

Liset Castillo, Jonas Pihl
Black and White Gallery

By Mary Hrbacek

In her new series of meticulously detailed color photographs, Cuban-born artist Liset Castillo records the intricate systems of tunnels, clover leafs, interconnecting lanes and elevated ramps which she has constructed from sand. The formally imposing structures are fated for a short-lived existence; as such, an aura of mystery surrounds these models. The close-up shots look large, but the scale is indeterminate; and the assumption of permanence — because we assume highways are forever — coupled with the ephemeral quality of sand, fuels a mental conflict in the viewer.

The use of a seaside setting conjures images of incoming tides dissolving the moats and turrets of children's sand castles, while the artificial highways suggest the temporal nature of the ice sculptures that Andy Goldsworthy creates and photographs. Like castles in the sky, a visual metaphor for day-dreams that never materialize in reality, these elegant photographs hint obliquely at a future obsolescence of the car culture, as we know it today.

In a similar vein, Danish artist Jonas Pihl's abstract works extend everyday expectations of the painting genre by grafting forms of installation and sculpture within the two dimensional painting format. In his free-spirited approach to art-making, process takes precedence; he splashes acrylic and enamel paint onto the canvas, photographs the splash, and projects it back onto the format. Then he carefully repaints the splash, forging random shapes into recognizable objects. In doing so, Pihl establishes a unity of dual creative intentions through a dialectic that mediates freedom and control.