

renwick gallery

The New York Times

Drew Heitzler

*Renwick Gallery
45 Renwick Street, near Spring
Street, South Village
Through July 29*

This solo by the surf-obsessed Los Angeles-based artist Drew Heitzler draws on source material both wet (surfer films and television shows) and dry (critical theory). Think of it as a summer show that's sometimes stuck in the classroom.

In the main part of the exhibition, the three-channel video installation "Spiral Jetty/Crystal Voyager/Region Centrale (Bootlegged, Re-ordered, Combined, Sometimes More, Sometimes Less)," Mr. Heitzler appropriates classic 1970s films by Robert Smithson, Michael Snow and George Greenough. It's an odd triad: one daredevil earthwork artist, one experimental filmmaker and one maker of surf movies. Yet it works, especially toward the end, when Mr. Greenough's camera tunnels through the waves, as Mr. Smithson's does aerial circles over the jetty, as Mr. Snow's rotates 360 degrees in a mountainous landscape.

The installation evolved from a lecture Mr. Heitzler gave at the Ninth Annual Surfing Arts, Science and Issues Conference. In a less compelling instance of repurposed research, he is also showing ink-jet on watercolor paper prints of an essay on Smithson and the author Thomas Pynchon that figured in his M.F.A. studies at Hunter College.

A third piece consists entirely of sequences from the television show "John From Cincinnati," a surf drama with magic-realist touches that aired on HBO for just two months in 2007. If you never saw the widely panned original (I didn't), nothing about Mr. Heitzler's edited version will inspire you to do so.

But these lesser works are more than redeemed by the installation, which weaves surfing, Land Art and structural film into the same questing, quasi-spiritual, adrenalized experience.

KAREN ROSENBERG