

Exhibition Guide

Mike Marshall *The Intimacy of Distance*
First Floor Galleries, 23 November – 22 January

British artist Mike Marshall works mainly with photography and video. Over the last few years he has travelled extensively and, during a recent residency at The British School at Rome, he consolidated much of the raw material he has gathered into a new body of work, much of which is exhibited at Ikon for the first time.

Marshall is interested in examining aspects of everyday life, things we take for granted or overlook. Through his interest in what he describes as 'focused daydreaming', he reveals the beauty of the most mundane, often nondescript objects and places. His practice is influenced by contemporary film and his framing of a particular image or moving panorama makes reference to the work of filmmakers such as David Lynch, Terrence Malik and Werner Herzog. Lynch's dream-like imagery of small-town life in films such as *Blue Velvet* infuses the 'day to day' with a sinister undertone, by using visual techniques such as heightened colour and symbolism. In a similar way, Marshall's work is layered, creating a rich texture, both visually - through a particular use of colour and light - and aurally through the manipulation of sound. This marks a new direction in his work, whereby soundtracks are enhanced, creating a density which makes the viewing experience more intense.

Marshall's video *Exploring a Small Canyon*, (2003) shows the artist, his back to the camera, shouting into a desert gorge. The words 'yes', 'no', 'hello' and 'goodbye', at first spoken distinctly, begin to overlap and repeat, echoing around the space, developing a complex call and response, filling the gallery with sound. The solitary voice could be easily lost in this large barren place but instead it is manipulated to create a crescendo of noise, contrasting with the modest scale of the video projection.

Marshall has expressed his intention to create 'a moment just before articulation' or comprehension. This is something which is conveyed in his large-scale photographic works which depicts various anonymous outdoor locations. The shifting focus of the images instil a feeling that we are on the threshold of something which remains tantalisingly out of reach.

Not Far From Here, (2005) is a video set in a clearing of what appears to be a tropical woodland, but like many of Marshall's films, the location is not specific. The camera pans in, through sun-dappled foliage, to focus on a tree. As the camera gently revolves, a piece of red fabric is revealed hanging from one of the surrounding trees, suggesting that this is a place of obscure ritual. The impression is of being on the edge of consciousness, fading between reality and other worldliness. This is reinforced through the soundtrack of half-uttered words, mixed with the surrounding noise of birdsong, rustling leaves and creaking branches. Sinister overtones are enhanced through the film's installation, projected between two walls, compressing the space and creating a sense of claustrophobia, intensifying the emotional reading of the work.

Marshall has also created an off-site sound installation *Cloudburst*, (2005) which involves the recording of individual drops of water falling onto different surfaces including metal, grass, concrete and wood. The small noises slowly accumulate until they reach a convincing crescendo of heavy rain, before fading away. Please ask at reception for details of the location and a map.

For the exhibition, Marshall has also created *Calendar*, (2005), an unframed A1 sized print, produced as a limited edition of 100.