

**Edwin Zwakman**

*Tales from the Grid*

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Edwin Zwakman's latest series of model dioramas explore the idea of our physical and social landscape existing as a series of formalized grids. These are probably some of the most 'convincing' models (which is presumably one of the artist's objectives, and inevitably the viewer's first reaction) that Zwakman has produced to date, and even at their full, intended size there are few clues to betray their illusion.

However, the quality of the model is not the only criteria with which to scrutinise the work. Zwakman does not divulge how he came to the point of making a relatively mixed suite of five images around this fairly broad and perhaps a little pedestrian concept, although the use of the diorama does seem appropriate for this subject: rather than working as a photographer within this grid (that is, the landscape), he has made his own grid, rendering the photographic element of the work little more than a necessity.

Zwakman prefers to work from memory and wanted to exploit the space between himself and his native Netherlands during a recent research fellowship at Derby, to create images based purely on what he calls his "collected impressions" of home. However, despite this distance - and this is perhaps the point of the work - there is no visible difference between Zwakman's conceived memory of his home, and the actual landscape of Britain: the shopping trolley in a supermarket car-park; the reflection of a tower-block in a puddle on paving stones; the pylon in a field... all typical views of any European country.

What carries the work, aside from Zwakman's accomplished technical skills, is its sense of humour and entertainment: *E L Centre*, the title of the image of an ugly concrete multi-storey car-park, suggests the name of a 1980s town centre shopping mall, but actually refers to the Early Learning Centre, the shop where Zwakman sourced the chunky building blocks for this particular model. There is also a sense of being at the mercy of a conjuror who is so confident of

his trick that he makes electricity cables out of cotton-thread (*Three Things*) instead of something more convincing, just to patronise his audience.