

**Anna Gaskell****White Cube  
London**

*Hide* was the first solo show by American artist Anna Gaskell in the UK. (A larger touring exhibition of older work is due to open in April at Oxford's Museum of Modern Art.) Gaskell first came to attention a few years ago at a group exhibition at Casey Kaplan, curated by Laurie Simmons, which linked Simmons's own carefully staged works with those of a younger generation. That show, *The Name of the Place* looks increasingly significant in retrospect, through its introduction, alongside Gaskell, of Amy Adler, Dana Hoey and Jennifer Bornstein.

*The Name of the Place* featured work made in 1996, in which Gaskell restaged elements of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, using identical twins as Alice, and directing them to create striking tableaux depicting the bewilderment and wonder of her transformation. The use of young models by a woman photographer also alerted us to Carroll's own obsessive use of pre-pubescent girls in his photography, and in particular the role of Alice Liddell as protagonist of both the tale and the photograph.

*Hide* is inspired by a Brothers Grimm story, *The Magic Donkey*, in which a girl is forced to make a costume from animal hides in order to escape the advances of her father. Manipulating depth of field, indulging in both bold foreshortening and distortion of feet and legs, Gaskell creates the same sense of bewilderment with change that suffused *Wonder*, but here the tenor is much more of the Gothic: there's a real threat of violence, achieved principally through an eerie lighting and camera angles that recall *Carrie* and *The Exorcist*. There's also a strong sense of the surreal, especially of Bellmer and Kertész, but the abiding presence here is Freud. The brooding sense of unpleasantness reminds me of his paper 'The Uncanny' and its reliance upon the fairy stories of the Grimms and Hoffmann.

*Hide* repeated Gaskell's interest in the traumatic/erotic potential of such tales, and in the unstable boundaries of its subjects. For Gaskell, transformation, shape-shifting, and that might include the shift from pubescence to adolescence which removed Liddell from Carroll's photographic interest, or the shift from adolescence to maturity, clearly has much to do with evading the attentions of the Father. (And that's both the familial father and the Freudian Big Daddy with a capital F.)



Anna Gaskell *Untitled #32 (hide)* 1998  
Courtesy Jay Jopling/White Cube

**Gregory Crewsdon****emily Tsingou Gallery  
London**

Talking of the Gothic summons images of Ruritanian castles, Hammer vampires, and Victorian ghosts. We think of the Gothic as a cultural phenomenon that, outliving its usefulness, has been relegated to the categories of the camp and the naff. But at the end of the Twentieth century the Gothic has undergone a massive resurgence, penetrating into vastly different facets of our culture and exercising a fascinating compulsion upon huge numbers of artists.

Gregory Crewsdon's large-scale photographs explore the pervasiveness of horror. Madness and terror erupts in the most secure locales. Nature invades culture: a grizzly bear rampages through a disintegrating kitchen, a madwoman, smeared in mud, plants a garden beside her stove. The outside world, inexplicable and destructive, changes life forever in a small American town: in a scene eerily reminiscent of seventies horror movies, a group of firemen and policemen examine the corpse of a cow on the outskirts of suburbia. Cause of death: unknown, and it is this inability to know which provokes terror. In a work which comments on specific contemporary crises, such as BSE, Crewsdon simultaneously evokes deeper fears about the intrusion of the unknown into boundaries that we always imagined were safe.

Like Gaskell, Crewsdon is concerned about boundaries, only he works out the issue in terms of dualisms between nature/culture, local/general, sanity/madness. Where Gaskell addresses the Uncanny - the familiar unchanged but suddenly unfamiliar - Crewsdon shows us the return of the repressed. His concern with the rupture in the local, specifically in a very American suburbia, has its roots in cinema - in particular in elements of the Horror genre, and in the more elevated oeuvres of the two David's, Lynch and Cronenberg. Lynch's *Blue Velvet* begins with a shot of the muck and corruption beneath a suburban garden, the camera seems to tunnel towards the light. There is something rotten just under the skin, Lynch suggests, and it will break through.

Crewsdon's earlier work seemed a conscious assault upon suburbia, the revenge of the exiled artist (as though he was what it had repressed, and been made monstrous in that repression.) In this new work there's a more mature, reflective approach, an ambivalent sympathy perhaps towards the object of destruction.



Gregory Crewsdon *Untitled* 1998  
Courtesy emily Tsingou gallery

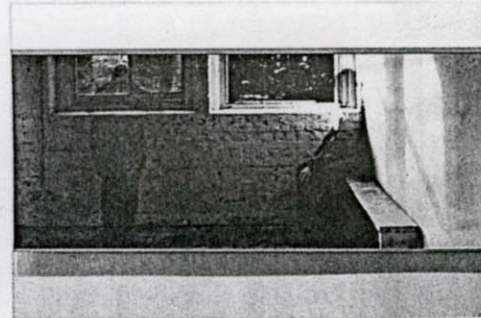
**Fiona Crisp  
Still Films****Camerawork  
London**

Fiona Crisp is one of a number of interesting artists working around the boundaries of still and moving images. Tim McMillan's recent "film" made from multiple perspectives of the same image is approaching similar concerns from a different angle, so too French artist Alain Fleischer's *Filmograms*. Crisp's large scale installation at Camerawork was part of an ongoing project to remove the image from time (rather than remove time from the image, which seems to the point of most still photography - a vitiation which causes the photographic death of the subject so mourned by Bazin, Barthes, Metz et al.)

At Camerawork Crisp showed three large black and white photographs, taken from her series *Film Stills*, and positioned them around two upholstered benches. The benches, ignored by most people, were an integral part of the work. The images, made with a pinhole camera, with an almost infinite depth of field and no clear focal plane were quite deliberately "slow". They did not yield all their information in one quick, easy, transparent reading. You needed to sit down and watch them, their slow exposure mirrored in your act of looking, so that a "filmic" narrative emerged from what was a frozen still.

Each image showed a sparsely furnished interior containing (or, given the deliberate blurring that occurred with the prolonged exposure, failing to contain) a hooded figure. The movement of this subject became the subject of the viewing subject's own narratives. In many ways - especially the suggested equivalence between subject and object, the long exposure and blurred figure - I was reminded of the much smaller, intensely intimate photographs of Francesca Woodman, whose concern in the late seventies with opening the encrypting vectors of time and space around the photographic subject seems to preface so much contemporary work. Looking at this, the hooded figure began to remind me, in a loose association, of those haunting figures who inhabit Gothic graveyards in John Clarence Laughlin's *Poems of the Interior World* - part of the body of work that inspired Woodman.

Fiona Crisp is working in a form of graveyard, too, that of the photograph and its entombing, encrypting of its subject. Given time, given contemplation, she succeeds in resuscitating what photography destroys.



Fiona Crisp *Still Film #32* 1998  
Courtesy Camerawork