

VIEW, 2001-2007

View is the title for a series of projects I worked on between 2001 and 2007 that all related to inherent ways of seeing landscapes. In them I present what I now see as the most significant of these projects.

In 2000, I was invited by the Public Art Agency Sweden to produce an idea for a public artwork, to be installed at a quayside by a newly built residential area in Malmö. At the time of the invitation I was developing ideas for my work in relation to 'Claude Glasses', a sort of 18th-century viewing instruments. To a lesser extent I worked with the Claude mirror, which is used to mirror and frame landscapes. Both are named after the 17th-century French landscape painter Claude Lorrain. The glasses were considered as viewing aids, often used by both tourists and artists for viewing landscapes in 18th-century Europe, a century known for its fascination for the search for the 'picturesque'. They came with a set of coloured filters used as a means to repeat features of the landscape that would connect it to the picturesque: what resulted was an ideal Italian landscape projected onto contemporary landscapes. By looking through these lenses, the landscape is re-framed with colour filters, ranging from rose pink to golden yellow, from cool blue to dark brown, evoking a palette of colours reminiscent of Lorrain's paintings. From an antiques dealer in London, I purchased a Claude mirror and two original Claude glasses, one with a set of three colours and the other eight colours. I started to experiment with these aids and eventually I photographed landscapes through them, using them in the way they were intended to, and you could say, 'misusing' them.

My proposal to the Public Art Agency Sweden was to install public



Vy/View (Västra Hamnen), 2001. Photo: Vegar Moen

binoculars refitted with coloured filters I had devised – inspired by the Claude glasses. The binoculars were installed on a site where the viewer could look across the Öresund strait towards Copenhagen. This work, titled *Vy/View (Västra Hamnen)* opened in 2001 and remained in place for a couple of years. It was finally taken down because it was repeatedly vandalised. I also published a book of ideas of the picturesque and how its traces and effects remain in a contemporary context. This book was given the title *Vy – en bok för er som bor i Västra Hamnen/ View – a book for those who live in Västra Hamnen*, and I delivered it to the Västra Hamnen community – the aim of the binoculars was to present an opportunity for the local community to re-view their landscape.

The second project to come out of this work was made in 2003 as the result of an invitation from Diane Shamash at the Minetta Brook in New York to produce a public art project for 'Watershed – The Hudson River Project' in upstate New York. I chose a site that would develop my ideas of an engagement with what I saw as a politically charged landscape: the landscape around the American Military Academy at West Point by the Hudson River – a beautiful landscape also known for being one of the most popular subjects for the Hudson River school painters, the first painters of the American landscape in the 18th century. This project consisted of three parts, each dealing with the landscape around West Point and each in a different way. Two public binoculars were once again refitted with coloured filters, one installed at the outdoor museum of the Boscobel House and Gardens and the other at Bear Mountain North Dock. I also suggested binoculars for a third location inside the area of the Military Academy, however finally compromised with the increased control of the site after the events and security issues resulting from 9/11. So I made a series of photographs of the landscape through my two sets



View (Boscobel), 2003-2006. Detail



View (Boscobel), 2003-2006. Installation view at Boscobel Restoration, Garrison NY, 2003

of Claude glasses and the Claude mirror, all images taken at the Great Chain Overlook at West Point.

As intended, the two binoculars remained installed for three years for this project. Therefore, what remains of these works is the publication: *VIEW* from 2004, including an attachment: a mimicry of the Claude glasses, simply constructed eye glasses with filters that contain a set of four plastic coloured filters. I gave names to the colours: yellow dawn, rose twilight, moonlight blue, and doomsday red.

The third project, in 2007, was a series of photos for a group exhibition at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in Arizona titled *View (Papago Park)*, which contains photographs of Papago Park photographed through my set of Claude glasses. Papago Park is located in the desert just outside Phoenix. I photographed from a hill with a view over the dams, including imported palm trees from the Middle East seemingly intended to create a kind of oasis. I had framed my view to incorporate parking areas that were evidently cruising sites for gay men – and in the background a mountainous landscape well known for its uses as a training ground for the US military's troops heading to Iraq and Afghanistan.



View (Papago Park), 2007