

Jenny Lu review
PARAPRAXIS
2005

By Duncan Mountford

Driving down city streets late at night is hypnotic. The sodium glare of the light is that of the dream, endless reflections from glass and polished metal, the repetition of light passing at regular intervals. There is the sense of alienation, of being somewhere that is anywhere and nowhere, cocooned in the metal cage, seeing the city through the screen that serves to distance what is viewed. City signs are specific only in occasional parts of the language – multi-national semiotics is global.

The latest video by Jenny Lu encapsulates the dream moment of city driving. The filmic references of the road are well known – the road that leads to the bright new tomorrow, the brighter future, or to escape, to oblivion. At the end of the long straight drive is something, even if all we anticipate is some sort of vague disaster. Or such is the desire. But this city never ends, this drive never ceases, the rhythm of the passing lights remains constant, there is no dawn, just the same passage.

Each of the works in *Parapraxis* is linked by this repetition, by the wait for the moment when the ceaseless action will reach a conclusion. We make a narrative, a before and after. But maybe in these videos no 'after', for each actor seems stuck at this point, there will be no going forward from this psychological dead end.

The triptych of monitors showing three women caught in a cycle of repeated actions has an unsettling resonance, an altarpiece of psychosis. Individually each image is disturbing – a woman bangs on a window, shouting – is she locked in or locked out? She draws our attention and yet makes us turn away; her constant banging is carried too far. Another female figure – the same woman? – jerks spasmodically on the floor. We look, but do not want to look. A woman rips up paper, endlessly, over and over again. Discarding her love letters? Her tax returns? Her life? These are things we should watch out of the corner of our eye, we do not want to be seen to observing another's distress.

Jenny Lu's work takes a situation and exposes the unsettling in the act of repetition, of obsession. We are made aware of our own situation as a viewer, watching what maybe we should not see.

A figure scratches, over and over again, and comes closer. The action is funny, pathetic, unsettling, frightening. And uncanny, for at the heart of the work is a sense of the world not being right, that beneath the surface there is the certainty of being in the wrong place all the time, of wanting to escape but being aware of the impossibility of escaping from what is not outside, but within us. The home is no longer the place of normality, of safety, for the rooms resound to the sound of paper tearing and someone shouting.

I wanted to scratch on the way home, and that woman is still banging on a window somewhere in my mind.