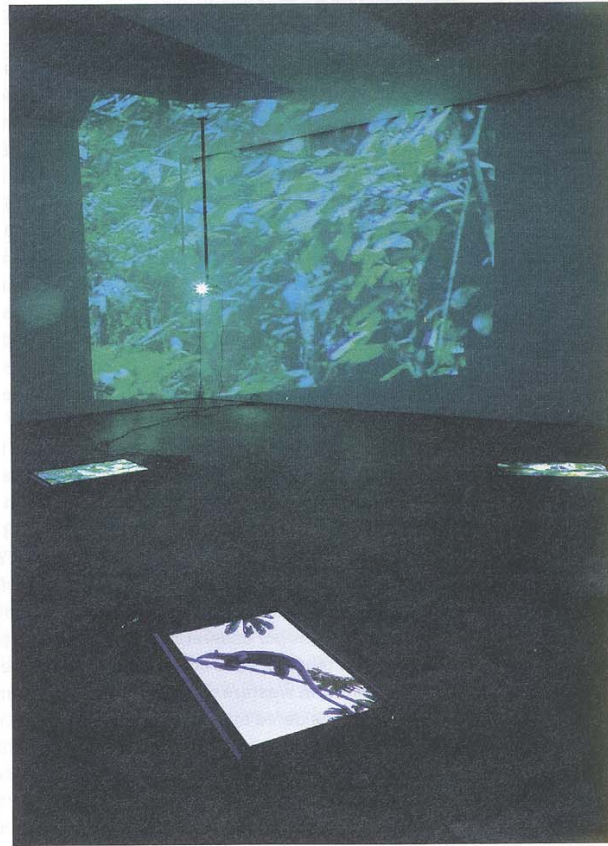


Ho, Christopher K. "Diana Thater: Continuous Contiguous." *Modern Painters* (March 2005): 99.

Right
Diana Thater *Continuous*.
Continuous, 2004-5, 4 LCD
projectors, 4 DVD players,
1 sync device, 3 plasma
screens, 3 consumer DVD
players, dimensions variable
COURTESY DAVID ZWIRNER GALLERY,
NEW YORK



Diana Thater: Continuous Contiguous

David Zwirner

7 JANUARY – 6 FEBRUARY

Time and again LA-based artist Diana Thater has asserted that, despite its prominent and consistent subject matter, of nature and wildlife, her work is primarily focused on formally transforming the exhibition venue, on creating a space 'between sculpture and architecture'. More important than what inspires this space – the different or alternative consciousness of animals – is what it inspires: a greater awareness on the viewer's part of his or her place in the artwork and, by extension, a reconsideration of his or her subjectivity. Thater's most recent installation, the footage of which was filmed during a month-long sojourn in the Panamanian rainforest, affirms this longstanding focus with sometimes poetic panache; along with other works in *Continuous Contiguous*, it also articulates more precisely the contours of Thater's viewing subject.

In the antechamber to the main gallery are three works from 1997, each comprised of paired monitors and displaying images of mountain ranges. *Shimmer*'s two monitors rest on their sides with the base of the ranges vertically abutting each other so that they resemble a Rorschach blot. (With typical attention to detail,

even the DVD players and electrical plugs on either side of the monitors mirror each other.) The images initially seem to be identical videos reversed; but subtle differences in cloud movement, evident upon extended viewing, indicate otherwise. Were the videos recorded on different days? Are they of the same range from different angles, or from opposite mountain faces? Like Roni Horn, another artist fond of the diptych format, Thater takes something and its double and foregrounds the liminal, ambiguous gap between them.

Doubling is also the structural principle of the sprawling, untitled installation that is the exhibition's centerpiece. Four video projectors at the corners of the cavernous main room throw slow pans of the Panamanian rainforest across the gallery, around corners, and onto the ceiling. At any given time, two projectors, diagonal from each other, are on, while the other two remain off. The pairs alternate every two minutes, heightening the feeling of being encircled, even coddled, by the lushness of the greenery (decadent given the bitter cold of the New York winter outside), and making moving out of the

way of a projector's path a ceaseless task: when one pair turns off and the other on, the viewer who has stepped aside to avoid casting a shadow must move again.

These shadows constitute the cornerstone of Thater's strategy to prompt the viewer to reconsider his or her subjectivity: seeing one's own shadow is supposed to engender an acute self-consciousness about one's physical presence and location in space. But in previous exhibitions, this experience was mitigated by the simultaneous and opposing one of being reduced to a disembodied, flat shell amidst a shimmering spectacle of refracted light (this was the case at the artist's 2001 show *Knots + Surfaces* at the Dia Center for the Arts). In effect, the virtual overwhelmed the actual. *Continuous Contiguous*, largely through its formal symmetry, rights the balance; a central axis in the real space of viewing anchors the experience of the exhibition, no matter how vertiginous. Perhaps more impressive than creating a space 'between sculpture and architecture' Thater simultaneously conjures actual and virtual space and holds them in suspended tension. CKH