

Art in America

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Jeremy Blake At Feigen Contemporary

Passages of the posthumously published diaries of Ossie Clark, fashion designer to Swinging London in the 1960s and '70s, provide a script for the digitally liquid, melting imagery of Jeremy Blake's DVD *Reading Ossie Clark* (2003). Narrated in smoky voice-over by the British-born curator/dealer Clarissa Dalrymple, the 9-minute loop morphs through photographically derived, computer-generated and hand-painted images evoking the pharmaceutically enhanced ups and downs of Clark's fast-lane life.

While these fleeting images vivify the era, draped bolts of brightly patterned fabric photographed in a secondhand store in Topanga Canyon memorialize the textiles designed by Clark's partner in fashion, Celia Birtwell (although Blake's fabric models are the work of unknown designers). They are the basis of two paintings, *Hidden Treasures 1* and *2*, that begin and end a sequence of 30 or so small oils in the series "Autumn Almanac" (2002-03), nostalgically named after a Kinks song, that

were installed in singles and pairs around the three contiguous walls of Feigen's front gallery. While fabric-derived images surface in the projection as well, the placement of the two fabric-based paintings at the beginning and end of the sequence also refers to the continuum of the DVD loop. In a text provided by the gallery, Blake offers that these folds of fabric may also be understood as metaphors for the folds of the surface of the brain where memories are stored.

The uniformly foot-high paintings of "Autumn Almanac," viewed collectively, function as the representation of a storyboard for the construction of Blake's DVD imagery. The 12-by-20-inch painting, *Am I Really Flying High Over America?* is composed of inscriptions from Clark's day planner, a rehearsal of Dalrymple's reading. A similar inscription also appears in the DVD on the spinning label of a long-playing record. With nods to celebrities of the period, Blake adds a cameo of Twiggy, a grisaille of superstar Viva with Michel Auder and Barnett Newman, and another of Alec

Guinness as Gullely Jimson in the 1958 film *The Horse's Mouth*.

A large-format bilaterally symmetrical chromogenic digital print, *Planet Waves* (2003), recalls Blake's previous work, but also his contribution to Paul Thomas Anderson's tortured romantic comedy *Punch-Drunk Love*, where his painterly manipulation of abstract color becomes a perceptible force, like an aura before a grand mal seizure. For *Planet Waves* (the title of a Dylan song), Blake abstracts the fabric in a mirrored, digitally created architectural surround reminiscent of an empty discotheque, bracketed on each end by vertical bands of what appears to be a human skull. This not altogether ambiguous image recalls the central photographic image in *Blowup*, the Antonioni film popular in the era. It is also a digitized reminder that Clark was murdered by his lover in 1996.

-Edward Leffingwell

Jeremy Blake: *Planet Waves*, 2003, c-print, 40 by 101 1/2; at Feigen Contemporary



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