

ARTWEEK - JULY/AUG 06

Zoe Crosher at Small A Projects

Paradoxical sensations of familiarity and disorientation seep through Zoe Crosher's serial landscapes of the environment surrounding the Los Angeles International Airport.

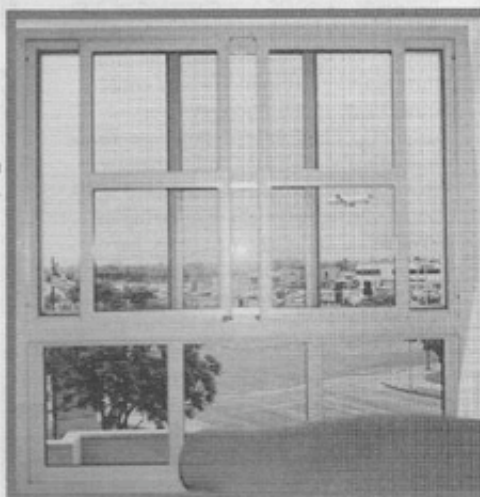
Crosher's project, *Out the Window (LAX)*, is comprised of 27-inch-square color photographs shot from 2001 to 2004 in twenty-seven different hotel and motel rooms bordering LAX's stagger of parking lots, terminals and runways. Each image depicts a room around a view. *Out the Window* begins in one no-place and maps a set of locations west and east of La Cienega Boulevard grounded, ironically, by the appearance of an airplane caught speeding across the sky or, occasionally, resting on the tarmac. Without this visual thread, Crosher's photographs are virtually impossible to locate. But that's the point. They reflect a spatial and emotional terrain that hangs in the realm of the imaginary. The cloying interchangeability of these spaces is captured and released in the precise moment that Crosher—often accompanied by plane-spotting friends and lovers—freezes the aircraft in her lens, and into record.

One night's stay ... it doesn't take long to realize that Crosher has inhabited these cheap, vibrating byways. In *L.A. Topper Motel*, for instance, we gaze out the patio door and into the sky across a disarray of soda cans and Burger King detritus. Crosher's temporary, purposeful

habitations summon our own experiences of boredom and escapism in the same ubiquitous rooms—channel surfing, fucking, drinking, pining alone after impotent phone conversations ... the list is endless. More perverse uses of the airport motel room (suicides, affairs, porn shoots) collide with the beauty and delicacy of the imagery: Sheer white polyester drapes billow against white-gray skies; colored glass patio doors cast bright, hopeful reflections across nubby carpeting. Crosher transforms each room into a temporary artist's studio, a twenty-four hour film set, spending the night—hanging out and biding her time (knitting sometimes) until the subtleties of morning light distract her back into art-making.

In dialogue with cultural critics such as Norman Klein and Chris Kraus, whose work on the Los Angeles imaginary propounds LA's inability to be understood outside of the fantastical, Crosher's photographs are dreamy, Technicolor visions. Scanning Crosher's installation at Small A Projects, a stuttering motion emerges—an animation that recalls the bumps and flares of early Zoetrope technology ... a reference to LA's cinematic history? Such arrested and accumulated images belong to photography—and its offspring—and Crosher references this history with a coy, intellectual savvy. But perhaps most importantly, *Out the Window* invokes the artists—and their working methods—that put Los Angeles on the map as a cultural field. Artists like Ed Ruscha, whose 1965 photographic book project *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* recorded just that. Ruscha mounted his camera onto a truck and shot images of each building in sequence. He then turned his truck around and completed the same study on

the other side of the street. It was the street that made Ruscha's project possible, the asphalt ribbon flowing through the city. Crosher's haunting images direct our gaze upward, toward a glint of titani-



Zoe Crosher, *LAX Renaissance*, 2004, light-jet print, 27" x 27", at Small A Projects, Portland.

um in the sky; they are only possible because hotels and motels, and airports exist. And without Crosher's performative curiosity, it is doubtful that we would recall the look and feel of spaces designed so forcefully toward forgetfulness.

—Stephanie Snyder

Zoe Crosher: *Out the Window (LAX)* closed in May at Small A Projects, Portland.

Stephanie Snyder is a freelance writer based in Portland.