

Vincent Goudreau

b.1976, Phoenix, Arizona, lives in Haiku, Maui

Javier Martinez

b.1973, Los Angeles, California, lives in San Francisco, California

exhibited in *Biennial VIII*

Compositions in Departure, 2010

video and 16mm film converted to video

running time: 34 minutes

Compositions in Departure weaves together three individuals from three different continents: one individual who has willingly departed (China), one facing the inability to leave (Ghana), and another who never wanted to leave but was left virtually alone (Mexico). It explores displacement, architecture and the idea of home as a metaphor for finding one's place in this world, while using textiles, migration and imperialism as an analogy for patterns of human behavior.

Coming from a painting background, we wanted to make a film that fell in line with these themes and concepts, yet was framed and shot as moving paintings. Shot in both 16mm film and video, this visually layered film captures the individual stories with an emphasis on the aesthetics and essence of each location.

VINCENT GOUDREAU

Born in 1976, Phoenix, Arizona
Lives and works in Haiku, Maui

Maps and machines, furrows and tracks, stories and memories—each provides a clue to the ways in which humans seek to bring order to life, and from that order to elicit meaning. Such diverse artifacts form part of the extensive conceptual vocabulary of Vincent Goudreau and Javier Martinez who, both individually and collaboratively, explore patterns of human behavior fed by the imperatives of existential structure and significance.

As a collaborative team, Goudreau and Martinez met while students at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, from which both received their BFA degrees in 2000. They have worked together on several video projects, beginning with *Villa Capri* in 1998. *Villa Capri*, a study of the residents in a retirement home, shares a strong sociological framework with Goudreau's later projects: *Harry and Janet* (set in a low-income housing project undergoing regeneration near Glasgow, Scotland and containing images of Hopi land at Second Mesa in Arizona) and *Ray Perlman and the Pitra Yadnya* (a study of the only Jewish undertaker in Phoenix, Arizona, juxtaposed with a Balinese cremation ceremony.) Both because of the focus on individual life-stories and because of the filmic structure that interposes those stories with corollary images and material, it

JAVIER MARTINEZ

Born in 1973, Los Angeles, California
Lives and works in Haiku, Maui

is most appropriate to consider these works as video portraits, works that orchestrate a process of getting to know particular individuals within the context of larger cultural arenas. *Ji Wang Chuan Rove*, Goudreau's and Martinez' most recently completed work, was filmed in China and takes an even more radical approach in working around the central subject rather than through direct and literal depiction.

As might be intuited from the range of subject matter, these works are generally approached from the position of the observant outsider; what they reveal is the artists' capacity to establish a common ground that is both empathetic and analytical, eschewing the extremes of polemic and sentiment. This has positioned them well in the creation of their 2005 collaboration *sub-paradise (a-c)*, perhaps the most structurally complex of their works to date. As a video triptych, it consists of three separate video/audio tracks, each of different length, which are looped to run simultaneously in ever-changing configurations of image and sound. As such, it suggests the different ways in which a story can be told, a narrative unfolding with shifting inflections.

Filmed on the island of Maui where Goudreau and Martinez are based, *sub-*

paradise deconstructs the myth of an idyllic existence by looking at the island's shifting social and economic patterns in the wake of the retrenchment of sugar production. The first segment, a five-minute loop, intercuts segments of 1940s Castle Films newsreels of south sea island cultures and fragments of the waning sugar industry with voice-overs of contemporary tour guides. The politically incorrect messages of both past and present marketing of "paradise" are uncomfortably obvious in a post-colonial environment. A second segment, a three-minute loop, carries substantial graphic impact, using split screens to contrast images of the affluent Makena area with graphics of aerial maps from the U.S. Geological Survey that reveal the effects on the outlying coral reef as a result of such development. The subtext is the lack of affordable land and housing for native Hawaiians. The third segment, and most substantial as a thirteen-minute loop is a portrait of Clarence "Ozzie" Ferreira and his "ice water gang." Their talk-story sessions, prompted occasionally by Goudreau (off-screen for the most part), range broadly across the life changes that have been the consequence of sugar industry changes during the forty-five years of Ferreira's employment. Throughout the segment, the subject of water flows as a potent undercurrent,

GOUDREAU/MARTINEZ (continued)

the driving force of development but also, as a finite resource, something that makes sustained development and the assurance of the quality of life quite problematic. It is to Goudreau's and Martinez' credit that the message of *sub-paradise* (suggesting both a substitute paradise as well as a substandard one) is couched in poetic rather than didactic terms. The artists also use the real-time aspects of the medium to create a slower pace of encounter, one markedly different from the near-instantaneous grasp of two- and three-dimensional works of art, one more suited to interpersonal relationships.

This sensibility is perhaps a reflection of the artists' desire to let the subjects speak for themselves, to let the meaning unfold in a more organic, less preconceived and structured way. As Goudreau explains, "... we generally go into a project with a collection of themes or interests, but do not have any ideas or desire to control the outcome of the piece... In the case of Ozzie in *sub-paradise*... I generally do not ask any questions or very few. Rather I let the individuals dictate or direct the video by natural storytelling... I've wanted to draw people back to investing time not only to listening, but listening to their elders."

In addition to their collaborative work, each artist also pursues independent avenues of creative work. Vincent Goudreau, who came to the islands about five years ago, has pursued freelance work in graphic design and video editing on Maui. Among his other projects, several of which involve the use of mapping imagery and other topographic symbol systems, he has developed a series of oil-on-canvas *Sketches for a New Hawaiian Flag*, which have a strong abstract graphic impact. These sketches, which are also linked to some of the fragments in the second segment of *sub-paradise*, include codified references to sections of the Maui coast and to their changing ecology. These sketches have also been translated into fabric flags by seamstress Amy Buchholz. As Goudreau reflects, the sketches and the flags are intended to help visualize "... a world without borders, countries, walls or boundaries... [representing] a space or climate zone versus a governed ideology."

Javier Martinez came separately to Maui and also works as a carpenter. That work as well as his work on *sub-paradise* brought him into contact with the artifacts of an environment in flux, which he has continued to document with still photography. *Tent Machine Sky* is a large-scale montage of Polaroid images, arranged in a loose grid

format, of heavy equipment, structures covered with fumigation tents, and fragments of the over-arching sky. As the artist notes, "... The Agriculture and Development Industries, significant driving forces of Maui's island economy, employ extremely aggressive machinery to push, carve and dig into the earth... They exercise their power over the face of the landscape, which affects the price of the land and ultimately even brings about changes in the weather... Juxtaposed against these machines are softer images of circus-colored fumigation tents... [which] unfortunately... contribute to the poisoning of our homes and our environment." Martinez considers that "... the push and pull between soft and hard textures creates an ironic fusion of the beautiful and the dangerous"... an apt characterization of a visual configuration in which the subtle alignments of form and color are apt to seduce one away from the darker implications of meaning. We continue to monitor the profound changes our natural and social environments are undergoing. The work of Goudreau and Martinez remind us that, as much as we cherish the perspective of long-term island dwellers, it is sometimes the fresh point of view of more recent arrivals that tells us what we need to know.