

Xcp: Streetnotes: Winter 2004

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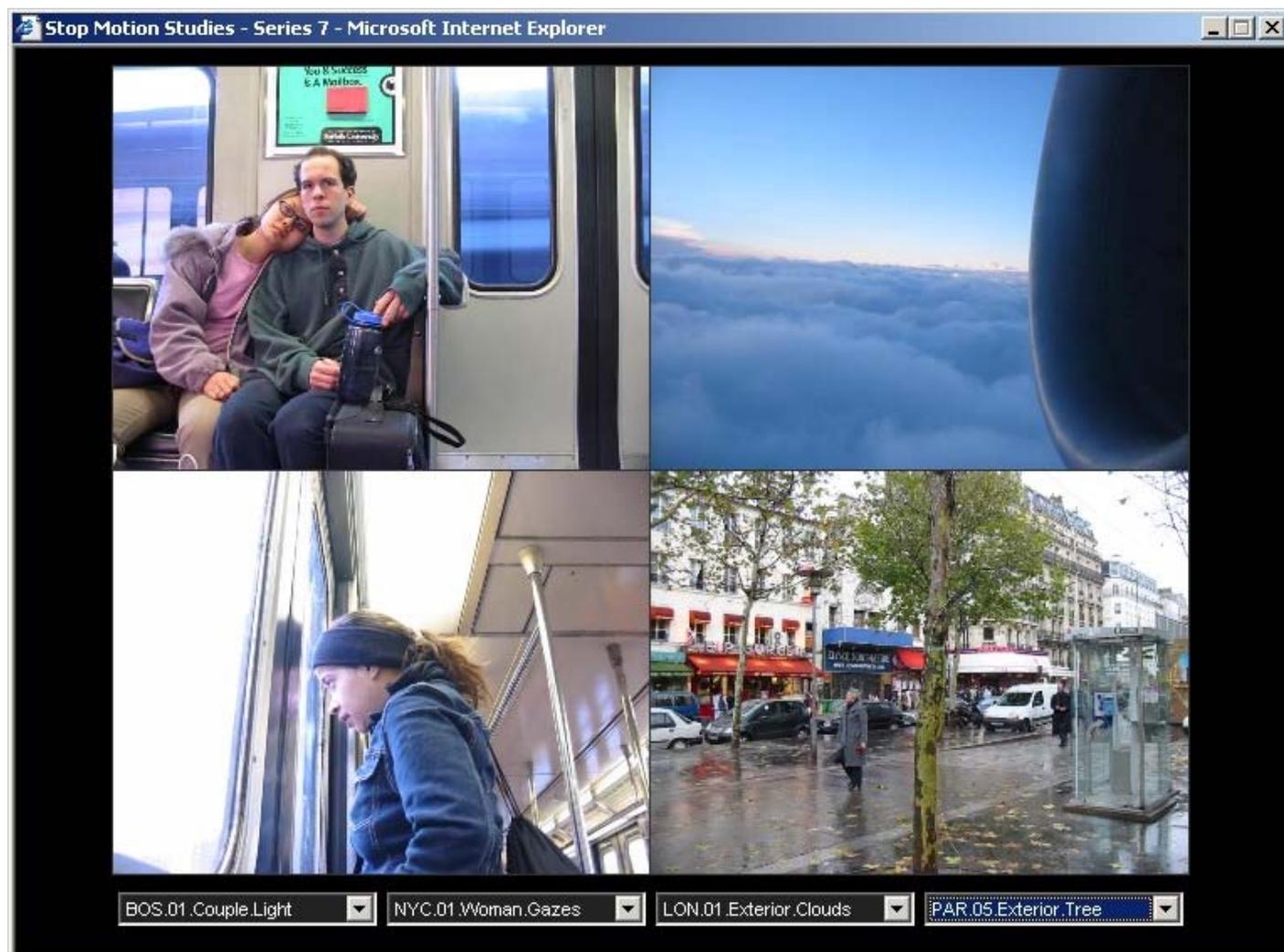
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Derek Fenner & Ryan Gallagher

a E-renga essay on

David Crawford's "Stop Motion Studies"

[use Netscape 7 to Explore David Crawford's SMS]



A Still from David Crawford's Stop Motion Studies. Courtesy of the artist.

Re: E-Renga Essay on David Crawford's "Stop Motion Studies"

(SMS)

First, we'd like to state that we like David Crawford's work a lot. But what we are more concerned with is trying to understand why the SMS work. Why are these studies so interesting and what makes the SMS worth writing about? We decided to write an electronic renga of sorts, loosely following the form, challenging ourselves to utilize email for the creation of this essay. It seemed appropriate. In any case, the critical prose of each section is flanked with reactions and links to individual pieces from each SMS listed in bold. Use the links as a guide through Crawford's work if you want. But we insist on your freedom.

[\[http://stopmotionstudies.net/\]](http://stopmotionstudies.net/)

[use Netscape 7 or Mozilla to Explore David Crawford's SMS]

"We live in a culture mesmerized by its own power and traumatized by its vulnerability. There are no easy solutions, but we believe that art, with its extraordinary poignancy and strength, retains a unique capacity to reflect, expose, and respond to the tensions of our times and to provide the means to better understand where and who we are."

--Gary Garrels

-----Original Message-----

From: Ryan Gallagher [ryangallagher@earthlink.net]

Sent: Friday, January 02, 2004 2:41 PM

To: Derek Fenner [theattacheddocument@earthlink.net]

Subject: Re: David Crawford's "Stop Motion Studies"

"Matisse said that he didn't paint things, but the differences between things. The stills in the SMS project are unimportant—it's the differences between them which matter."

**David Crawford from an interview
with Helen Thorington**

At first glance, I'm intrigued with the lack of regularity in the rhythm of the frames, or it's my lack of familiarity with the pattern. Obviously what makes this unique, and this seems to be an unmistakable outcome of utilizing the web as a gallery, is being able to apply some computer generated techniques that seem almost impossible in either the single frame shot or the continuous video. Think of all the ways that photography challenged painting and revitalized it. How did motion pictures challenge photography and how did painting on film challenge moviemaking? How will the addition of digitally created rhythms challenge other art forms? Whereas Stan Brakhage seemed to try to create something similar with a handheld motion picture camera, letting in all the bumps and jerks of time and oblong zooms seen through the eyes of the filmmaker, Crawford seems to use the disjunctive motion more as an expression of the character(s)' universe; how they witness and experience their time on the subway. There is this sense of rhythm from the disjunctions because there are just a few frames to efficiently cycle through.

SMS #4 --- Boston, USA on Solstice Eve and the Solstice of 2002.

#1. "You and Success / Is a Mailbox". A found poem from a Suffolk University poster, absurdist life advice. Lonely but in love, unaware of how the whole universe flashes in front of them.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms4/01.html>]

[use Netscape 7 to Explore David Crawford's SMS]

#4. Two frantic coffee drinkers. Window upper left, a nice nature shot, ominous sky, and trees all shadow.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms4/04.html>]

#14. Quick. Pick which character you identify with the most. What is your source of connection with the character? If the question is too limited for the viewer, then the viewer lacks adequate imagination. (This is an important concept in Crawford's medium. Participation is necessary.)

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms4/14.html>]

-----Original Message-----

From: Derek Fenner [theattacheddocument@earthlink.net]

Sent: Sunday, January 04, 2004 11:08 PM

To: Ryan Gallagher [ryangallagher@earthlink.net]

Subject: Re: David Crawford's "Stop Motion Studies"

#14. An orange pulsing jacket. She is only a few steps removed from you.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms4/14.html>]

#3. I am consumed by the hymn of my cell-phone hum, how it keeps me from talking to you. A dark cloudy sky, but moving, I don't feel part of it.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms4/03.html>]

SMS #6 ---New York City, USA on January 4, 2003.

#8. Some sylvania, two crows tiled blue square, the only thing moving is your paper, how your coat matches the station supports.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms6/08.html>]

"The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true."

Ecclesiastes

Like in Plato's Sophist, David Crawford's SMS are a mapless world, in which there is no way to measure the difference between the object and its simulacrum. And thus "What side of the mirror is one on?" Little touches of solitude. Interaction within a much larger world of images. There is no longer photography. Is this an actual mirror, or are you sitting opposite of them? Crawford, the photographer, does not exist here. You are the observer and sometimes you're observed. His images are closer to a painting of light. Once they (or you) sense the lens, this image of flux acts as if you were looking at yourself in a mirror on a subway, or watching someone (as we human's usually do on a subway) as a reflection, bumping along public transportation. This is Roland

Barthes Primitive Theatre^{3/4}a figuration of movement while waiting to get somewhere. And by utilizing the Internet, there is a portal between the past and the present, one which could never be achieved on a piece of paper or as film. How should the viewer participate then? --- Only look at the people that interest you, like on a train, like in real life.

#8. X marks the spot where your heart is in a raincoat. Have you any idea that you are being watched? Ground Zero.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms6/08.html>]

#2. Whether or not you have your day job or your dream job, get some rest man, you look beat.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms6/02.html>]

#19. Stripes on shirt move with window, tenements over bald guy, waiting on that call, reading "Have you been tested for HIV? Has your partner?"

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms6/19.html>]

-----Original Message-----

From: Ryan Gallagher [ryangallagher@earthlink.net]

Sent: Tuesday, January 06, 2004 8:36 PM

To: Derek Fenner [theattacheddocument@earthlink.net]

Subject: Re: David Crawford's "Stop Motion Studies"

19. The type of guy you wish you hadn't sat next to at a bar. Tenement topslant light-bleached sky. Michel Foucault as a Yankees fan.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms6/19.html>]

SMS # 3 --- Paris, France on the 8th of November, 2002 through the 11th of November, 2002.

#3. Tiresius! Tiresius! The sharp-faced German you're with looks so lonely. Can you see the shadow of a llama walk by?

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms3/03.html>]

9. Arts et Métiers. The Sistine Subway Renaissance Ceiling Curve. The colors of patriotism can be impressive, but what if the images in a Dali could move? What if Gala held a day job? Salvador! Salvador! Stop staring. [<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms3/09.html>]

"For Heidegger, it was through an increasing obsession with techné as the only way to arrive at an understanding of objects, that the West lost touch with Being. Let's turn the question around and ask which techniques and practices constitute the Western concept of the subject, giving its characteristic split of truth and error, freedom and constraint. I think that it is here that we will find the real possibility of constructing a history of what we have done and, at the same time, a diagnosis of what we are."

--Michel Foucault *The Politics of Truth*

At this point in the correspondence, I'm wondering if this essay, like David Crawford's work, is far less interesting if it is experienced in any other way than on a computer screen? Can the Internet, "a mapless

world", actually be the preferred medium? Can writing or music or sculpture ever achieve this? David Crawford's work leaves me with more questions than anything else. I am really fascinated by that. There are things that I assume about the individual worlds that he creates, but I am left with so many questions. The most interesting of which is (and please don't take this the wrong way), will I find myself? I mean this. The first series I insisted on seeing was the Boston Series (SMS#4) because that is where I live. It is familiar. After double clicking a few different icons, I began to wonder if I actually would see myself. Is it unrealistic at all to imagine that I've been photographed on the Green Line without my realizing it? How many times a day am I photographed with or without my knowledge? (This may actually be a better question). But back to my original question. Answer: His images are far less interesting if they are not experienced on a computer screen. This is in no way a criticism though. His photographs as single frames are excellent. But the disjunctive movement, as well as the interactive mapless universe that Crawford has created, make for an overwhelmingly personal experience of a usually public space.

9. Reach out and touch God. Reach out and touch space.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms3/09.html>]

13. The push button accordion has a 200 year history. Par le vous Polka? Push down on Top Hat Man's head like a mechanical pencil and his eyes pop out.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/studios/crawford/sms3/13.html>]

SMS # 10 --- Tokyo, Japan on the afternoon of October 28, 2003. Funded by the "LEF Foundation."

4. Note the obvious phallic imagery of the umbrella in what seems to me to be the proof for the universality of the Catholic School Girl Fantasy.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/Works/sms/sms10/04.html>]

-----Original Message-----

From: Derek Fenner [theattacheddocument@earthlink.net]

Sent: Saturday, January 09, 2004 6:36 AM

To: Ryan Gallagher [ryangallagher@earthlink.net]

Subject: Re: David Crawford's "Stop Motion Studies"

#4. Reach out and touch...God she's gorgeous.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/Works/sms/sms10/04.html>]

#1. On a subway in Tokyo, rather than here on my couch, it's much easier to be close to someone, close enough to smell a graphic novel, hear the pages flip, backwards while moving forward.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/Works/sms/sms10/01.html>]

#12. My mind's already out of here. Won't you come along?

[<http://www.turbulence.org/Works/sms/sms10/12.html>]

"The truth is somewhere between the documentary and the fictional, and that is what I try to show. What is real one moment has become imaginary the next. You believe what you see now, and the next second you don't anymore."

--Robert Frank

When has the subway ever been so intimate? There you are, in front of your computer, looking for yourself, wondering if the world in SMS exists. The photograph creates a record of what has happened, whereas Crawford's work shows you what is happening. The place in which one views art is more important than one may think. Can we not have a more intimate connection with the work if we are alone with it (like a book) rather than in a gallery or museum. And what if we are in our office, or family room, or even our very own bedroom. Does this change the connection to the work? In SMS, our voyeuristic pleasures are pronounced. We can stare infinitely. What happens when we take the work further into the world, away from a live on-line connection? Well, I did just this. I had David Crawford send me a CD-ROM with some of the SMS for off-line viewing. I took it to work with me, where I teach art in a juvenile prison. I took it into the city of Boston. I looked at the work in my car, in the woods, and finally on the Red Line in Boston, running from Alewife to Mattapan, where Crawford most certainly must have stood at some point in his art-making, which really extends from Marcel Duchamp's idea of choosing art ("Choice is the main thing, even in normal painting." Duchamp). Crawford, like Duchamp, gets us to look at a subject one would look at while turning one's head—seen out of the corner of an eye. This is readymade art he captures ³/₄ living, breathing, blinking, staring readymade art. The idea of fabrication begins to collapse as Crawford's role is to fall all over the subject, bumping into them on his crowded subway rides where a subject of choice chooses him in a metastable slip of the eye. He makes art without considering art. And while viewing his art, you are there in the picture standing next to him, sharing a moment, but discern yourself, your point of view, save enough energy and concentration to reverse the subject's gaze back to you. What I realized after taking SMS out in the world is that even without a live connection to the Internet, the work still moves me. It's in an international language, easily translated by most viewers. But I guess when it comes down to it, the best place to view Crawford's work is on the subway itself. On the subway, a moving waiting room, I sensed that I became so much more interesting to look at, staring at that lidded-eyed angel nodding to the future on my computer (SMS 10³/₄#12) --- looking at art made on a subway, on the train itself. The mirror has again reversed, which side was I on?

#12. I believe in myself. I believe in you. I believe I need whatever is in that can. I love how you love me.

[<http://www.turbulence.org/Works/sms/sms10/12.html>]

SMS # 7

"In this remix for the Whitney's Artport, I've taken previous material and added a meta-structure which allows users to apply database logic as a creative filter. The project's original sequential construct remains intact, but is now nested within a categorical hierarchy. The interface also supports a spatial montage in which sequences from four cities appear simultaneously. Users are invited to reconstruct mini-narratives based upon the paths they take through the data. Thanks to Beverly Hynes-Grace, Mats Nordahl and Christiane Paul."

David Crawford 03.01.03

We invite you to link to SMS 7 here and mix your own universe.

[http://artport.whitney.org/gatepages/artists/crawford/index_01.html]

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