

BRITTANY CARMICHAEL

By Alice Stratford-Kurus

Brittany Carmichael is in her final year of her BFA at Concordia University. She has honed her photographic practice concurrently with her art historical studies. *Couple by Car* (2009-2010) is from Carmichael's *Powell River* series which portrays the namesake community in British Columbia. This series was realized over two summers when the artist immersed herself in the remote rural town where her father spent his childhood. An ordinary moment is captured in *Couple by Car*. Significance is accorded to this instant through its isolation and preservation (by the lens of the camera) and through heightened detail achieved by a crisp focus and luminous colours. The dress, location, and poses of the two people are true to how the photographer initially encountered them. Thus the image captures two portraits that give intimate insight to the characters of the subjects. The eyes of the two figures meet Carmichael's behind the camera lens and, ultimately, the subjects of the image meet the gaze of the viewer directly. The man and woman appear content and approachable; *Couple by Car* acts as an introduction shared between strangers. The photograph also serves to index the artist's physical presence in Powell River and alludes to her relationship as a visitor to the town rather than a local inhabitant. In this sense, Carmichael's *Powell River* series navigates both the familiar personal history of the region and the artist's entrenched place at the margins of the community.



Brittany Carmichael. *Couple by Car*, from the series *Powell River*. 2009-2010. Photograph.