



ARTIST

Vikky Alexander

TITLE

Untitled, from the West Edmonton Mall Series.

DATE

1992

DIMENSIONS

23.5 in H x 16 in W

MEDIUM

Chromogenic Color Prints

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1992.002

CURRENT LOCATION

2432-2C

VIKKY ALEXANDER

BORN

1959

BIRTHPLACE

Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

GENDER

Female

CITIZENSHIP

Canada

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-Canadian

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Light Work Gallery, 1983
Artist-in-Residence, 1992

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 74
Contact Sheet 97

ESSAYS

In a scene from Martin Scorsese's film 'Mean Streets,' Charlie, a small time gangster, reveals to Teresa, his secret girlfriend, that one of the things he likes best in the world is mountains. When Teresa tells Charlie, who has lived his entire life in Manhattan, that there are no mountains in New York City, Charlie retorts 'Tall buildings - mountains, they're the same thing.' In her recent series of photographs titled 'Artificial Nature', Vikky Alexander extends Charlie's concept of mountains to include a variety of natural elements in an arena that is constantly being reinvented as a commodity for business, pleasure and convenience. Since the early 1980s Alexander has explored how industry, advertisers and the media present commodities as essential components of a full life, and how we in turn acquire an understanding of who we are and what we need through these commodities and the landscape they create. Her work suggests that as we surround ourselves with wood grained Formica, murals of nature and conditioned air, and measure our looks and lifestyle against super-models and movie stars, we create a personal history grounded in the experience of simulation. In 'Artificial Nature,' Alexander surmises that if we want a 'real' experience, like pain, we could prick our finger with a pin, but if we need to experience nature, we should just go to the mall. In her photographs made in the West Edmonton Mall in Canada, Alexander sees the attempt to bring the natural environment indoors reflected in the glass, chrome and polished stone of the malls' physical components. Just to make sure we don't confuse the artificial environment of the mall with the 'real thing', Alexander shows us palm trees and a pool with fabricated waves reflected in the shiny facades of the store fronts and display cases. Just as Alexander layers her photographs, making it difficult to tell just where the flora and fauna begins and ends, she layers her point of view with humor, skepticism and acceptance. If we embrace the information that Alexander presents as merely transparent attempts by ambitious entrepreneurs to influence our behavior, then what's the harm in a brief commune with nature on our way to purchase a microwave oven, or some pantyhose or some oven cleaner....? Jeffrey Hoone (c)1991 Vikky Alexander participated in our Artist-in-Residence program in February 1992. Originally from Canada, she currently lives in New York City.