

DIAZ CONTEMPORARY

Lisa Steele & Kim Tomczak

The funniest thing...

3 September to 10 October 2009

Opening Thursday 3 September from 6 to 9

Diaz Contemporary is pleased to present new work by Lisa Steele & Kim Tomczak. Steele & Tomczak have worked exclusively in collaboration since 1983, producing videotapes, performances and photo/text works. Visually elegant and technically sophisticated, their work addresses universal social realities, family histories and repressed memories. They have profoundly influenced developments in video and media art in Canada since the early 1970s through an intimate and subjective approach to investigating and documenting society.

In the current exhibition, Steele & Tomczak continue this research and documentation of society through a series of photo-text hybrids. Several large-scale photographs present adolescents from various Western countries, facing institutional doorways, with their backs to the viewer. The images are overlaid with text – responses to a series of questions asked by the artists. The questions are personal, asking the teens about their fears, worries, dreams and goals; the responses demonstrate several issues facing youth today. The series speaks to the deep solitude of young people, while never abandoning the current social environment within which they exist.

These works address adolescents collectively, but they also present a deep sense of individuality. While some of the questions produce similar answers (what is your favourite colour?), others produce responses that are strikingly different (what are you most looking forward to?). The teenagers' faces are not visible, yet their individual personalities and senses of style come through, as do their deepest fears and anxieties. Steele & Tomczak simultaneously present collective and individual stories of a generation.

Toronto-based Lisa Steele & Kim Tomczak have shown their work in numerous film festivals and exhibitions worldwide. In February 2009, their new 4-channel video installation work "*Becoming...*" was featured in the Berlin Film Festival, *Forum Expanded*. In September 2009 they will be showing a new piece entitled *Speak City for Projections*, part of the Toronto International Film Festival. Steele & Tomczak have received numerous grants and awards including the Governor General's Award for lifetime achievement in Visual & Media Arts (2005). They are also co-founders of Vtape, a Toronto media arts centre, and both teach at the University of Toronto, where Steele is the Associate Chair of the Department of Art.