



Photograph courtesy of The Ydessa Gallery

Shelagh Alexander
Loonytoon, 1984,
black and white
compilation photograph,
101 x 254 cm

Whereas Susan Scott's works start out from a totally imaginary fiction, the works of **Shelagh Alexander** do just the opposite.

Her photographic compilations are made up of images found in the family photograph album or in cinema history.

Shelagh Alexander was born in 1959. She attended York University and the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, and graduated from the College in 1981.

The photographs she uses seem familiar to the spectator. They are part of the collective subconscious of a common world where bits of photographic images float. And they show scenes that we all think we've seen before.

Thus, in a series of her compilations where family album photographs are used, it is easy to identify

the main figures – parents and children, posing according to their expected social roles.

However, the process of compilation produces one single impression out of the many familiar ones, and in doing this, it changes the messages that the individual ones seem to convey. It therefore creates a completely new image from a series of accepted images, and this causes us to re-examine the images in a critical way.

The montage technique used by **Tomio Sasaki** – and characterised in her work, *Aviary Species in Soda Soup* – is comparable with the technique used by Shelagh Alexander.

Tomio Sasaki was born in Vernon, British Columbia, in 1943. She studied at the Alberta College of Art, the San Francisco Art Institute and the California College of Arts and Crafts. She now lives in New York.

Aviary Species is an installation made up of nine monitors showing three videos simultaneously. These tapes document the activity and behaviours of different types of birds from Lake Nakuru in Kenya.

One after the other, images of various group formations, in flight and on the ground, cross the screen along with close-ups of smaller groups of individual birds.

These movements are reproduced in the editing, three, four or five times, so that each tape is made up of short repetitive sequences. This is very different from the usual documentaries, which show the spectator the complete story of a bird's life as totally self-contained.

Two languages confront each other, those of biology and technology. And a great tradition – the nature documentary – is examined. Tomio Sasaki confronts this tradition by revealing the presence of the tool, which interferes between what is real and what is representation.

Artistes Canadiennes/Canadian Women Artists will take place from January 15 to March 25, 1986, at Canada House Cultural Centre Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London. ♦

Tomio Sasaki
Aviary Species in Soda Soup,
1981/82, video installation

