaroslav Hanzelka and Miroslav Zikmund at a Berlin flea market, they were inspired to use the contents of the book as a means to explore the social, historical and political upheavals of the period. Little known outside of the Czech Republic, the book itself, with its missing pages and evocative sepia images was a cypher: an inventory of readymade images and ideas that the artists could appropriate for their collaborative production of stop-motion animation.

Stop-motion animation is Soft Turns’ principal medium, and a laborious, time-consuming process. Animation is essentially an assembly of static images edited together sequentially to create perceptual continuity. Traditional film runs at a speed of 24 frames-per-second (fps). To achieve various degrees of motion, the artists alter the shutter speed, shooting their videos at 24fps, 12fps or as little as 6fps. While digital technology makes this form of animation less cumbersome, its unique limitations are central to their practice.

The parallels between the travels and research of Hanzelka and Zikmund and those of Gorlitz and Olejnik are intentional. The artists follow in their predecessors’ footsteps, at least on a conceptual level. They freely reference the book’s contents, their work is a playful inquiry into the breaks between film frames. Spaces in between that are at once absence and possibility. They shot in Bergen, Norway. Hanzelka and Zikmund represent kindred spirits, modern explorers that the artists channel through their own practice.

The use of stop motion is fitting for a project predicated on a book that has never been to Africa or South America, they have travelled extensively throughout Europe. They did not have access to a vintage Tatra 87, so they constructed a scale model of the dashboard to use as a cinematic prop for their video P-19720, which makes this form of animation less cumbersome, its unique limitations are central to their practice.

Soft Turns are currently based in Toronto. www.softturns.com

List of Works

behind the high grass, 2011, stop-motion animation, 3:42 loop

behind the high grass, 2012, sculptural installation, various materials, dimensions variable

SEASON FOUR
His recent works make use of existing artifacts as readymade surfaces for markmaking. CENSURE SERIES: Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue, 2012. Line marker on canvas, 208 cm diameter. FOLK SERIES: Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue, 2012. Line marker on canvas, 76 cm diameter. MAP (All Roads Lead to Rome), 2010. Line marker and acrylic paint on canvas, 120 cm x 175 cm. From the Files of the Board of Wayne County Road Commissioners, Detroit, Michigan. Documented and printed by Wells. List of Works Wells has exhibited in recent solo exhibitions at the following venues: CENSURE SERIES: Mapology, 2012. Line marker on canvas, 208 cm diameter. FOLK SERIES: Streets of Laredo, 2012. Line marker on canvas, 208 cm diameter.