

A preview of

Ambient Parking Lot, by Pamela Lu

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The recording of “Ambient Parking #25” went off without a hitch. Production efforts approached the sublime. We watched in rapture as the parking lot cooperated with our long-arm mike and seemed to relax into the session. The seven-inch vinyl single was released two and a half weeks later on an indie label underwritten by the University of Krakow, with liner notes cribbed from an anonymous dissertation on Hugo Boss:

The moment is in the line. The line is in the secret. The secret is in the crease. The crease is in the power. The power is in the moment.

Words meant to sketch the condition of high fashion, but which could just as easily be applied to oil-slicked asphalt, acres of grid-striped spaces approximating the breadth and presence of the compact car.

Played back, the music emitted a low earthy growl, privileging bass-level amplitude over quasi-narrative pop disappointment. Stripped down to essentials, the noise had the pounding attitude of reverb without its inbred conservatism. As always, a tough-minded aesthetic kept our minimalist concept intact, while the lusciousness of the infinite loop made even the shoegazers smile. With just a little filtering, the empty landscape managed to express its industrially generated solipsism and came to

AMBIENT PARKING LOT

overshadow even the engine gunning and trunk popping of SUVs.

It was a watershed moment in our recording career. The success of “Ambient Parking #25” buoyed our spirits and encouraged us to reconsider our earlier failures among “Ambient Parking #1” through “Ambient Parking #24.” We mixed and rereleased these tracks as streaming audio B-sides over the Internet. Popular response and informal critical attention inspired us to add ever more elaborate explanatory text to our web site. A select bibliography of our sources included:

- 1) The 2000 post-Kyoto Accord report on automotive fuel emissions in major metropolitan concentrations west of the Rockies.
- 2) The 1999 Small Business Administration report on wage inequities across gender lines in the private sector.
- 3) The 1980s Kern County stats on rising rates of bullying among girls, ages eight through thirteen, in the Fresno public school district.
- 4) The pedagogical philosophies of Count Tolstoy.
- 5) Marcel Proust’s unwritten letters to Alfred Agostinelli, volumes 1 through 3.
- 6) Several lesser-known Taoist texts.
- 7) The *Portable New Millennium Anthology of Anti-Late-Consumer-Capitalist Writings*, published by Barnes & Noble.
- 8) The seminal Technicolor love duets of Rock Hudson and Doris Day.

AMPLIFIER

9) Essays on the unseen footage clipped out by the signature jump cuts of early New Wave cinema, contributing to the development of a hidden hipster *mise-en-scène* that revealed its holiness, leisurely and progressively, to countless generations of twenty-five year olds.*

In the midst of our compilation, we slipped underground and regrouped to discuss proper ambition. After several cycles of soul-searching, we deemed ourselves ready to produce a full-length album. We purchased sturdy walking shoes and took only public transit in order to develop rigorous objectivity *vis-à-vis* our subject matter. A period of intensive study ensued.

We positioned ourselves near the entrances of major garage structures in the core of the city to observe the tonal differences between midweek and weekend parking. We rode the elevators to roof level, where prime parking spots and a crosshatched walkway led to scenic aerial dining. We patrolled the grounds of self-attended corner lots, where visitors parked between divisions of cracked asphalt and inserted dollar bills into numbered slots on metal collection boxes.

We compared the tempos of residential versus commercial parking, noting the modal distinction between those who parked within twenty feet of their destination and those who parked to walk toward a designated area, such as a faux downtown or pedestrian marketplace. These two populations, as it turned out, were separated culturally and socioeconomically by a chromatic half step. The seductive dissonance of songs-at-war, it seemed, had not been lost on certain city architects.

* These sources marked an artist's, or an outlaw's, paradise. And though we saw our own work as emotionally proportionate to them, their appearance here was more *realpolitik* than academic. We hoped to generate a bibliography so tedious and overgrown that it would be mistaken as our primary preoccupation and prevent scholars from stealing our work. We hoped to create a field of footnotes so perplexing and baroque that critics would feel compelled to write their own criticism of them.