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# ARTnews

## THE SHOCK OF THE REAL

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wood beams occupy the foreground of a dark space. They jut out from the right, situated at a slight angle to each other; the viewer might imagine them to be roof struts, but they are clearly none too sturdy. Almost immediately they begin to sprout long spores like mushrooms. Then bugs start to flutter across the scene, making it appear as if nature's nocturnal secret life were being captured with time-lapse photography. Again, though, one has doubts: the wood seems slick, the light is oddly filtered, and the spores sway as if the whole scene were underwater. In fact, *Growth* is an entirely animated and deliberately ambiguous invention, a work whose fiction is confirmed at the end when the beams break apart and fly off into the dark distance, like debris in space.

Cottingham has long been interested in creating plausible creations from invented scenes. In the past he has used small models to make photographs evoking architectural spaces. In this case, the accompanying photographs were simply stills from the film, and Cottingham seemed less invested in the marvel of fic-



Keith Cottingham, *Sequence A (Frame No. 1770)* from *Growth*, 2007, C-print, 38 1/4" x 68". Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

tion itself than in the gap between the small and slow and the big and fast: while the film appears to capture scenes of microscopic life, it goes on to suggest a world of vast, cosmic proportions. Maybe this theme is well worn, yet, composed as elegantly as it was here, the film delivered a reminder of human frailty.

—Morgan Falconer

## Keith Cottingham

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

*Growth* was the title and also, at first glance, the theme of the short film at the center of this clever show by Keith Cottingham. At the outset of the film two

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