

Kimberley O'Neill  
*Enigma Bodytech*  
18.05.19 – 30.06.19

# COLLECTIVE

## *Endless Drifting* Emmie McLuskey

Sprawled across the backseat of a dull but shiny grey Hyundai Elantra glaring out the window onto a gridlocked freeway, I look down at a green murky liquid, which claims to detox and rehabilitate the body. The bottle is the shape of something you might find in a hospital, it strangely omits all vowels from the product's text that can be read vertically up the side of the plastic. I paid upwards of eight dollars for this privilege. It makes me feel strangely aware of my organs. My head is hot and hazy from the long drive, I inhale gas fumes that rise from the tarmac, there is a low sustained hum of engines, the artificial heat entering the car sinks into the upholstery. Hanging an arm on the open window I stare blankly at the luscious green flora working hard to pump out oxygen for us to consume, process and feed/back. The backdrop for the scene is California's Silicon Valley.

Kimberley leans over to press a button on the radio, the song *Vegetables*, from The Beach Boys' 1967 album *Smiley Smile* is our soundtrack. Dennis Wilson, the drummer of the band whose hedonistic lifestyle is written into Californian mythology also plays the mechanic in the counter-cultural cult classic *Two Lane Blacktop* (1971), a road movie about two street racers who drift from town to town across America, moving West to East. In this slow film with minimal dialogue, Wilson's character feuds with the driver played by James Taylor over a hitch-hiker performed by a young Laurie Bird. My mind wandered back to earlier conversations with Kimberley. She'd spoken to me at length about her fascination

with Rudolf Wurlitzer's novel *Nog*, a story that inspired Monte Hellman, the director of *Two Lane Blacktop*, to make the film. The writing is deliberately disjointed and self-congratulatory: the reader, unsure who the narrator is, moves through a collection of characters, symbols and places including a fake octopus, a commune, an oracle, a drug dealer, a hospital, the desert and a woman named Meridith. The prose, written in first person, is forcibly male.

I look up at the camera lens pointing towards me, then turn my gaze back out of the window onto the road. We are moving now, the road lines flashing in a fast, steady rhythm, the rubber of the tyres making a tacky click, I wonder about the road and who owns these images? My eyes move between the rear view mirror and the windscreen, I witness large Winnebagos covered in images of the Californian desert, road signs selling brighter futures and more signs that read 'adopt a highway'. The navigation of once inhospitable sites is now a neatly packaged experience, complete with free wifi and viewing platforms located at a safe distance. Hordes of tourists gather to observe the real life experience of being inside the computer, their iPhones recording the iconic geology of El Capitan. The name and image of El Capitan, a vertical rock formation in Yosemite National Park, is used as a screen saver by Apple Mac for its operating system OS X 10.11. These holiday snaps creating a perfect loop when uploaded back on to the system.

Kimberley's film, unlike the male figures described previously, searches and troubles the viewer's reading of such journeys, her shots move across a spectrum of interaction, from the harrowing to the familiar. Escaping your everyday and running away from your problems appears to typically be a privilege saved for men and the middle classes. Kimberley's film script, to me, is a conscious obstruction of this privilege. Her use of lines from *Tripticks* – the last novel by working class writer Ann Quin – alongside recorded interviews with healers, scientists and historians as well as her own words, draw lines across time and beliefs, seeking out alternative narratives, complicating the pursuit of self. The healer in *Enigma Bodytech* states, 'it's better to see rather than look, in looking you are going to cut down the information you are picking up because you are on a quest... you have a quiet agenda,' Kimberley's shots showing us an oscillation between 'seeing' and 'looking'.

In the film's soundtrack, frequencies recorded from Kimberley's own body's nervous system play through the car's speakers, and various voices reflect on a once politicised counterculture, holistic practices and their intersection with computing. These elements fold back on themselves, internalising the focus, and hurtle towards a kind of self-actualisation, but whose? Much like the novels referenced, Kim's film describes an outer journey as an analogy for an internal quest, a quest mediated by technology and how we interact with it and in doing so depict her concern with the relationship between subjectivity and the communal. I think about her camera's movement between subject positions including that of her own, this view feels decidedly female and shared.

Back in the car, whilst driving at night time through a city called Bakersfield, the air oily with industry, Kimberley tells me of a quote from Wurlitzer. He describes the windscreen view as 'the future' whilst what is seen in the rear view mirror as already being in the past. I pick up speed by applying more pressure to the gas, the road open with no other vehicles in sight. I watch the images collecting in the

background then move my sight line to the road straight ahead. My tired eyes heavy, my mind wanders to where we'll sleep and what we'll eat. The car propelling us forward feels like progress, car travel much like the computer interface, means that if you stop and don't like the view you can simply choose a new backdrop, but the internal experience of being inside a body is one not so easy to switch.

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**Emmie McLuskey** is an artist based in Glasgow. She works with other artists to produce collaborative work; this has previously taken the form of publications, events, objects, conversations and exhibitions. In 2018/19 projects included *these were the things that made the step familiar*, Collective, Edinburgh; *To: my future body*, with Janice Parker, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; *The Perfect, Perfect Look* with Jude Browning and Amelia Barratt, Glasgow International Festival, Glasgow; PAC Festival, Marseille, with Sarah Fastré; and the Summer Residency Programme, Hospitalfield Arts, Arbroath. This summer Emmie will be in residence at Dogo Residenz fur Neue Kunst, Lichtensteig. Emmie was Associate Producer at Collective and has been commissioned to develop texts as part of Satellites 2018.

**Satellites Programme** is Collective's development programme for emergent artists and producers based in Scotland. Satellites aims to support practitioners at a pivotal point in their careers through a critical programme of retreats, workshops, studio visits and group discussions, public exhibitions, events and publishing. Artists are selected from an open submission by a new panel each year. The 2018-19 participants are Helen McCrorie, Emmie McLuskey, Kimberley O'Neill and Katie Shannon.

**Collective** is a contemporary visual art organisation that delivers an exciting and ambitious programme of exhibitions, new commissions, events and off-site projects. Collective produces major new work by Scotland based and international artists who are at a pivotal stage in their development.