

Matthew Grover

ltd presents... Matthew Grover

Traps Forward

06 April – 11 May 2013

Shot along the 22.4 mile stretch that Glenoaks Boulevard cuts across the San Fernando Valley, the 63 image suite that comprises Matthew Grover's *Traps Forward* eschews straight street photography in favor of impressionistic manipulations of color and tone. The pictures were exposed on Kodak Vivid Color film, pushed at the lab for higher contrast, before Grover brought them into Photoshop for further alteration. This interweaving of the grain of the film with the wider color gamut of the inkjet printer on which Grover's scanned negatives were printed evokes the look of an old film clip uploaded onto YouTube, and the project's very premise seems to rhyme the slow crawl of Ed Ruscha's *Every Building on Sunset Strip* with the lowriders cruising down the boulevard in an early 90s Snoop Dogg video. Accentuating these layers of mediation, the work asks to be placed alongside that of other artists interested in the ways that representations make meaning not in relationship to an external referent, such as a geographically defined locale, but rather in relation to other representations.

The banal sites captured by Grover's lens are photographed less as the scene of a crime than the staging of one in line with hip hop's obsessive appropriation of Brian De Palma's *Scarface* (1983). Innocuous interactions are made sinister, and tinted windows imply something worth hiding. Photographed from a certain angle and at a certain distance, mundane situations are caught in an ill-boding narrative. Aided by Grover's manipulations in post-production the images enter a network of associations, which include tropes of rap music videos that are themselves drawn more from Hollywood gangster films than firsthand experience. Yet, these street scenes are overwhelmingly nondescript, hardly the cinematic *mise en scène* likely to launch an aspiring rapper into a larger than life career.

Beyond their hazy atmosphere, the images record a monotonous suburban sprawl that's only distinguishing features are the occasional palm tree or the possibly recognizable mountain range in the distance. In this compound of ominous atmospherics and prosaic daily life, there's an unsettling suggestion that nothing happens next.

—Ben Carlson, 2013