

Published on the occasion of the exhibition

Christa Blatchford: [See Around](#)

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Artists Space

Project Space

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About The Artist

Born and raised in New England, Christa Blatchford is a video artist that examines perception through the study of object, place, and personal experience. Her work has been included in a number of group exhibitions in New York, Boston, and Cape Cod. Blatchford completed her MFA in Combined Media at Hunter College in 2005. She recently taught digital media at Hunter College and is currently conducting seminars around New York State for the New York Foundation for the Arts. This is Blatchford's first solo exhibition in New York.

Thanks + Credits

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All images courtesy the artist.

The subject of Seeing

Meredith Johnson

It is surprisingly rare to really look at something. More often than not we glance at an object or site, quickly process the information, and move on to the next. Inundated by a multitude of images in a given day, seeing in our culture is an act of on-the-fly editing, a quick prioritizing of what to remember or respond to. In a city like New York, skillful visual editing keeps many of us from investing in a prolonged study of anything. We take light, sound, smell, and sensory stimuli as givens, never dissecting their layers to see how they connect to our individual perceptions of place.

Over a series of months, Brooklyn-based artist Christa Blatchford committed to the visual exploration of one place. By removing herself from her daily routine, she navigated the boundaries of Block Island and recorded dozens of hours of video footage. Alone, over multiple seasons, Blatchford captured the range of characteristics that exist on one small stretch of coastline. *See Around*, a four-channel video work, documents her experience of sitting, waiting, and watching. A simple act that reveals the small details often passed over by the quick encounter or the touristic survey of a place.

In examining the solitary exploration of the boundaries of an island, Charlemagne Palestine's 1976 film *Island Song* is in stark contrast to *See Around*. In *Island Song* the artist travels around an island in Hawaii on motorcycle, uttering a nervous sound similar to the bike's engine. The journey is one of frantic flight, ending without an escape from the confines of the island's borders. Both *Island Song* and *See Around* record, from the artist's view, the boundaries of a small and navigable place. Unlike Palestine's work, however, Blatchford's journey is not rooted in claustrophobic anxiety. Instead, it approaches the island as respite and meditative landing point, slowing down its interaction with the landscape, rather than intensely rushing through it.

Similar to the focused view in Andy Warhol's *Empire*, *See Around* plays with the perception of time. In Warhol's seminal 1964 film, he directs his lens toward the Empire State Building, producing an 8-hour and 5-minute look at a landmark that is casually and quickly glanced at by millions each day. Like Warhol, Blatchford focuses our attention and makes us decelerate our viewing. This creates a condition of witness for the passing of atmospheric events. The four frames of her work sometimes appear to construct a seamless view, with the horizon lining up to reveal a panorama. At other moments, however, one realizes that tides don't always correspond, landscape markers suddenly move out of the field, and light conditions vary by frame. The overlapping of site and time is matched with intermittent color fields, isolating the hues of the various horizons, slowing down the experience of light and time even further.

During her visits to Block Island, Blatchford uncovered a series of makeshift shelters throughout the landscape. Large enough to accommodate someone sitting, but too small to act as housing, these structures suggest a community of isolated watchers. The viewer never encounters these shacks in the film itself, though Blatchford often anchors her gaze from these locations. In the gallery, the work is projected on roughly built walls, their loose construction surrounding the viewer in a similar way to the island's shelters, enclosing the inhabitant and framing the expansive horizon. This shelter, this respite, is like the island itself. It provides an enclosure from which to focus the gaze, and directs thoughts to the limits of the eye. In *See Around*, the act of looking becomes the subject, requiring a prolonged engagement we too rarely exercise either in our daily lives or in our experiences of art viewing.

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when you see a horizon line will it be the same as mine?