

# Art in America

Jordan Crandall: Installation view of *Drive*, 1998, mixed media; at Sandra Gering.



## Jordan Crandall at Sandra Gering

"The days when one's meatself is docked at the monitor are coming to an end," Jordan Crandall writes in an essay accompanying his two-part video installation, *Drive*. Accordingly, both the imagery in the two wall-projected videos and the manner of their viewing are meant (like J.G. Ballard's certainly relevant novel *Crash*) to reveal the interpenetration of machine and body.

One of the videos derives mainly from 8mm and 16mm black-and-white film, the other from color footage produced by a digital camera, though there are exchanges of footage from one tape to the other. An alternate means of viewing the videos further compounds the imagery: Crandall has provided three sets of sleek-looking goggles that channel the images directly onto their lenses (intended to be the visual equivalent of a Walkman, the goggles now exist as commercial prototypes). The images on the lenses are semitransparent, allowing the viewer to see the two tapes in superimposition; the effect requires some concentration, and is a little hard to sustain, but is uncanny enough to justify the effort. It's not the much-vaunted VR effect, but you do inhabit the work in a novel way.

As the multivalent exhibition title suggests, the subject of both tapes is forward propulsion of all kinds, with a focus on buffed bodies in motion. There are shots of "fit actors" (they're not dancers, but they're not amateurs, either) flexing well-developed arms, hands and backs; there are close-ups of eyes blinking; and there is blurred street traffic both pedestrian and vehicular. There is also footage made with a digital motion-tracking program that analyzes body movements and predicts their trajectories. These

predictions, which appear as green gridded coordinates and inscribed contours, are matched with the filmed movements from which they're derived. In other passages, bodies are considered with all the languorous attention of a Weston nude, but just as often they are seen in haste, as blurry fragments in a busy urban context or in shadowy industrial wastelands.

As was true for his previous exhibitions, Crandall was generally present at the gallery, during the run of the show, helping viewers with the equipment and with the work's conceptual framework as well. The founding editor of the now on-line publication *Blast*, Crandall is prodigiously articulate, and the real-time verbal support he provides for the work—it has links to an oral tradition as old as passion plays, and as new as the ritualized theater of trade-show computer demos—seems central to both its meaning and its success. Crandall says *Drive* is intended, in part, to "prepare us to multitask," to offer "proprioceptive engagement" and disembodied optical pleasure at the same time. In both its subject and its means, the work negotiates a host of polarities that includes public and private space, global mobility and hermetic insularity, and technological and biological perceptual mechanisms, as well as more parochial oppositions, like those between the conventions of cinema and video. The web of words—some sticky, some glittery—that Crandall spins around his work (look for an upcoming book of collected essays) becomes integrally related to its form. Indeed, it is the indivisible ties between old, face-time, meatself ways of negotiating the world and newer, more techno-trippy ones, that Crandall most knowingly explores.

—Nancy Princenthal