

northeast

BUFFALO, NEW YORK

LARA ODELL's "Impatient Pixel" (*Big Orbit Gallery, May 4—June 23, 2002*) features an impressive body of work produced over the course of a single compact year. *One Feet Deep* (2001-2002) is a series of nine iris prints of swimming pools. Odell is from the West Coast. Imagine the pool for a SoCal artist: lots of aqua blue water and signs of life—namely white people tanning themselves on Day-Glo rafts or chaise lounges. The artist would subvert this tired image—making it into a mockery of the American Dream and the culture of escape. The pictures here however come out of the specificities of a very different place: Buffalo, New York, where Odell has been based for the past four years. Buffalo is for many synonymous with snow. Other associations are decline and loss—of the region's economy, of its populace—a forgotten loneliness. For its residents, the city often feels empty, a sensation confirmed by explaining each time friends come through that the question "but where are all the people?" is a constant and therefore rhetorical one. "The people" are not here—although *we are here* and sometimes we do make ourselves brilliantly visible.

The challenge that the local presented for the Buffalo artist was to convey such realities without compromising their intrinsic psychic and existential charge, something much more difficult than readily appears as surface signs are easily misconstrued as signifiers of depth. Odell's pools afford expanses not of blue, but of white, not punctuated by concentrations of color such as rafts, towels, or sunning bodies, but diagrammed by runs of green. Her landscape portraits change water into snow, summer into winter, South into North, invitation into cancellation, leisure into hardship. They are surprisingly beautiful and calm, not riddled by desires, expectations nor regrets, but conveying the sense of being at peace with one's surroundings, of offering no resistance. Without pushing the compulsion for metaphor too far, the snow-filled pools are almost like beds; the fact that their dimensions are greatly

reduced through photographic representation makes this idea more tangible. Yet there is a deeper allusion: hypothermia. Lethargy and desire to sleep are symptoms of this potentially lethal condition. It is critical to engage all one's willpower in resisting this call to be "at peace with one's surroundings."

The video *Good Answer: a documentary* (2002) revisits a 1979 episode of the TV game show *Family Feud* featuring Odell's mother's family through original clips and recent interviews. Eliciting smirks and outright laughs, the work is especially uncanny in showing how the TV appearance forms the family's collective memory. *Antibodies* (2002), represented here by video and prints, is a performance project in collaboration with Monica Duncan placing color theory in a social context. Dressed as twins, the artists embrace hybrid personas: scholars, meter readers, inspectors, collectors, models, childcare workers, silent cinema villains and comedic figures, as they go around matching colors of the real world environment to their charts. *Antibodies* resonates with Komar & Melamid's "democratic paintings" based on the American public's attitudes about color, composition and content.

Winter Camouflage Fashion Catalog 2002 (2002) outfits the artists all in white, even including faux fur glasses (causing blindness rather than granting vision). Striking poses first in clinical interior spaces and then in the snow-covered out of doors, the two parody "white-outs"—when the snowfall is so fantastic that it is impossible to see anything other than white. Like animals whose only chance of survival is to blend into the environment, Odell and Duncan become snow. In the video's finale they fall into the snow, where they remain as the credits scroll across their inert bodies.

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Monica Duncan (left) and Lara Odell (right) in their collaborative performance *Antibodies*, 2002 (photo by Ben Ruggiero courtesy Lara Odell).