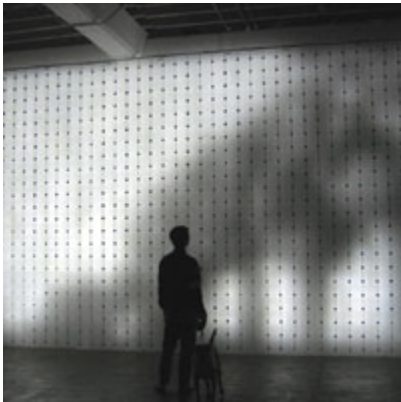




"Jim Campbell: Home Movies"

The technophile artist has arrived at a startling depiction of memory and magic
07.01.08 - 11:58 pm | Erik Morse |



REVIEW The West Coast electronic artist Jim Campbell returns to the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum to reprise his popular 2006 installation "Home Movies," a screening of amateur, low-resolution family films projected through a tapestry of LED lights. Strung from ceiling to floor, the highly pixelated reflections of quotidian family life become nothing less than digital simulacra when magnified to such extremes. Building on the conceptual linkages of his *Illuminated Averages* (2001-03) and *Ambiguous Icons* (2000-03) series, the technophile artist has arrived at a startling depiction of memory and magic. Campbell's explorations of communications apparatuses since the mid-1980s largely mirrors the hypermodernist theories of Jean Baudrillard — problematizing rather than simply fetishizing the digital domain — and rejects the scientific utopianism of Bergsonian temporality for the more radical slippages of personalized memories and nostalgia. For Campbell, the question surely remains whether digital perception has elevated or mutated our inscriptions of the past.

The answer, of course, is far from conclusive and further still from novel. In fact, "Home Movies" is reminiscent of cinema's magical roots in the 18th century *Fantasmagorie* shows, which posed similar concerns in their embrace of new technologies. Spectral and hypnotic in their visual imperfections, these magical lantern exhibitions introduced the sublime moment when the still painting became animate, reaching out from its crypt of secrets to grab hold of the spectator in a living darkness. The *Fantasmagorie* often thrived on intimate family images, using projected portraits of recently deceased ancestors to unsettle or mesmerize the audience. In his brilliance, Campbell has recognized a similar power in manipulating the iconography of America's recent past, using the omnipresent home movie as a prop of sorts for his own digital legerdemain.

Historical and aesthetic precedents aside, "Home Movies" is a supreme cinematic delight, re-presenting the primal pleasures of film-going but refracting this nostalgic glow through a matrix of increasing digital deconfiguration.

JIM CAMPBELL: HOME MOVIES Through Aug. 1. Wed.–Sun., 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Berkeley Art Museum, 2626 Bancroft, Berk. \$4–\$8 (free first Thurs.). (510) 642-0808,