

## PIERS RAWSON: PHOTOGRAPHIES

Surreal?

Voiture

Oradour

ART

Four sets of prints look at ways photography relies on perception, realism, cultural reference and time. *Surreal?*, *Voiture*, and *Oradour* all include photographs from France (with brief excursions to Italy and Brussels); *ART* montages images from disparate sources in a play on our notions of the meaning of art.

*Surreal?* explores different ideas of surrealism in photography: from direct reference to the Surrealist movement in France, to a sense of the dreamlike, poetic, ambiguous and irrational – conveyed in a nuance of light or enigmatic absence – implying an unfulfilled narrative that only we can complete. The Miro sculpture is at the Fondation Maeght (St-Paul de Vence); five images were made in the village of Seillans, beloved of the Surrealists and home to Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst 1957-76.

*Voiture* makes a transition between *Surreal?* and *Oradour*, a brief take on entropy and the automobile as cultural fetish.

*Oradour: Day for Night* presents a personal response to the tragedy of Oradour-sur-Glâne: on 10 June, 1944 this village in the Limousin, France, was attacked without warning, and on grounds still far from clear, by a regiment of the 2nd Waffen-SS Panzer division. Buildings were gutted by fire and 642 citizens (women, men and children) were massacred. In the ruins, only the solid traces of a society survived – iron bedsteads, sewing machines, tramlines and cars. The “martyred village” is a national monument committed to preserving the site as a lasting memorial (a battle against rust and the forgetfulness of time passing); paradoxically, it manages to offer both a visitor attraction and an intensely moving encounter with small-town life frozen in time. I came to see the vehicles, crushed by falling masonry, as an equivalent to Paul Nash’s *Totes Meer* (1940-1): a lunar displacement from the everyday, like the cinema practice of shooting “day for night”.



image © TATE

*ART* is a new series deriving from a public art billboard commission of 2004: fully intended to seduce the eye – but who says “frivolous” can’t also be “serious”? Imagine an intimate rendezvous between Grayson Perry and Andy Warhol, then spend some time trying to get the image out of your head.... Note the irony, the veiled references to Romanticism! To access this aspect, the titles are significant: *Landscape*; *Skyscape*; *Art in a Painted Sky* (#1 and #2, n.b. a glorious sunset is sometimes referred to as a “painted sky”; the actual painted sky comes from Palladio’s Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza); *The Art of Camouflage*.



All prints (unless stated): archival pigment inks on archival paper, signed, edition of 10.