



Nicola Loder, *The Apprenticeship of Silence*, 1994, detail.

NICOLA LODER *The Apprenticeship of Silence* at Centre for Contemporary Photography, Fitzroy, May-June, 1994

Simeon Kronenberg

For this exhibition, Nicola Loder arranged over 800 tiny framed photographs of landscapes and architectural models in three large grids. The title of the exhibition indicated that the artist's interest lay in the 'silence' located in the spaces between the images, in what remained unsaid, as much as in what was conveyed by the photographs. But necessarily, the grid forced relationships between the images. However, as Deborah Hennessy pondered in her introductory catalogue notes:

It is a small point but it lingers – does the process of gridding give information or only coordinate it. Should I affirm, yet again the grid as an ordering device, dynamically referring to itself; a structural matrix spread across a single surface or can I look for more fleeting incidents, something more casual than causal.

The tiny scenes within each frame captured possible worlds in moments of time, and events of minute significance. Their totality suggested a complex and arbitrary world in which images floated in odd relation to each other, in which the disparate and chaotic were ever present, profoundly denying the imposition of the ordered grid of rational minimalism.

In this apparent dislocation, in this contradiction between the enormity of the grid and the intimacy of each image used to construct it, Loder very deftly reminded us that the visual logic of the overall grid is challenged by the perception of each separate and intimate image.

The mathematical precision of grids is both comforting and disturbing. On the one hand, they demonstrate order through geometric

precision; on the other, they produce a disquieting sense of the vastness of things. In our imaginations they are not contained by the edges of the work but go on forever.

Many artists before Loder have been interested in the use of grids. One might cite the work of Agnes Martin (b.1912) whose 'pencilled grids aimed at a balance between the individuality of the mark and the impersonality of the structure' (Whitney Chadwick, 1990, p309).

Loder's concern is not with the anonymous and cool geometry of the grid but with an emotionally resonant and compelling apprehension of the complexity of the social world. The oblivion produced by the grid, its impersonality, its refusal to be idiosyncratic are denied.