

## **Jon Sasaki – On Purpose**

To lead a life of purpose is a desire unique to humans. When that purpose or usefulness is removed or thwarted it creates an emotional and psychological space that is an important point of connection in these recent works by Jon Sasaki.

In *Toronto's Official Y2K Mascot, Autumn, 2008* (2008), the obsolete mascot sits on a park bench, the droopy spire of his CN Tower head signaling deflation and impotence, as he ponders his options now that the event he was created to celebrate is well in the past. His situation seems bleak, and although he may hold out hope for new opportunities he embodies the fear of being made obsolete by the passage of time. This same sense of pathos permeates *Unfilled Dance Cards* (2010, ongoing), a collection of found cards that were never put to their only intended use. Although it is the cards themselves whose purpose is negated, they act as stand-ins for the attendees of a long-ago dance, making them our entry point to a narrative of loneliness, rejection and social failure just by the fact of their blankness. By remaining unfilled however, they also contain the potential for future use and the possibility of romance and acceptance.

Continuing Sasaki's exploration of frustrated purpose, *Stanchion* (2007) is a photograph of a found situation in which a stanchion leans up against the very painting it was meant to protect from damage, while the small sculpture *Cloverleaf* (2010), shaped like a highway interchange with no exits, is an unusable roadway, a continuous loop (much like Sasaki's videos) that makes travel impossible rather than simplifying navigation. Although the scenario in the video *Cycle* (2010) is also one of frustration, the cyclist's perseverance despite unchanging conditions introduces another type of optimism and determination. Pedaling furiously to little effect, his inexplicably slow progress marked by the regular traffic speeding by, the cyclist is undeterred by the lack of reward for his efforts. *Cycle* allows for the idea that the companion impulse to our search for a meaningful existence is the determination to keep trying, even in the face of failure and pointlessness.

**Catherine Dean** is an independent curator based in Toronto. Recent exhibitions include *David Armstrong Six: The Law of the Excluded Middle* at Red Bull 381 Projects, Toronto (2010); *The Boundary Layer*, Prairie Art Gallery, Grande Prairie, Alberta (2009); *Everyday Nameless Spectacle*, Contact Photography Festival (2009); and *You Don't Really Care For Music, Do You?*, Red Bull 381 Projects (2008).