



ERIN O'KEEFE

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Born 1962, Bronxville, New York
Lives and works in New York

Education

- 1988 MA, Columbia University, New York
1984 BFA, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Solo and Two-Person Exhibitions

- 2020 *Certain Things*, Seventeen, London
2019 *Seeing Things*, Denny Dimin Gallery, New York
Erin O'Keefe and Matt Mignanelli, Denny Dimin Gallery Hong Kong
2018 *Ecstatic Vernacular*, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York
2017 *Book of Days*, Denny Gallery, New York
2016 *Things as They Are*, Gallery Jones, Vancouver
2015 *Things as They Are*, Denny Gallery, New York
Natural Disasters, Platform Gallery, Seattle

Group Exhibitions

- 2020 *Triple Play*, Steve Turner, Los Angeles
Conversations in Colour, Cooke Latham Gallery, London
AND/ALSO: Photography (mis)represented, Kasmin Gallery, New York
2019 *Joy Before the Object*, Seventeen, London
Paperworks, Albada Jelgersma Gallery, Amsterdam
20 x 16 Biennial, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York
2018 *Invariants*, Ampersand Gallery, Portland, Oregon
2017 *NEW YORK, NEW WORK*, Albada Jelgersma Gallery, Amsterdam
Translucent, McKenzie Fine Art, New York
SPRING/BREAK Art Show (with Rob de Oude), New York
UNTITLED, Denny Gallery, San Francisco
Painters and Photographers, Providence College Galleries, Rhode Island
Press One For Show, Lorimoto Gallery, Ridgewood, New York
Photo II, Transmitter Gallery, Brooklyn
2016 *Inside Out/Upside Down*, The Photographer's Gallery, London
High Summer, Foley Gallery, New York
Treading Water, TGIF Gallery, Brooklyn
The City and The City, Denny Gallery Pop Up, New York
Construction Site, McKenzie Fine Art, New York
Big Nothing, Sous Les Etoiles Gallery, New York
PASS/FAIL, Ortega Y Gassett Projects, Brooklyn
(Not So) Still Life, Glyndor Gallery, Wave Hill, Bronx
2015 *Emerging*, Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles
COMMAND-Z, Improvised Show Boat #7, Brooklyn
20 x 16, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York
The Avoidance of the Real, Gallery Jones, Vancouver
It's All Been Done Before, Forum Art Space, Cleveland
2014 *Konstellation*, Galerie f56, Munich
Strategies for Flatness in Photography, QueenSpecific, Toronto
Vice Photography Issue Exhibition Pioneer Works, Brooklyn
Frameshift, Denny Gallery, New York
Photographs 2, Silver Projects, Brooklyn
Estuary, NYFA Gallery, Brooklyn
2013 *Lightplay*, Gallery 21, Moscow

- Blog/REblog, Signal Gallery, New York
 Hey Hot Shot, Jen Bekman Gallery, New York
- 2012 *More Photographs about Buildings and Food*, Gallery 339, Philadelphia
31 Women in Art Photography, Hasted Krautler Gallery, New York
3rd Annual Photography Exhibition, Philadelphia Photo Arts Center
make_space_copy.jpg, The Plains Project, Chicago
- 2011 *Remasters*, Plug Projects Kansas City, Missouri
- 2010 *2010 Photography Competition Exhibition*, The Camera Club of New York

Awards

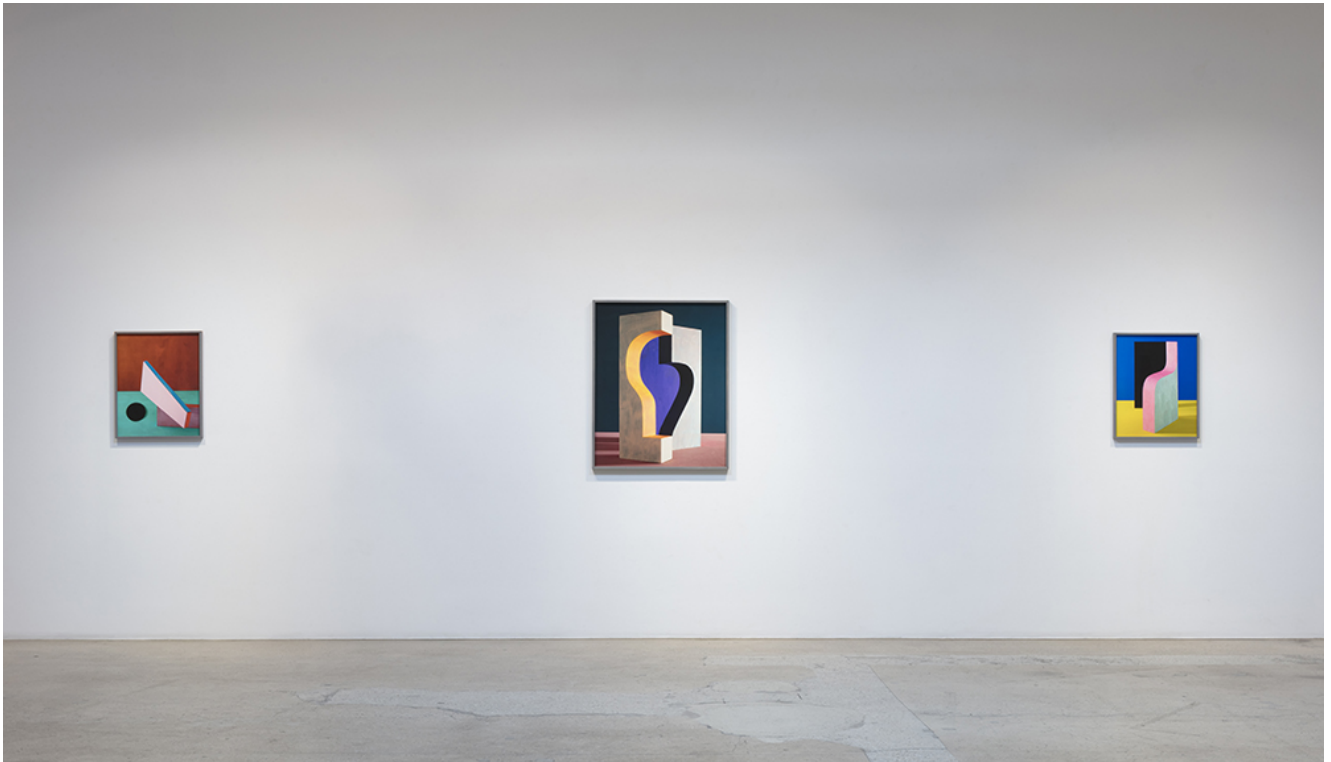
- 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship in Photography
- 2017 Santo Foundation Individual Artist Prize
- 2015 Named one of Photo District News *30 Photographers to Watch*
- 2013 NYFA Finalist Fellow in Photography
 Hey Hot Shot winner (Jen Bekman Gallery)
- 2010 First in Camera Club of New York (CCNY) Photography Competition, juried by James Casebere

Bibliography

- 2020 Tarker, Kate. "New and Recent Photographs," *The Paris Review*, Issue 235, Winter
 Knoblauch, Loring. "Review of *AND/ALSO: Photography (mis)represented* at Kasmin Gallery,"
Collector Daily, August 3
- 2019 Cash, Stephanie. "Erin O'Keefe: Seeing Things," *photograph*, November 5
 "Seeing Things by Erin O'Keefe," *UNSEEN Platform*, October 23
 Pfarrer, Steve. "The newest additions: Mead Art Museum exhibit features treasure trove of
 contemporary art," *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, October 16
 Knoblauch, Loring. "Erin O'Keefe, Seeing Things @Denny Dimin," *Collector Daily*, October 16
 "Interaction of Space," *Less Than Half*, October 14
 Keh, Pei-Ru. "There's more to Erin O'Keefe's still lifes than meets the eye," *Wallpaper Magazine*,
 September 11
 Singer, Jill. "A New Body of Work By Erin O'Keefe Asks What Makes a Space "Real"," *Sight Unseen*,
 September 4
 Cascone, Sarah and Caroline Goldstein. "21 Gallery Shows You Won't Want to Miss in New York
 This Fall, From Amy Sberal's Star Turn to a Historic Cuban Artist's US Debut," *artnet news*,
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 Artworks," *artnet news*, June 26
- 2018 Cohen, Alina. "The Artists Everyone Talked about during Art Basel in Miami Beach," *Artsy*,
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 Baker, R.C. "A Painter's Photographer: Erin O'Keefe's Bewitching Shapes," *Village Voice*, May 15
 Hall, Carmen Rosy. "Before Bed: The Wing's Curator Falls Asleep to Sabrina the Teenage Witch, and
 Dreams of Rearranging Art," *Vogue*, May 15
- 2017 Gibson, Jeff. "Review of Erin O'Keefe at Denny Gallery," *Artforum*, Vol. 55, No. 10. pp. 363-4, Summer
 Knoblauch, Loring. "Erin O'Keefe, Book of Days @Denny," *Collector Daily*, May 1
 Dafoe, Taylor. "The Phenomenon of Light and Shadow: A Q&A with Erin O'Keefe," *Blouin Artinfo*,
 April 24
 Sanger, Jill. "Saturday Selects," *Sight Unseen*, March 25
 Knoblauch, Loring. "Photo II @ Transmitter Gallery," *Collector Daily*, February 7
 Forrest, Nicholas. "Sneak Peek: Untitled, San Francisco 2017," *Blouin Artinfo*, January 11
- 2016 Allison, Genevieve. "5 Photography Exhibitions to See This Summer," *Aperture Blog*, July 5
 "Big Nothing: Sous les Etoiles," listed in *The New Yorker*, Goings on about Town, July 11 & 18

- Shen, Danni. "Things As They Are: An Interview with Erin O'Keefe," *Wave Hill Blog*, May 31
Plantation Journal 5: Sculptural Corners, May
- Churchill, Jessie. *Looking at Painting*, Volume 2
- Rosenberg, Karen. "Meet the Artist: A Few Questions for Architect-Photographer Erin O'Keefe, on Creating "Cubist Space" With the Camera," *Artspace*, April 27
- "(Not So) Still Life at Wave Hill," *Musée Magazine*, April 23
- Brown, Hudson. "The Flatness," *Paper Sea*, Volume 3, Issue 4
- 2015 "Goings On About Town: Erin O'Keefe," *The New Yorker*, October 5 Issue
- Zelony-Mindell, Efreem. "Holy Shit! Erin O'Keefe at Denny Gallery," *Style.No.Chaser*, October 4
- Keeting, Zachary. "Erin O'Keefe at Denny Gallery," (video) *Gorky's Granddaughter*, September 25
- Knoblauch, Loring. "Erin O'Keefe's Things as They Are @ Denny," *Collector Daily*, September 15
- Leifheit, Matthew. "Studio Visit: Erin O'Keefe," *Paper Journal*, September 9
- Strand, David. "Closing Soon: Kristin Cammermeyer & Erin O'Keefe," *Vanguard Seattle*, June 23
- Hegert, Natalie. "Barbara Kasten: New Peers in Contemporary Photography," *The Huffington Post*, April 22
- "PDN's 30 2015," *Photo District News (PDN)*, April 30
- Feinstein, Jon. "Erin O'Keefe's Multidimensional Photographs Might Melt Your Brain," *Humble Art Foundation*, March 26
- "Backstory: Erin O'Keefe," *Tilted Arc*, March 16
- WIRED* Japan #15
- Quiet Lunch Magazine*, Issue #2
- 2014 Schiller, Jakob. "Mind-Bending Dioramas That Distort How Your See Reality," *WIRED*, November 25
- Frame Magazine*, issue #101, November/December
- VICE Magazine*, Photography Issue
- Knoblauch, Loring. "Frameshift @ Denny Gallery," *Collector Daily*, June 27
- Vartanian, Hrag. "Your Concise Guide to the 2014 Bushwick Open Studios," *Hyperallergic*, May 28
- WAX Magazine*, Issue #5, Summer
- Campion, Darren. "Erin O'Keefe: Surface and Depth," *Prism Photography Magazine*, Issue #16, May/June
- A/Topic Magazine*, Issue #2
- 2013 "Snapshot: 'Silver Paper #6' (2012), by Erin O'Keefe," *Financial Times*, November 15

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS



Triple Play. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



Triple Play. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



Triple Play. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



Conversations in Colour. Installation view, Cooke Latham Gallery, London, 2020



AND/ALSO: Photography (mis)represented. Installation view, Kasmin Gallery, New York, 2020



AND/ALSO: Photography (mis)represented. Installation view, Kasmin Gallery, New York, 2020



AND/ALSO: Photography (mis)represented. Installation view, Kasmin Gallery, New York, 2020



Seeing Things. Installation view, Denny Dimin Gallery, New York, 2019



Seeing Things. Installation view, Denny Dimin Gallery, New York, 2019



Seeing Things. Installation view, Denny Dimin Gallery, New York, 2019



Joy Before the Object. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2019



Joy Before the Object. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2019



Erin O'Keefe and Matt Mignanelli. Installation view, Denny Dimin Gallery Hong Kong, 2019



Erin O'Keefe and Matt Mignanelli. Installation view, Denny Dimin Gallery Hong Kong, 2019



Erin O'Keefe and Matt Mignanelli. Installation view, Denny Dimin Gallery Hong Kong, 2019



Ecstatic Vernacular. Installation view, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, 2018



Ecstatic Vernacular. Installation view, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, 2018



Ecstatic Vernacular. Installation view, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, 2018



NEW YORK, NEW WORK. Installation view, Albada Jelgersma Gallery, Amsterdam, 2017



Book of Days. Installation view, Denny Gallery, New York, 2017



Book of Days. Installation view, Denny Gallery, New York, 2017



Book of Days. Installation view, Denny Gallery, New York, 2017



Book of Days. Installation view, Denny Gallery, New York, 2017



Photo II. Installation view, Transmitter Gallery, Brooklyn, 2017



Things as They Are. Installation view, Denny Gallery, New York, 2015



Things as They Are. Installation view, Denny Gallery, New York, 2015



Things as They Are. Installation view, Denny Gallery, New York, 2015

SELECTED WORKS



Fallout, 2020
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



For Lucy, 2020
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Orange Over, 2020
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Orange Squeeze, 2020
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Purple Heart, 2020
Archival pigment print
40 x 32 inches (101.6 x 81.3 cm)



Tango, 2020
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



Twist and Float, 2020
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



Blue Boy, 2019
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 inches (127 x 101.6 cm)



Girls, 2019
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



Kiss, 2019
Archival pigment print
40 x 32 inches (101.6 x 81.3 cm)



Orange Pushy, 2019
Archival pigment print
40 x 32 inches (101.6 x 81.3 cm)



Ripple, 2019
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



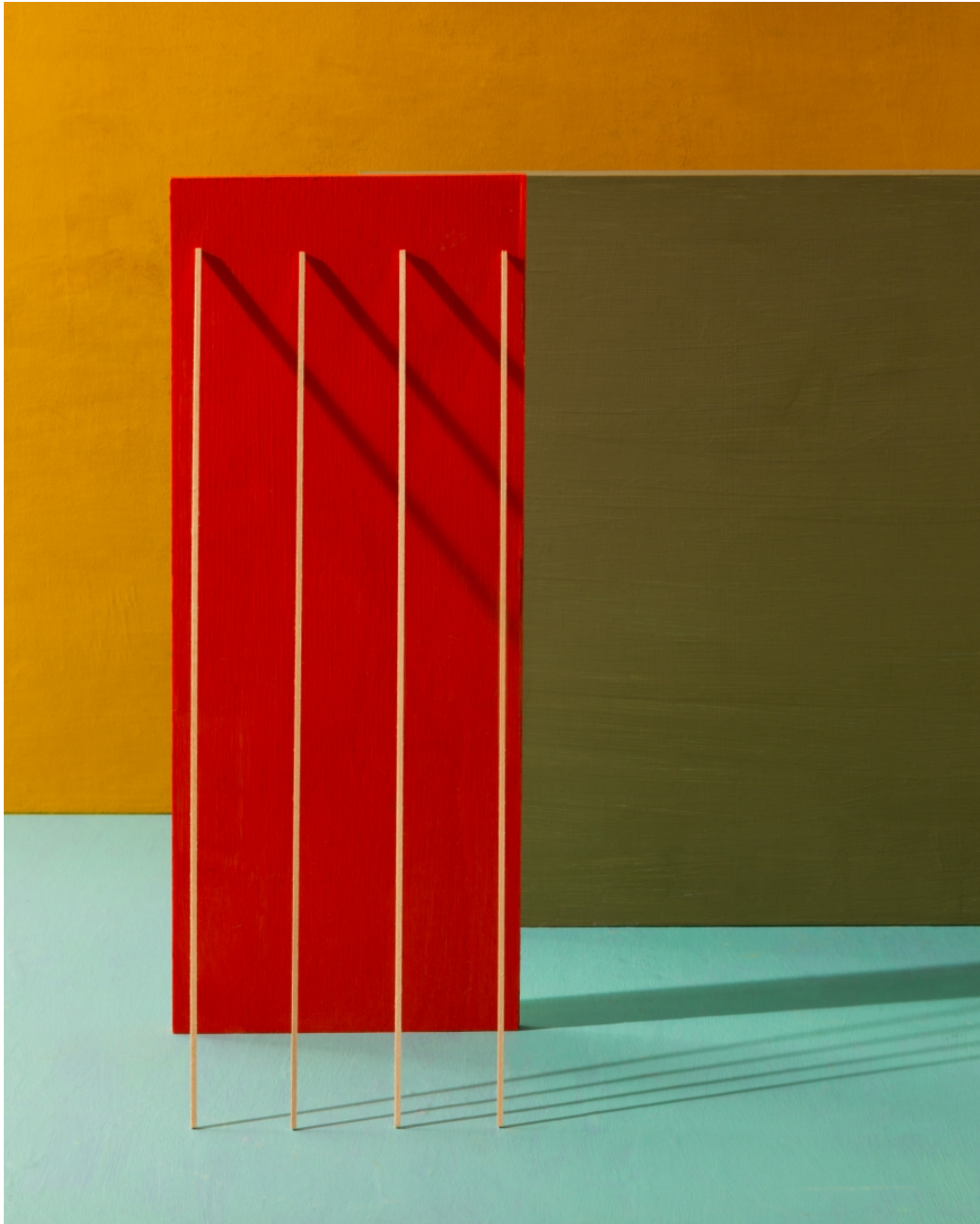
Built Work #3, 2018
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Built Work #4, 2018
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



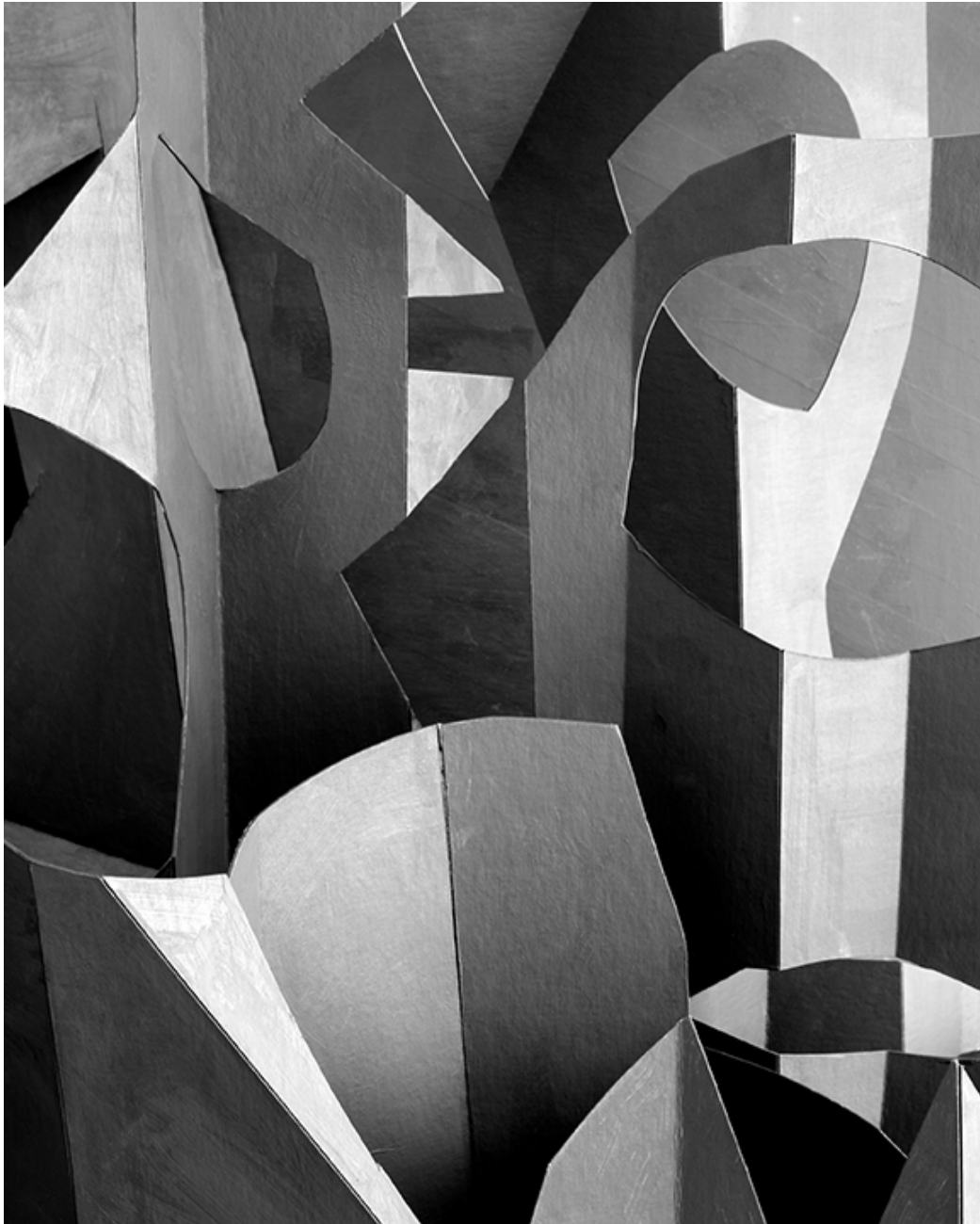
Built Work #5, 2018
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Built Work #7, 2018
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



Book of Days #10, 2017
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



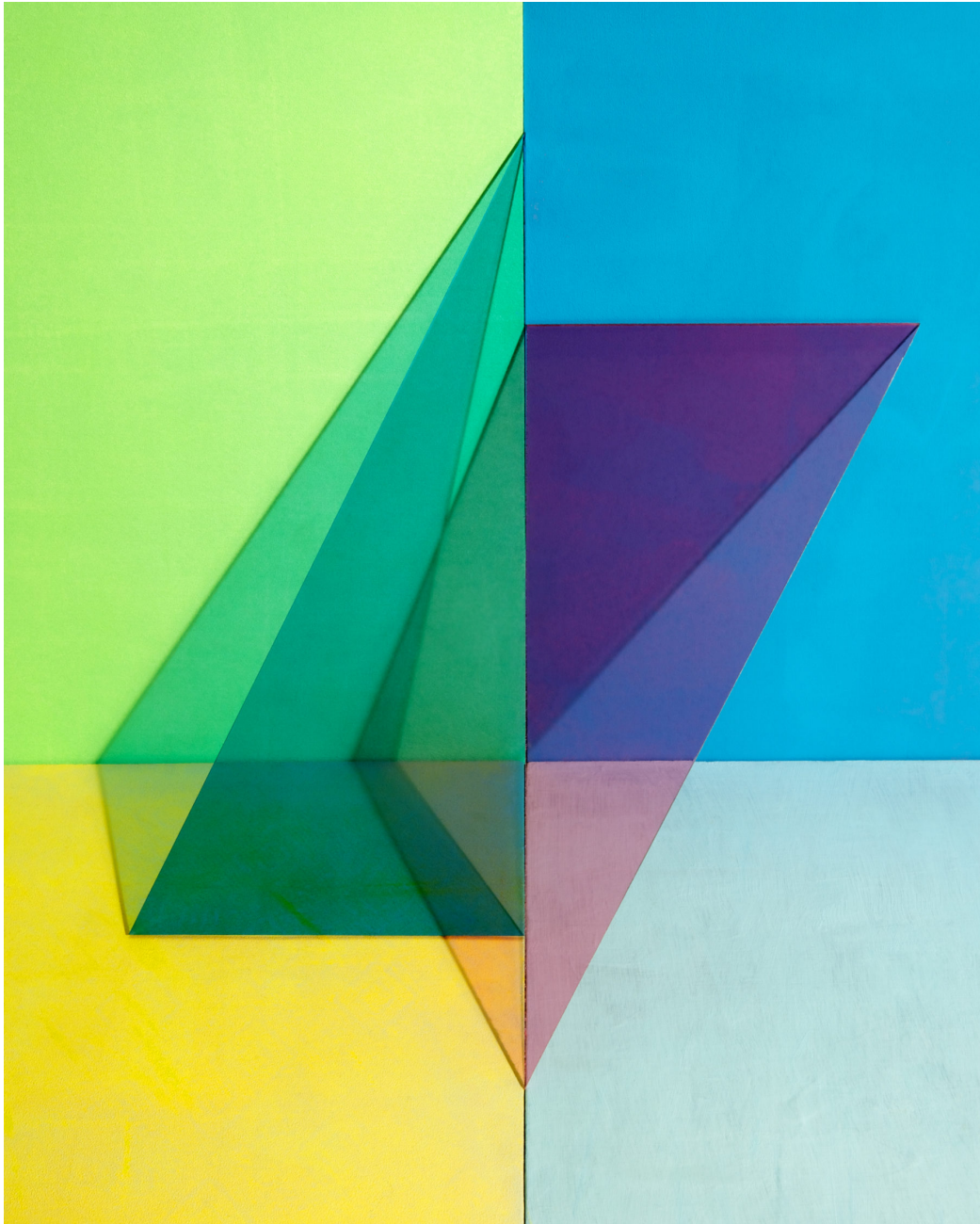
Book of Days #15, 2017
Archival pigment print
25 x 20 inches (63.5 x 50.8 cm)



Things As They Are #42, 2017
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



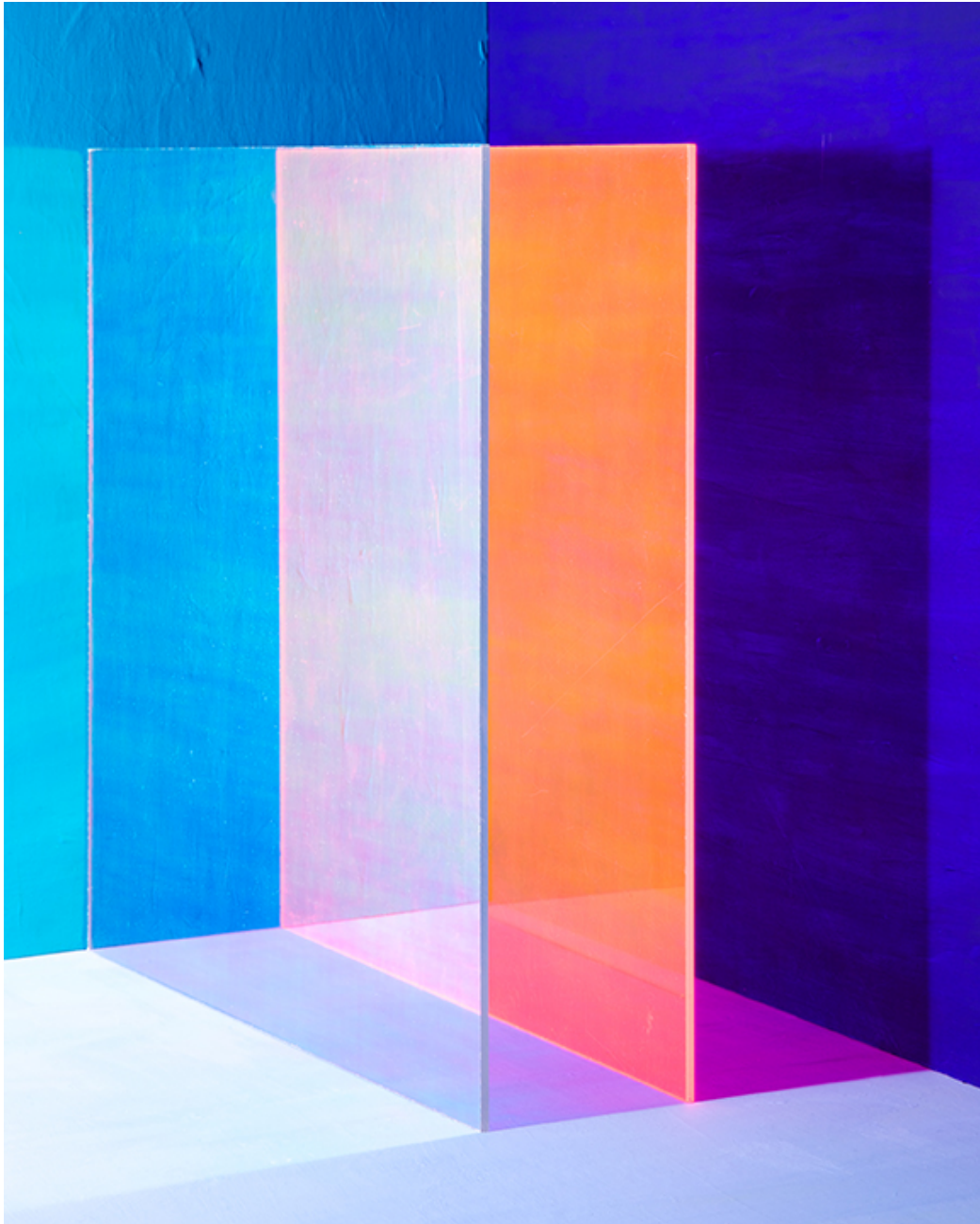
Things As They Are #69, 2017
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Things As They Are #74, 2017
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



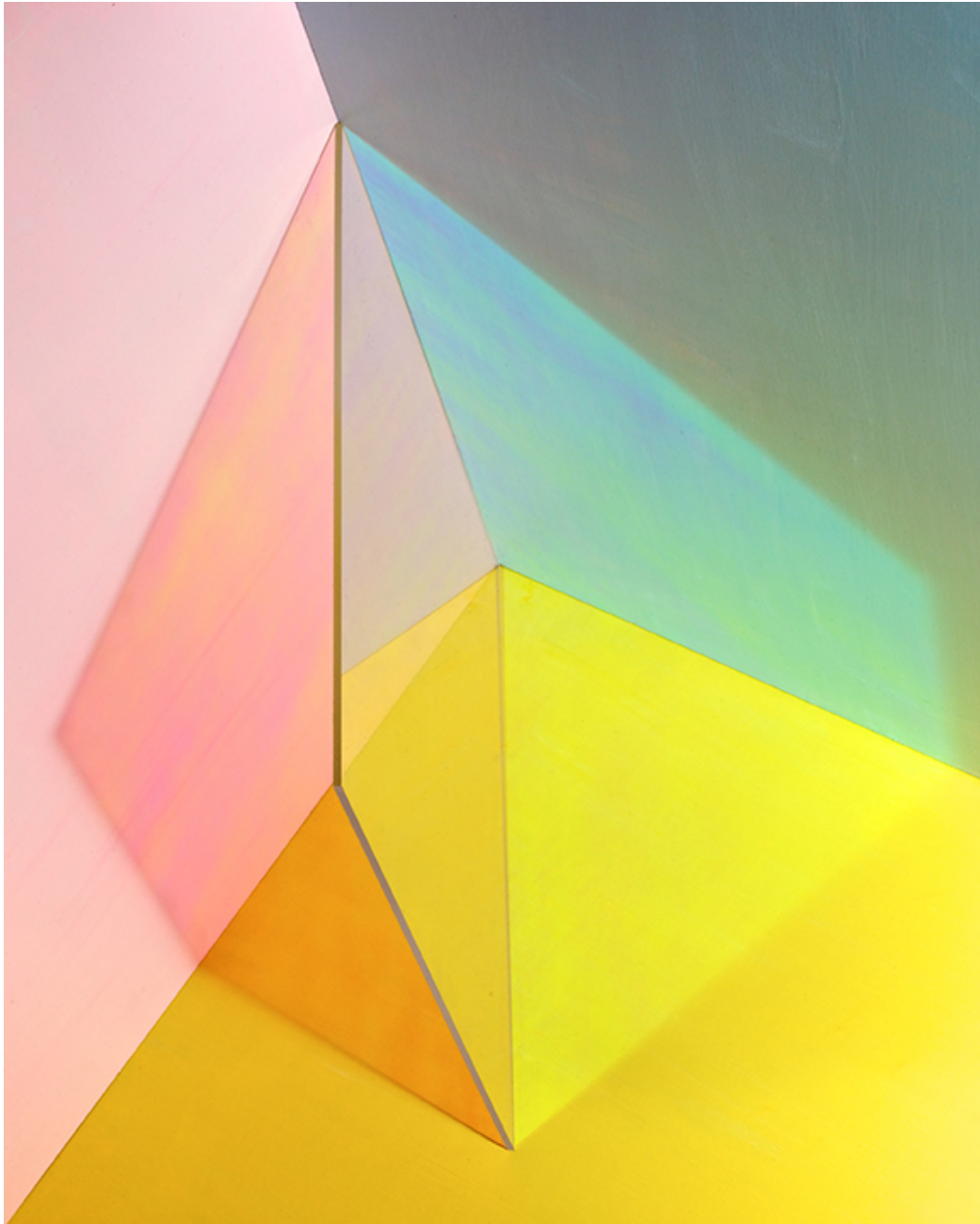
Brass Tack, 2015
Archival pigment print
31 x 24 inches (78.7 x 61 cm)



Things As They Are #2, 2015
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Things As They Are #6, 2015
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)



Things As They Are #10, 2015
Archival pigment print
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

SELECTED PRESS



REVIEWS

Erin O’Keefe: Seeing Things

Denny Dimin Gallery, New York City
By Stephanie Cash

While it’s true that things aren’t always what they seem, it’s also true that things can be hidden in plain sight. A show of new works by Erin O’Keefe embraces both maxims. Just as Photorealist painters flipped the script on their medium, a number of photo-based artists of late have been tinkering with processes



Erin O’Keefe, *Blue Flip*, 2019. Courtesy Donny Dimin Gallery

and materials to painterly effect. Consider the process-based abstractions by Matthew Brandt and Alison Rossiter, or even the video reenactments of Old Master works by Eve Sussman and Bill Viola.

O’Keefe works in a similar vein. Her photos resemble canvases by many a mid-century abstractionist, with bold colors and geometric shapes. It takes a close look to see the images for what they are: three-dimensional sculptural tableaux, essentially still lifes of color and form and, more subtly, space and light. But O’Keefe achieves her painterly effect through compositional and spatial trickery (and a bit of paint). Despite the ocular deception, the images are straightforward, unmanipulated photographs of wood forms the artist strategically arranges for the camera.

Trained as both an artist and an architect, O’Keefe merges those disciplines here by defining space with paint, sculpture, and photography. She uses a jigsaw to slice curvilinear forms from small wood blocks and then roughly paints the surfaces and edges in contrasting or complementary colors, leaving visible brushstrokes that in the photos read as thinly applied paint on canvas. Printed as large as 50 x 40 inches, the images are larger than their real-life counterparts, further complicating the perception of scale and space.

O’Keefe arranges the pieces on a mini set, visually aligning tops or edges so that, when viewed through the eye of the camera, they seem to merge. The pictorial space is flattened, pushing the colored forms into the same plane. Also included in the show are wall-hung con-

structions that similarly toy with spatial perception. Various configurations of boxes contain mirrors and painted, angled elements that interact with each other as well as with the photos captured in reflections. Sometimes the source of the reflected image can be hard to pinpoint, as when the gallery's pressed-tin ceiling incongruously appears inside a small box. In that sense, the constructions knit together the entire show, upending expectations and challenging assumptions.

Quentin Shih: Familiars

Galerie XII, Los Angeles

By Catherine Wagley

When Quentin Shih went to the beach at dusk to take a photograph of a friend, using only his car headlights for lighting, he asked her to wear a red dress like one he remembered girls wearing back when he was in high school. Asked by *Lens Culture* why he staged that particular scene, Shih recalled a memory from the late 1980s: he was a pre-teen at summer camp, on the beach near the water, gossiping about a young, beautiful counselor. The campers had seen this counselor crying alone. "I can't remember if she dressed in red," said Shih, but "[y]ears later, she committed suicide."

The images in Shih's *Familiars* series, on view through November 9, all take comparably ephemeral yet charged memories as their subjects. Beijing-based and most widely known for his fashion work, Shih has a theory about photography: "It's a process to evoke memory; ...something that is growing weak and abstract and needs to find expression," the press release quotes him as saying. That admittedly vague statement may explain Shih's hazy, subtle approach to images in which figures rarely face the camera as their bodies come into relief against evocative yet indistinct landscapes.

Reds and blues saturate the images in ways that feel unreal, even if Shih employed accessible strategies like car headlights to achieve the effect. In *BG05.GG61.HM24.02*, 2015, a

woman in a red skirt, shown from the knees down, wears red jelly sandals with white socks. The ground beneath her glows red, making the cheap sandals shimmer as if they were Dorothy's ruby slippers. In *TB05.JB61.TG27.05*, 2015, a woman carries similar red sandals as she wades into dark blue water.

Over the past decade, any separation between fine art and fashion photography has grown increasingly thin. But Shih's *Familiars* has an entirely different sensibility than his often crisp and edgy collaborations with fashion brands. In *Shanghai Dreamers*, for instance, a 2010 series with Dior, he surrounded white models dressed in couture with uniformed Chinese women and girls (which he described as a black-humor jab at China's mass production of fashion objects). Other of his fashion-related series also contain highly constructed narrative drama, which *Familiars* more or less lacks. Instead, because of its narrative ambiguity, *Familiars* invites fixation on odd, mundane details, such as the subtle scars on a subject's legs; the thin, low socks on her feet; or the flashes of red light. The series feels like it's about everything and nothing at once, which, for a photographer interested in expressing something that is "growing weak and abstract," may be a win.



Quentin Shih, *BN05.JE51.EV24.02*, 2015.
Courtesy Galerie XII

SEEING THINGS

by Erin O’Keefe

Selected by
Rebecca Leona
van Enter,
Artist and
Gallery Liaison,
Unseen



“Carefully aligning colourful 3D blocks, Erin O’Keefe’s abstract compositions play with space and spatial perception. The resulting photographs trick the eye, and are often mistaken for paintings.”

Unseen Platform: How long do you spend on the composition of each work? Do you make sketches of the desired result beforehand, or is it a matter of playing around until you're happy?

Erin O'Keefe: It's a very open ended situation, really a matter of trial and error. Eventually, there is some relationship that feels fruitful – but I have a very difficult time predicting that. I really enjoy the process of discovery and looking, looking again, and again, and so on. There's never a particular goal, although I'm always looking for a condition where there is some ambiguity or multiple readings possible in the final image. Sometimes I can see that in the viewfinder, although I'm often surprised when I get home and am able to see the image on a larger screen.

Space and spatial perception is at the core of your practice. How does this subject continue to inspire you?

Our perception of space is at the centre of our lived experience. I am interested in how mutable this perception is – and how we mostly just take it for granted. By finding ways of highlighting that mutability in my work, my hope is to invite people to think more consciously about the act of seeing. I think there is a pleasure in trying to work out these confounding relationships in the images.

In your recent exhibition *Seeing Things*, you included sculpture alongside photographic works for the first time. Do you have plans for more sculptures in the future?

Yes, I would like to continue making sculpture. It's a different way of approaching the same issues, so I'm interested in the way the photographs and sculptures can be understood in relation to each other.

Your colour palette is very distinctive, can you tell us about how you select which shades to use?

My colour sense is something that comes through osmosis – it may draw from a Giotto fresco, a grocery display, or just someone's t-shirt on my morning commute. That being said, the way the colour functions spatially in the images is something that I work hard to predict and understand. As a photographer, I'm using light in combination with these painted surfaces, I can shift and change the colour very quickly and dramatically by small adjustments to the position of either the object or the light source. Certain colours recede, others move forward and flatten – it's a very rich situation to play with when building an image.

In previous interviews you've spoken a lot about how your background in architecture has informed your artistic practice. However, I'm curious about your personal experience of this career change. How have you adjusted to life as a full-time artist?

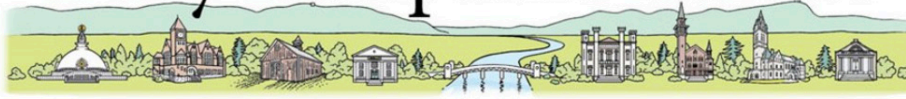
I would say the upside and downside are the same – there is now absolutely no distinction between my personal life and my work life – which is exhilarating and exhausting in equal measure. It allows a level of focus on the work that I never had before, but it also means I have to work a bit more intentionally to create time for other things.



Erin O'Keefe

New York, US

Having studied both Fine Arts and Architecture, Erin O'Keefe (b.1962, New York) spent many years working as an architect before establishing herself as a full-time artist. O'Keefe's architectural knowledge continues to inform her work, which consistently plays with space and spatial perception. By precisely aligning coloured 3D shapes the artist creates abstract compositions which, once photographed, give the illusion of being paintings.



The newest additions: Mead Art Museum exhibit features treasure trove of contemporary art

By STEVE PFARRER
Staff Writer

Published: 10/16/2019 4:25:16 PM

What exactly defines contemporary art?

As David Little sees it, there's a fair amount of gray in that definition, since there's debate about when modern art, the dominant theme of the 20th century, segued into contemporary art — sometimes broadly defined as “the art of today.”

But the director and chief curator of Amherst College's Mead Art Museum also notes that many contemporary artists are willing to work in multiple mediums — painting, printmaking, photography, video — and can comfortably integrate those fields, while also finding inspiration from multiple sources, from the media to found objects to plastic and plexiglass.

On a recent tour of the Mead, Little was able to point to a good number of those examples. The museum received a gift this summer of over 170 contemporary artworks from an anonymous donor, and this fall it has opened a new exhibit, “Starting Something New: Recent Contemporary Art Acquisitions and Gifts,” that pulls together over 60 artworks from the donation as well as other recent acquisitions of contemporary art.

Little said some art historians point to the mid 1950s as a dividing line between modern and contemporary art, but that the work in the Mead exhibit is all much more recent that, with the oldest piece dating from 1987.

He led about 20 people on a tour of the new works, which included sculpture, paintings, photographs, prints and mixed media pieces. What distinguishes many of these new items, and that of contemporary art in general, he said, was that contemporary artists often “don't necessarily think that art must be sacred ... There's the idea of the artist being a scavenger [for materials] and testing and blurring boundaries between mediums.”

One good example: a photograph by Erin O'Keefe, an artist based in New York City and New Brunswick, Canada with a background in architecture and who creates what appear at first glance to be paintings of basic geometric shapes. But these are in fact photographs, produced in such a way that they appear like optical illusions, confusing the senses with images that appear to be

altered but are actually shot straight on, without any retouching.

“It looks like a painting, doesn’t it?” said Little as he gestured to “Built Work #38,” a image of what seemed to be a wooden triangle, a half-circle and a couple other shapes, arranged in a tableau that made it unclear which shape was supporting the others. “But it’s a photograph, and yet there’s no Photoshop, no manipulation. [O’Keefe] says ‘I take photos to see what the camera sees.’ She basically employs the camera to create an illusion.”

Just down a little further along the gallery wall, Little asked the visitors to give their impressions of “Please,” a large painting, spelling out that word (with the letters all bisected by horizontal lines), by New York City/New Mexico artist Sarah Bush. “What kind of paint does she seem to use?” asked Little.

One woman suggested it looked like the kind of semi-gloss paint used in painting houses. “That’s right,” said Little, who added that Bush painted this particular work after living near New York’s Times Square, where she was likely influenced by the district’s neon lights.

The painting, with its graffiti-like look and feel, he noted, “has that kind of pop-art sensibility as well.”

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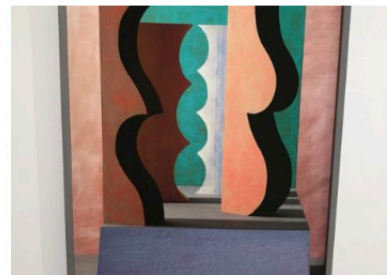
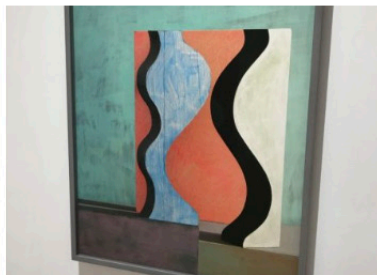
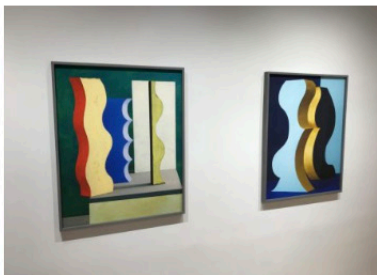
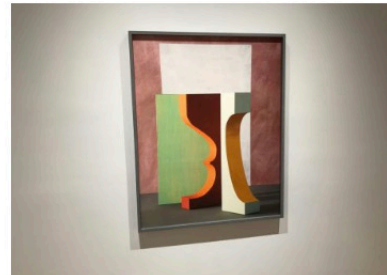
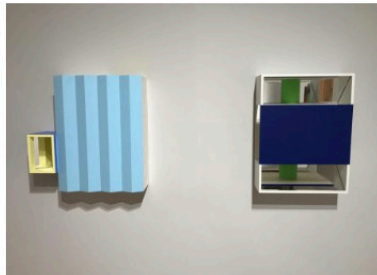
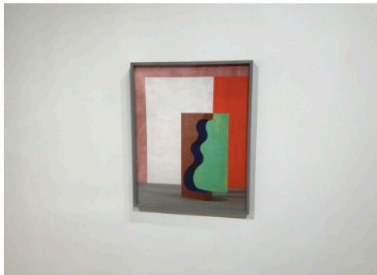
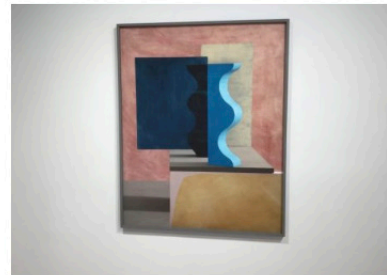
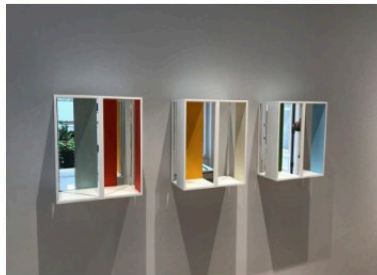
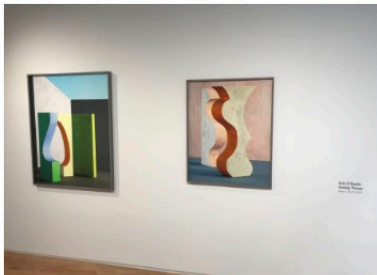
“The Hammock,” 2002 painting by Alexis Rockman. STAFF PHOTO/CAROL LOLLIS

Erin O'Keefe, Seeing Things @Denny Dimin

By Loring Knoblauch / October 16, 2019

JTF (just the facts): A total of 9 large scale color photographs, framed in grey and unmatted, and hung against white walls in the divided gallery space. All of the works are archival pigment prints, made in 2019. Physical sizes range from 25×20 to 50×40 inches, and all of the prints are available in editions of +2AP.

The show also includes 5 sculptures (2 single works and 1 triptych) made of plywood, paint, mirror, and PVC pipe, made in 2019. Physical sizes are either 17×22×9 or 18×24×5 inches each. (Installation shots below.)



Comments/Context: At a moment in contemporary history when our ability to discern facts from their opposites is called into question on an almost daily basis, Erin O’Keefe’s disorienting constructed abstractions feel particularly relevant. While her photographs employ no digital trickery, their truths seem somehow uncertain and malleable – the spatial properties we expect from her elemental geometries are both straightforwardly apparent and puzzlingly upended, leaving us with works that oscillate between obviousness and obscurity.

While O’Keefe’s previous works largely played with the controlled interaction of cast light and the hard edges of transparent Plexiglas sheets (in 2015, reviewed here), and more recently, the overlapped layers of painted cardboard cutouts (in 2017, reviewed here), her new photographs bring the central figure/ground dichotomy of sculpture back into view. Thick blocks of wood are the primary actors in her new arrangements, their sides cut into undulating painted curves.

In each setup, these cut pieces are installed in ways that the edges, the carved-out negative space, and the shadows (either real or implied) are placed into visual conflict, the flattening eye of the camera making the “front” and “back” of the space difficult to discern. O’Keefe’s exacting placement (and lighting) of these objects deliberately confuses our perception – she precisely matches the lines and edges that we might usually use to help understand the depth of the space so that the overlaps and continuations are overtly perplexing. When she paints the sides of the cut forms black, they become particularly deceptive, as they fool us into thinking they are shadows.

Formally, O’Keefe has brought curvature into her compositional toolbox. She’s added vase-like shapes, wave-like ripples, sweeping cuts, tight scallops, and bulbous rounds to her vocabulary, often mixing several of these types and visual rhythms into one collapsed arrangement, with flat panels of color in front and behind to further skew our sense of depth. Almost all of the works deliver a moment of confusion that goes beyond the abstract sculptural interplay, so while we may be initially drawn in by the bright colors and the sinuous curves, we are ultimately pleasingly wrong-footed by what we see.

This show also includes a handful of wall sculptures that test our perception in alternate ways. Using angled mirrors inside boxes with painted sides, O’Keefe creates optical realities (via reflection) that initially seem impossible, that is until we understand how the setups have been constructed. Once we are in on the game, the elegant cleverness of O’Keefe’s management of space becomes clear – it takes sophistication to make simplicity look so complex.

These new photographs feel like they have opened up some new artistic white space for O’Keefe. The curves have freed up the strict order and tightness of her compositions, allowing her to bring more fluidity and lyricism into her highly controlled geometric environment. That contrast of hard versus soft, placed within her framework of camera-driven spatial uncertainty, offers plenty of exciting as-yet-unexplored options.

Collector’s POV: The photographs in this show are priced between \$5500 and \$12000, based on size and the place in the edition; the sculptures are either \$12000 or \$24000 (triptych). O’Keefe’s photographs have little secondary market history at this point, so gallery retail likely remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.

October 14, 2019

Interaction of Space

Erin O’Keefe at Denny Dimin Gallery

As a student of Western art history, I have been asked to study the work of Pablo Picasso a little too frequently for my taste. I thought I could confidently say that I had puzzled over his collages—you know, the famous still lifes that incorporate wine bottles and cut up pieces of *le journal*—enough to be thoroughly fed up with seminar table conversations on representation and reality in pictorial space.



Blue Boy, 2019
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 in/127 x 102 cm

Imagine my surprise, then, when I fell in love with *Seeing Things*, an exhibition at Denny Dimin Gallery of works by Erin O’Keefe, whose photographs wrestle with the same themes—or should I say whose photographs nimbly dance around the same themes, as her work’s brighter colors and abstract curves are less lugubrious than Picasso’s, less concerned, perhaps, with making capital-A, capital-H Art History happen. (This is, after all, one of the Guerilla Girls’ proclaimed advantages of being a woman artist; that is, “not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius.”)

O’Keefe is certainly not simply a poppier Picasso, however. First off, she is a photographer (a mistake for which you can be forgiven if you—like I— thought otherwise) who physically stages painted pieces of wood and then captures them at precisely the right perspective as to confuse their planes. In one photograph, wooden pillars which stood inches apart in the studio appear to lie tangent to one another, while in another several individual pieces align and coalesce into a single collaged object. All dimensional effects, like the casting of shadows and the perceived difference in color based on the way light falls, are real. It is often these shadows that give the images away as photographs, as they throw the images back into real space.



Kiss, 2019
Archival pigment print
40 x 32 in/102 x 81 cm

Her sculptural work engages similarly, using the mechanism of the mirror to create spatial confusion. (Early cameras, one might note, heavily relied on mirrors to direct light.) Stand in front of a series of wall mounted works in the first gallery and you will see reflected back not yourself, but the friend standing next to you; investigate another which appears to feature a continuous column, and you will find it is merely a stubby one, elongated by the simple trick of mirrors positioned at 45 degree angles.

My desire to deconstruct these works (at least mentally) as a means of understanding them reveals what’s most interesting about them. Though they ultimately intend to subvert, these works take as their given a collective

understanding of what is real. Our knowledge of what space looks and acts like becomes of central importance to finding meaning in these works. We need to know what reality is in order to give art the power to challenge it.



Blue Scallop, 2019
Archival pigment print
40 x 32 in/102 x 81 cm

To the extent that these images are of real spaces that have existed in time, they are not about representation, but about seeing. And when the question is about seeing, then it's also about art, or that magical space between what we perceive and how things are, which—in its crystallized form—is art. By formalizing the tricks of perspective and blatantly making her work about sight, Erin O'Keefe allows us a space in which we can delight in something deliciously simple, though fundamental. Some might say that's her genius.

Erin O'Keefe: Seeing Things

Denny Dimin

Until October 26

There's more to Erin O'Keefe's still lifes than meets the eye



Installation view of 'Erin O'Keefe: Seeing Things' at Denny Dinim Gallery, New York

PEI-RU KEH

11 SEP 2019

A bright and vibrant colour palette doesn't often figure into the oeuvre of a trained architect, but for the artist Erin O'Keefe, who not only studied architecture but has taught it as well, the power of colour couldn't play a bigger role in how she perceives space.

'I taught for 23 years as an architectural professor and as part of that, I was teaching the Albers' colour [theory],' says the artist. [Both] teaching and thinking about that as a two-dimensional thing and wanting to see it as a three-dimensional thing was really a jumping off point for me. Colour is really embedded in the way I think about space.'

Known for her abstract and vivid compositions, O'Keefe's works are often mistaken as paintings. In actuality, they are photographs of painted, still-life arrangements of objects that she has made, the visual tension between contrasting planes that weaves through her pieces is much pronounced in a new body of work, on view at Denny Dimin Gallery in New York's Tribeca neighbourhood.

Appropriately titled 'Seeing Things', O'Keefe's latest effort brings an added layer of dimensionality to her experimentation with perspective. Where her past works often toyed with transparency and mostly flattened planes, the new images on view involve jigsaw puzzle pieces and sculpted wooden blocks (all designed by the artist) that curiously appear to warp and fuse together in a series of photographs that trick the eye.



Orange Pushy, 2019, by Erin O'Keefe, archival pigment print.
 Courtesy of Denny Dinim Gallery

'I've been working with planes of colour, and this sense of weight, opacity and tactility for a while. The imperfections of these [blocks and planes] are really interesting to me,' explains O'Keefe, who became preoccupied with curved forms and their possibilities. 'In some cases you will see things really flatten out and in some cases, they become more spatial in a way that's hard to discern. It opened up this whole other way of how an image works and how you translate something that is real into an image.'

Because of the interplay of light on the objects – the textural brush strokes visible on the painted surfaces and backdrops, coupled with the carefully arranged compositions – O'Keefe's images deliberately depict an ambiguous spatial relationship between

each of the individual components that veer in and out of real space.

The artist says, 'There's a really funny dance that they do, which you wouldn't see if it weren't an image of the thing. That sense of confusion, disorientation or misreading of the [blocks] is then paired with a very tactile, direct and understandable surface. You think that you are looking at one thing, but you're not.'

O'Keefe's play with perception also manifests itself in a new series of sculptures – the first she has exhibited in over a decade. Comprising box forms that incorporate clever placements of mirror and coloured planes, the sculptures extend, invert and displace space, folding together the built and reflected realms in thoughtful and playful continuation. §





09.04.19

EXCERPT: EXHIBITION

A New Body of Work By Erin O'Keefe Asks What Makes a Space "Real"

by Jill Singer

The artist Erin O'Keefe — whose work we've been continuously sharing since 2014 — has a solo show opening this week at Denny Dimin Gallery in New York. While her work has remained fixated on a single subject during that time — how to manipulate space and our perception of it — the ways in which she interprets that subject seem to be almost infinite. In her photographs, she builds still lifes from painted wood blocks and planes; in her sculptures — the first she's created in more than 10 years — she uses a mirror to refract light and dimensional space. But "the problem of what makes space 'real' is at the center of both bodies of work. The way our eyes reconcile our understanding of the world, usually a seamless and transparent situation, is open to question. The dissonance between experience and image is apparent, and this uncertainty makes possible a kind of naïve perceptual awareness; seeing things as they are." The new works are occasionally geometric — an O'Keefe signature that recalls the work of Barbara Kasten — but many of the newer forms are almost harlequin in nature. An exciting development. On view from September 6th to October 27th.



Beyond bath fixtures...

The John Michael Kohler Arts Center, a nonprofit museum in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, promotes the work of self-taught and contemporary artists through original exhibitions, particularly championing artist-built environments.

“Lenore Tawney: Mirror of the Universe,” running October 6 to March 7, is one such show. 1961’s *The Judge*, in linen, and *The Bride*, 1962, linen and feathers, will be among the over 120 works by the influential fiber artist who died at age 100 in 2007, along with hundreds of components from her studio.

A master’s in architecture...

It informs Erin O’Keefe’s abstract yet dimensional photography. In fact, it’s translating 3-D space into a 2-D image, and the distortion that comes with it, that’s the “central issue” in her work. *Pink Ground*, an archival pigment print, exemplifies that leitmotif. It’s appearing alongside O’Keefe’s 11 other new pieces in **“Seeing Things,”** at Denny Dimin Gallery in New York from September 6 to October 26.



Belgian flair...

From September 26 to October 3 at Unix Gallery, **“Textiles Revealed,”** part of the fourth annual New York Textile Month, co-curated by *Interior Design* Hall of Fame member Lidewij Edelkoort, will showcase 11 contemporary Belgian textile designers. Among the installations, sustainable furniture, tapestries, and rugs by the likes of Alice Leens, KRIST Studio, and Geneviève Levivier will be the wool *A Traverser* by Ani Bedrossian and Flavien Servaes of BedrossianServaes, whose work is research-driven and experimental.



London, Paris, New York...

Founded by architects Ian Flood and Chris Prosser, **Skyline Chess** sets are composed of miniature versions of noteworthy buildings in those cities—from the Shard by Renzo Piano to Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim—hand-crafted of quality materials. Now San Francisco has entered the game, with William Pereira’s Transamerica Pyramid as queen and César Pelli’s Salesforce Tower as king. The figures in the Premium Metal version shown are cast in resin mixed with aluminum or iron and play on a screen-printed Carrara marble board.

HAPPENings



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RICH MACLEJEWSKI/COURTESY OF THE LENORE G. TAWNEY FOUNDATION, NEW YORK, AND THE JOHN MICHAEL KOHLER ARTS CENTER; COURTESY OF BEDROSSIANSERVAES; COURTESY OF SKYLINE CHES; COURTESY OF ERIN O’KEEFE AND DENNY DIMIN GALLERY

September 3, 2019

By Caroline Goldstein & Sarah Cascone

21 Gallery Shows You Won't Want to Miss in New York This Fall, From Amy Sherald's Star Turn to a Historic Cuban Artist's US Debut

"Erin O'Keefe: Seeing Things" at Denny Dimin Gallery
September 6–October 27



Erin O'Keefe, Blue Flip. Courtesy of Denny Dimin Gallery.

In addition to a BFA, Erin O'Keefe has a masters in architecture, and the two disciplines are both in evidence in her painted wall sculptures and photographs of painted wooden blocks. Both bodies of work play with space, creating strange interplays of color and form. The photographs strangely flatten O'Keefe's still life arrangements, while the sculptures incorporate mirrors, creating reflections that play with viewers' perceptions.

Denny Dimin Gallery is located at 39 Lispenard Street.



Introducing | NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship Program Recipients and Finalists



NYFA has awarded \$661,000 to 98 New York State artists working in the categories of Architecture/Environmental Structures/Design, Choreography, Music/Sound, Photography, and Playwriting/Screenwriting.

New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) has announced the recipients and finalists of the NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship Program, which it has administered for the past 33 years with leadership support from the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). The organization has awarded a total of \$661,000 to 98 artists (including three collaborations) whose ages range from 25-76 years throughout New York State in the following disciplines: Architecture/Environmental Structures/Design, Choreography, Music/Sound, Photography, and Playwriting/Screenwriting. Fifteen finalists, who do not receive a cash award but benefit from a range of other NYFA services, were also announced. A complete list of the Fellows and Finalists follows.

The NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship Program makes unrestricted cash grants of \$7,000 to artists working in 15 disciplines, awarding five per year on a triennial basis. The program is highly competitive, and this year's recipients and finalists were selected by discipline-specific peer panels from an applicant pool of 2,542. Since it was launched in 1985, the program has awarded over \$31 million to more than 5,000 artists. This year, thanks to the generous support of photography nonprofit Joy of Giving

Something, NYFA was able to award an additional five Fellowships in Photography, which has the largest application pool of any Fellowship category.

“We are grateful to NYSCA for this annual opportunity to provide nearly 100 artists from New York State with unrestricted cash grants,” said Michael L. Royce, Executive Director, NYFA. “What’s most exciting is that the Fellowship impacts artists of all disciplines and career stages and that these artists are being recognized by a jury of their peers. Beyond the financial aspect, it empowers them to keep creating and exploring new possibilities in their work.”

New York State Council on the Arts Executive Director Mara Manus described how the program makes New York communities more vibrant: “The NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship recognizes that artists of all disciplines, backgrounds, ages, and career stages make vital contributions to New York’s creative culture. Over the past 33 years, the Artist Fellowship has been a launching pad and a critical source of support for artists whose work helps build healthy communities in all regions of the state.”

On receiving a NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship in Playwriting/Screenwriting, Brooklyn-based Nabil Vinas said: “It is a deeply moving honor to be recognized by NYSCA/NYFA. I took up screenwriting out of necessity, as it became clear that the voices and stories from my life would not appear in works by others. This fellowship tells me our stories matter, and that my voice is worth hearing.”

For Ben Altman, a Fellow in Architecture/Environmental Structures/Design from Danby, NY, the NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship represents another facet of support from NYFA: “NYFA has informed my artistic practice throughout my 12 years in Upstate New York, providing professional development, fiscal sponsorship, grant application support, workshops, critique, and timely advice. To be awarded a NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship is as much a tribute to those inputs as it is an important and very welcome recognition of the work NYFA’s support has helped me to produce.”

To Veena Chandra, a Fellow in Music/Sound from Latham, NY, the NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship empowers her to “continue to create, promote, and

preserve” musical tradition. “I feel blessed to have been playing Indian sitar music for the last 63 years. I am so grateful to my father, who created an environment for me to learn this beautiful music and taught me from the very beginning of my life. To be recognized for my work in performing and preserving Indian Classical music means a lot to me, especially at this point in my career,” she noted.

Fellowship Recipients, Finalists, and Panelists by Discipline and County of Residence:

Photography Fellows

Manal Abu-Shaheen (Queens)
Yasser Aggour (Kings)
Aneta Bartos (New York)
Lucas Blalock (Kings)
Matthew Conradt (Kings)
Debi Cornwall (Kings)
Robin Crookall (Kings)
Tim Davis (Dutchess)*****
Eli Durst (Queens)
Nona Faustine (Kings)
Jonathan Gardenhire (Kings)
Rachel Granofsky (Kings)****
Carlie Guevara (Queens)
Gail Albert-Halaban (New York)
Daesha Devón Harris (Saratoga)*****
Gillian Laub (New York)
Jiatong Lu (Kings)*****
Diana Markosian (Kings)
Rehan Miskci (New York)
Rachelle Mozman Solano (Kings)
Karina Aguilera Skvirsky (New York)
Erin O’Keefe (New York)
Paul Raphaelson (Kings)
Victor Rivera (Onondaga)*****
Jahi Lateef Sabater (Kings)
Nadia Sablin (Kings)
Derick Whitson (New York)
Letha Wilson (Columbia)*****
Alex Yudzon (Kings)



The Artists Everyone Talked about during Art Basel in Miami Beach

- **Alina Cohen** Dec 7, 2018 5:57 pm



Installation view of Erin O'Keefe at UNTITLED. Miami Beach, 2018

Art Basel week always boasts a heady mix of frivolity and seriousness—intense schedules, hefty price tags, free drinks, and spectacle. This year's edition was no different. Miami's art museums, galleries, and fairs mounted their Basel best, introducing an international audience to emerging artists and offering significant exhibition space to established figures.

...

Back on the beach, UNTITLED featured a relatively breezy scene. Denny Dimin Gallery, however, was blissfully busy. The gallery reported selling around 30 works by artist Erin O'Keefe by Friday morning—all close-up photographs of brightly painted objects that resemble paintings at first glance. At the booth, Elizabeth Denny and Robert Dimin attempted to count exactly how many pieces they'd sold: one to the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College, one to the Cleveland Clinic, and two to trustees at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Wadsworth Atheneum. The pair flipped through the sales book, counting and recounting red stickered dots. "When we tell people they're looking at abstract photography and not painting, they have this kind of aha moment," Dimin said—the optical trick can seal the deal.

...

A Painter's Photographer: Erin O'Keefe's Bewitching Shapes

by R.C. BAKER

MAY 15, 2018



"Built Work #3" (2018), "Built Work #4" (2018), "Built Work #8" (2018)

When I first walked into the gallery, I mistook Erin O'Keefe's photographs for smooth-surfaced paintings, with an intense but exquisitely tuned palette and dynamic abstract compositions. Everything about them — the triangular shadows cast across two emerald-green rectangles by a mottled yellow crosspiece — recalled the way a painting's built-up strokes impart a sense of time passing, of long sessions in the studio.

When I finally determined, through some nose-close viewing, that these were, in fact, photos, I said a little critic's prayer: "Please let these not be Photoshopped." It makes a difference, because if the fragile equipoise O'Keefe (born 1962) achieves in her constructions was born of manipulating pixels, the images would still boast impressive layouts and a feisty palette, but much of their physical wondrousness would dissipate.

In Built Work #8 (created this year, as are the other works in the show), two right triangles stand before blue, pink, and gray rectangles. A heavier plane matches the height of the blue element, and all of the objects align on one off-center axis. There is a communion in that vertical line, as if these planes were seeking something greater than the sum of their plain-Jane individualities. They attain it, and then some, not least because they cast translucent green shadows, pitched at perpendicular right angles to the vertical fulcrum, undermining with a playful frisson O'Keefe's carefully structured architectonics. The geometric characters in Built Work #5 also align on a vertical, as if they were revolving around a maypole. As I studied the slightly irregular joins and roughly brushed surfaces, I said aloud to a fellow gallery-goer, "Damn, I think these are straight-up photographs."

A gallerist heard my mutterings and insisted on taking me two blocks north to O'Keefe's studio, where I could see for myself how the artist achieves her bewitching balancing acts — using only painted boards set precariously on edge with nothing more than an occasional bit of tape on the backs to help hold them in place. O'Keefe worked for years as an architect, which gives

her insight into — and endless curiosity about — the ways in which walls, ceilings, and floors interact with each other and the spaces they surround.



“Built Work #5” (2018), “Built Work #1” (2018), “Built Work #6” (2018)

O’Keefe told me she gets her cast-off bits of lumber from woodworkers she contacts on Etsy, a way to sidestep making the cuts herself. Instead, she works with whatever comes out of the box, painting the wood pieces and setting them up against simple, flat backgrounds. In her studio it was fascinating to walk around one tableau-in-progress and watch the angles of light and shadow entwine, then separate, which helps explain why her homely materials find such animation in the final compositions. Using only a digital 35mm camera and a shallow focus, O’Keefe conjures a palpable realm of space and air, a colorful gravitas.

The artist once told an interviewer, “I look at painting a lot. I feel interested in those issues. When I was teaching architecture at design studios, we did this exercise where we would have students take a purist painting and build it as a model. It was fascinating to think about the translation of something and see what would happen when you would try to go backwards from it, to reverse engineer it. We also did another exercise with [Josef] Albers paintings. I would have the students try to render them three dimensionally to see how the color operated.”

One can easily see how Albers’s color studies influenced this work, but when looking at O’Keefe’s rough edges and bluntly painted objects, I instead recalled the bottles, cups, and boxes that Giorgio Morandi, a true “painter’s painter,” would arrange on a battered tabletop in endless variations in the middle of last century. The remorseless observation the Italian master brought to his mundane housewares captured the very colors in the air — those whiffs of reflection and shadow that traverse the spaces between objects. There is a monumental intimacy in Morandi’s *natura morte* canvases, akin to the off-kilter emotions aroused by the surreal piazzas painted by his countryman (and influence), Giorgio de Chirico. O’Keefe’s keen attention to lighting, surface, perspective, and volume similarly conveys an expansive yet intimate range of corporeal heft and formal excitement.

In a perhaps wildly inappropriate analogy, it occurred to me on the subway home that the intensity of O’Keefe’s imagery recalled the flesh-and-blood stuntmen leaping from one fast-moving vehicle to another in *The Road Warrior* — as opposed to the physics-defying CGI hijinks of whichever Marvel blockbuster is currently showing in the multiplexes. O’Keefe’s rich imagery reminds us that amid our virtual cacophony, sometimes you just want to see some skin in the game.

Erin O'Keefe

DENNY GALLERY

More than a little of the considerable appeal emanating from Erin O'Keefe's photographs lies in the difficulty we encounter deciphering them. With these works—razor-sharp depictions of abstract, brushily painted, sculptural tableaux, for the most part—not only does one struggle to identify the medium, but the compositions traffic in shadowy illusion and spatial ambiguity, making it hard at times to know exactly what is being portrayed.

Consequently, the eye moves searchingly across the picture plane, propelled by the pleasures arising from the work's bold construction and rich yet subtly balanced palette, and by the curiosity attending cognitive discontinuity and contradiction.

This show, the artist's second with Denny Gallery, was more or less split down the middle by a bifurcated display of two distinct bodies of work. To the left, from a new series of images titled "Book of Days," 2017–, sat a suite of medium-size, generically cubistic compositions—some contrasting high- and low-key colored shapes, others consisting of color photos of black-and-white forms, or, more accurately, color photos of matte-black forms rendered as many shades of gray via skillful lighting and camera technique. Indeed, the artist's command

of her process and materials is impressive. Vaguely figurative cardboard forms have been torqued and angled, then arranged in clusters upon a tabletop in such a way that when seen from the fixed focal point of the camera's viewfinder, each component surrenders a degree of legible autonomy—through befuddling overlap or misleading linear convergence—to the formal cohesion of the resultant image, which is then immaculately printed and presented. Here, O'Keefe effectively reconstructs, for depiction, and with aplomb, the planar faceting and perspectival dispersal of classical Cubism, but with a final perceptual corrective courtesy of the image's still-evident foundation in photographic realism, with its single, overarching vanishing point.

To the right of the gallery entrance lay a string of glistening jewels: small, brightly colored geometric abstractions from the ongoing series "Things as They Are," 2015–. Crisp photos of tabletop constructions once again, these works feature precisely lit, ingenious arrangements of opaque, reflective, or translucent materials. Simple, punchy compositions are struck from the juxtaposition of variously textured planes of flat or graduated color. The viewer's initial response is typically a rush of retinal delight coupled with a quizzical pondering over the material makeup of the constituent parts. Upon close inspection,



Erin O'Keefe, *Things as They Are #42*, 2017, ink-jet print, 20 x 16".

SUMMER 21



THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

SILVIA FEDERICI ON WOMEN
SIMON CRITCHLEY ON ACTIVISM
ED RUSCHA ON THE NEA
JULIE AULT ON GENTRIFICATION
JOSEPH VOGL ON MONEY
GEOFFREY WINTERSHOP-YOUNG ON DRUGS
MABEL WILSON ON SPACE
ALAN BERGER ON INFRASTRUCTURE
ELIZABETH POVINELLI ON THE ENVIRONMENT
MONEY OXON ON NIGHTLIFE
CULTURAL APPROPRIATION: A RICHESMILE
AMY TRUBIN ON QUEST

REVIEWS

we see that some of these colored planes appear to consist of opaque surfaces, while others are perhaps a function of lighting. Take *Things as They Are #42*, 2017, an intimately scaled, portrait-format configuration of elements that centers upon a jagged, mirrored form nestling into a convergence of flat planes suggestive of a three-dimensional corner space. On noting the thin line extending beyond the point at which the wall-like surfaces meet the supposed floor, one might surmise that we are looking, end-on, at a sawtooth-shaped piece of tinted, translucent Plexiglas pressed into a right-angled fold of solid material. If so, it would seem that the jagged form is lit in such a way that differently colored shadows or reflections are cast or projected left and right, in perfect symmetry. Warm, harmonious tones of red, pink, burgundy, and ocher quell and consolidate the jittery, angular formation, while the unreality effect sparked by the uncertain material status of each of the elements is cemented in the picture's resistance to tenable depth perception.

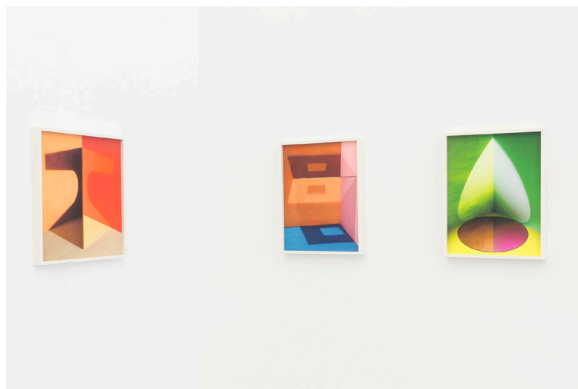
As is the case with most abstract photography, be it historical or contemporary, these works place willful obfuscation in dynamic tension with objective disclosure. Once identified as photographs (and despite our diminished faith in representational veracity in an era of pervasive digital image editing), O'Keefe's works draw the viewer into a conscious examination of components as an instinctual effort to wrest meaning and purpose from equivocal information. It is this sense of quandary, in combination with the artist's mastery of technical and formal principles—her ability to extract such a remarkable concinnity from the collapse of painterly, sculptural, and photographic effects—that makes these works so exceptional.

—Jeff Gibson

Erin O’Keefe, Book of Days @Denny

By Loring Knoblauch / In Galleries / May 1, 2017

JTF (just the facts): A total of 15 color and black and white photographs, framed in white and unmat-
ted, and hung against white walls in the two room gallery space. All of the works are archival pigment
prints mounted on museum board, made in 2016 and 2017. Physical sizes are either 20×16, 25×20, or
40×32, and all of the prints are available in editions of 3. (Installation shots below.)



Comments/Context: While we often like to celebrate the blast of serendipitous genius found in artistic insight, for most artists and photographers, the process of finding a worthy path to follow is much less glamorous. Absent the arrival of an obvious lightning strike, they get to work investigating a set of not-yet-fully-formed ideas, and through a patient dose of methodical effort, slowly figure out which of these potential aesthetic or conceptual discoveries actually has merit.

When I reviewed Erin O’Keefe’s 2015 show at Denny Gallery (here), it was clear that she was in the middle of just such a process of open-ended exploration. In her Things As They Are series, her table top setups began with a limited set of constraints (a three sided painted corner, a selection of tinted Plexiglas sheets, and a few painted sticks), which she then iteratively combined using cast light as her activating agent. And

her initial results gave her some promising clues – depending on the choices she made with the painted backdrop and edge-on (and therefore effectively invisible) tinted sheet, the light could create a multitude of additive color geometries, with overlaps and shadows creating sharp angles and unexpected shapes.

Two years later, O’Keefe has now reached #53 in this series, and her results are much more compositionally complex and nuanced. The transparent sheets have evolved from simple rectangles and squares (previously always in the same physical location in the setup) into circles, triangles, and bolder curved polygons that wander into new places, paired sheets that create reflections, and even one sheet with a central cutout that generates a rectangle-within-a-rectangle form. The thin sticks are now generally used in pairs, and a few move on from strictly matched geometries to unbalanced linear forms. And when all these new approaches are intermingled, what emerges are abstractions that are increasingly sophisticated – colors pile up in angled slices, shadows are cast in inexplicable directions, and formal equilibrium is much more precarious. Overall, the best of the images are less easily read than her first forays, making us work a little harder to unpack them.

In O’Keefe’s new Book of Days works, the artist moves in an adjacent direction, continuing to rely on the flattening effect of the camera’s vision, but moving on from controlled experiments with light and shadow to more emphasis on three dimensional construction. Painted cardboard cutouts are built into dense made-to-be-photographed sculptures with see-through depth and contrasts of flat and curved edges, the planes of fragmented color becoming sinuously tangled when collapsed into a single composition. The effect is something akin to late scissor-ready Henri Matisse and frenetic jazz-age Stuart Davis thrown into a Cubist blender and then mediated by a camera.

Once this framework was in place, O’Keefe then began to experiment with different tonal combinations, trying bright primary colors and softer pastels, grey and black backdrops (creating alternate spatial depths), and even a few monochrome white/grey/black compositions that feel more restful and nuanced than the brash shifting vibrancy found in the color works. This painterly new series feels like it has plenty of forward running room, most notably in its ability to use intricate sculptural construction to explore larger scale.

What distinguishes O’Keefe’s work is her unusual approach to interrogating abstraction. In her world, built physicality is the underlying driver that generates her formal outcomes, and her camera provides the downstream mechanism for the translations. This 3D to 2D jujitsu, and its inherent visual reconfigurations, isn’t entirely new in and of itself, but it is providing O’Keefe with novel ways to reintroduce uncertainty into abstraction. While painters and graphic designers of bygone eras may have pioneered some of the motifs O’Keefe is now recycling, she is thoroughly making them her own, and giving them contemporary freshness, by reconstructing them using these hybrid sculptural/photographic methods. Her newest works are a strong step forward, and confident evidence that her artistic momentum is starting to gather.

Collector’s POV: The works in this show are priced at \$3200, \$4150, and \$6200, based on size, with prices rising as the editions sell. O’Keefe’s work has little secondary market history at this point, so gallery retail remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.



THE NEW YORKER



GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

“Big Nothing”

The British photographer Richard Caldicott, best known for his work with abstraction, has rounded up works by six like-minded contemporaries, half of them newcomers. The show borrows its title from a series by Luuk de Haan, ghostly black-and-white pictures of biomorphic white forms, which, like most images here, hover somewhere between present and vanishing. Erin O’Keefe makes constructions of translucent Plexiglas panels, which dissolve into layers of color and light in her photographs. Dizzily intricate patterns appear in the work of both Ellen Carey and Gottfried Jager, balancing pleasure and rigor. Caldicott’s curatorial coup is his focus on modest-sized works, a welcome antidote to the recent glut of supersized abstract photography. *Through Aug. 19. (Sous les Etoiles, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-0796.)*

“Big Nothing”

Sous Les Etoiles

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Artspace

Meet the Artist

A Few Questions for Architect-Photographer Erin O’Keefe, on Creating “Cubist Space” With the Camera

By Karen Rosenberg

April 27, 2016



The artist Erin O’Keefe. Photo: Aidan McCready

NAME: Erin O’Keefe

AGE: 53

HOMETOWN: New York City

BASE OF OPERATIONS: New York City

MEDIUM OF CHOICE: Photography is my medium of choice, but I make sculptural arrangements as the subject of my photographs—so although there are some other media involved along the way, the final product is always a photograph.

WHY I MAKE ART: I make work as a way of asking questions about how we see, and particularly how we perceive space. My background in architecture is essential to this, and makes those questions feel both more urgent and more pervasive. I remember in kindergarten, being asked what I wanted to be, and answering “artist.” I recall feeling very certain about it, even then—but it hasn’t been the most linear path to get here!

CURRENT PROJECT

I'm working on a series of photos called "Book of Days," in which I am trying to get at a sense of space that flattens and expands within a single still life—a bit like the space in a cubist painting.
current project



Rudy Burckhardt, A View From Brooklyn II (1954)

WHERE I'M FINDING INSPIRATION NOW

It's always a pretty varied set of inspirations—Morandi, for his restraint, and Goethe, for aspiring to a very direct and focused observation of things. Recently I've been looking at lots of images of concrete brutalist architecture—very austere, powerful stuff.

ONE ARTWORK I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD

I first saw this photograph [Rudy Burckhardt] many years ago, and I loved the way the view of the bridge out the window is as present in the room as the postcards pinned to the wall. That spatial collapse stays in my head as both question and inspiration.

PERSONAL PANTHEON OF ARTISTS

James Turrell, Fred Sandback, Jan Groover, Robert Irwin, Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, Rachel Whiteread, Robert Smithson, Anne Truitt, Josef Albers. And Giotto and Fra Angelico—I love the awkward scalar relationships and spatial flattening in early Renaissance painting, and the color is a total sensory pleasure.

INSIDE MY STUDIO



STUDIO ITEMS I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

The things I end up using the most are my radio and my foam brushes. The radio provides company on solitary days, and the foam brushes are an absolute necessity for me, because I have ruined so many “real” paintbrushes by forgetting to clean them—and the hardware store downstairs sells them, so I never really run out. radio brushes



ART-WORLD PET PEEVE

I don't know if I have one, actually. What we all collectively do is so strange and useless – but also absolutely critical. The art world seems like a place populated mostly by people with a kind of optimism and secular faith that can be pretty hard to find elsewhere.

STRANGEST REACTION TO MY WORK

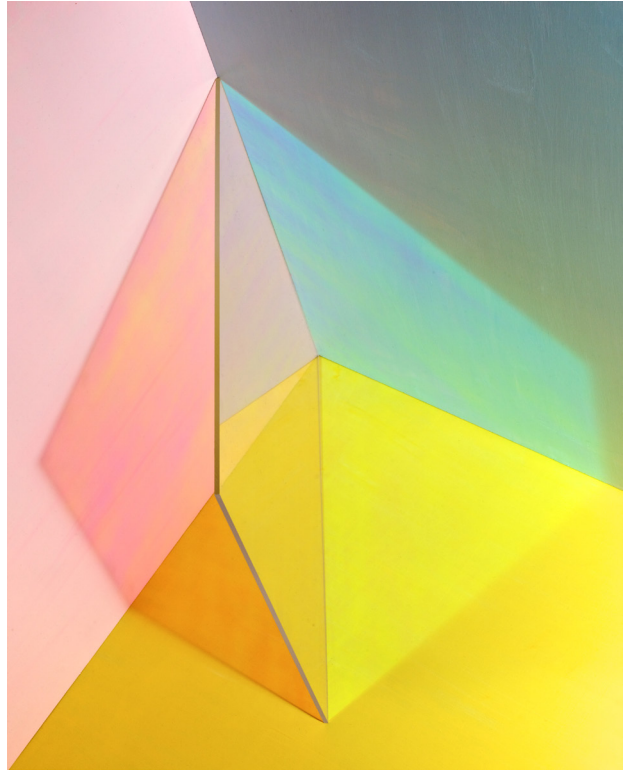
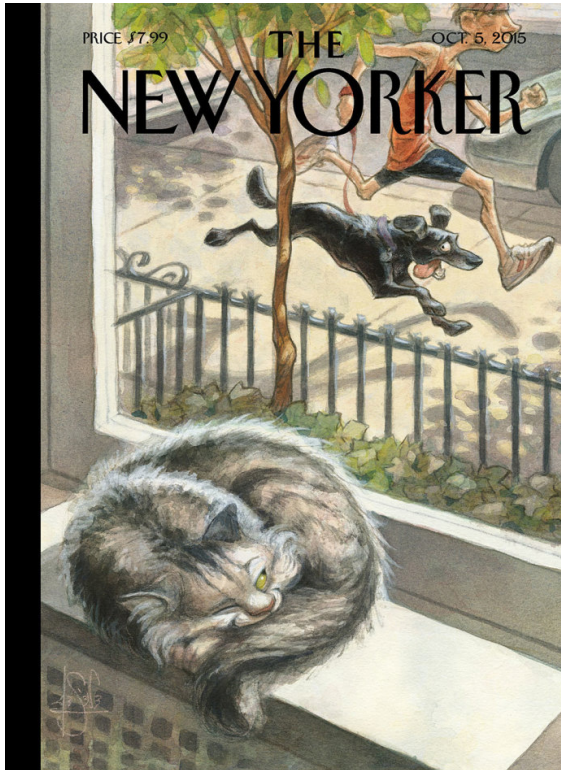
People will often insist that they are not really photographs. But they are absolutely photographs—made with a camera, and lights, and a click of the shutter.

WHAT I'M STREAMING

I just finished watching season four of House of Cards. So dark, so well done—I felt simultaneously repulsed and fascinated. It made The Sopranos feel cozy.

MY PROCESS

My process is always pretty open ended—lots of tangents and accidents. As part of this, I usually come to the studio with a question. For the series “The Flatness,” I wanted to make an image where the flattest thing in the still life “read” as the most dimensional in the photograph, and the actual space of the arrangement flattened out in the final image.



ERIN O'KEEFE

September 9 2015 – October 10 2015

Photographs of geometric arrangements of painted boards and tinted Plexiglas will inevitably draw comparisons to Barbara Kasten's influential oeuvre. O'Keefe, a New York artist and architect, nods to Kasten (and to Eileen Quinlan and Sara VanDerBeek) but stakes her own claim to the territory—call it Bauhaus playhouse—in a series of seductively simple color images. Using reflected light and overlapping colors, O'Keefe creates luminous architectural illusions; when she applies paint to her constructions she conjures a winningly trompe-l'oeil effect. Through Oct. 11.

Denny
261 Broome St.
NY, NY 10002
212-226-6537

Studio Visit: Erin O’Keefe



Erin O’Keefe is a studio artist who has taken 800 pictures of a corner in her studio since last year. It’s not that she finds the corner itself particularly beautiful, it’s just a space that—when customised with very deliberate combinations of colours and materials, lit precisely, and photographed in an exacting way—can transcend its materials and become an otherworldly experience that challenges traditional perceptions of space. This is all done in-camera, without Photoshop, by drawing on a diverse range of influences from early Renaissance figurative painting to Josef Albers to. Based in Manhattan, O’Keefe graduated from Cornell University with an undergraduate degree in printmaking and, when faced with the fiscal realities of this certificate after graduation, decided to get a masters in Architecture, and then start teaching. She did this for 23 years, and along the way picked up a husband and two daughters. Last year, she quit her job to become a full-time art photographer, working from a small studio on the Upper West side. I

saw the first pictures she ever made in a 2012 group show curated by Humble Arts Foundation that I wrote about for TIME, was immediately fascinated, and have witnessed a steady increase of her presence in both online and brick-and-mortar exhibitions in NYC and beyond. Last year, following a studio visit where Erin showed me the beginnings of her epically complex series *Natural Disasters*, I invited her to debut the work in VICE magazine’s 2014 photo issue, which I was putting together at the time.

“The Disasters are ongoing,” O’Keefe told me in her studio earlier this summer. “It’s something I return to. Those were inspired by looking at images in the New York Times every day and seeing everything falling apart. There’s nothing that’s fixed. And so I wanted to build them, some of them are more chaotic than others. It’s also to do with the failure of our eyes to make sense of things. We look at this and think it’s photoshop, it can’t be real. So there’s this idea about giving up a sense of control, or something. Somehow those two ideas are connected for me in this work. There is no stasis, there is no fixed truth.”

Tonight at Denny Gallery in New York, O’Keefe’s latest series, *Things as They Are*, will debut alongside three of the epic *Disasters* in a solo exhibition. Photographer Max Marshall and I went to O’Keefe’s studio earlier this summer to talk about life in the world versus work in the studio, how having kids can change your colour palette, and the inexplicable awe of perceiving something unmediated by language.

Matthew Leifheit: You have a Jan Groover postcard on your studio wall, from Janet Borden’s booth at the Armory. But the other reference images are paintings.

Erin O’Keefe: The top two are Leger, and those others might both be Gris. I look mostly at painters, I have to say.

But your background is not in painting or photography.

Architecture. That’s what I did for 23 years.

How did you come to that? Did you try being a painter first?

No, I never painted. I studied printmaking as an undergrad, and after I graduated, it was terrifying economically to think, what do you do with that. And I didn’t want to work at an ad agency or something. And I was really interested in architecture, so I got a masters degree, got licensed, and then taught.

And then you stopped teaching to be a full-time artist?

Yes, one year ago is when I formally left. Dopey economics decision but...

How does your biography impact what you’re making?

Architecture is a way of thinking about things, and particularly thinking about limitations. In any of this work, I set up some sort of rules for myself. And that’s part of the reason it’s studio-based. The world is too big. I don’t know how I’d even go about choosing what I was interested in.

Now I can make things in a much more immediate way than I could as an architect. There’s a thing that I’ve thought about where, when you’re an architect you either kind of make models or make drawings, and so you’re always referring to this other thing, but you’re never dealing directly with the thing. The thing (the building) is always at this weird remove from what you do. Photography is sort of the same thing, there’s a distance between the subject or the condition that you’re taking a photograph of, and the photograph itself. And I like that separation, that’s what I find very juicy about the whole thing.

Something to do with the transformation the camera performs in creating a new flat surface. But you’re also taking photos in the world, printing them, and then putting them back into pictures in the studio. There’s some kind of composting going on in your photographs.

Something I find frustrating is that when you make a sculpture, you make a thing, and there it is. When you make a photograph, it exists in this weird... it’s like I can give you a jpeg, and then I can give you something else, and then we can print it big. It never resolves itself into an item.



The pictures in *Natural Disasters* sometimes incorporate pictures of carved stone drapery on sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum. Those are pictures of the world.

Yes, but I like that that is also remote. And it's all in the American wing, so they're copying copying copying... There's this weird thing where you're looking backwards through a periscope or something. History reproduces this stuff over and over.

Are you just following your heart, or is there some consideration for adding to a specific dialogue?

It's definitely coming from me and my concerns, but I do feel like there is this potential convergence of those concerns with what's going on in contemporary photography. And that discussion is something I am really interested in. I have something to add because I come from this other place.

Some people are frightened if they notice things out in the world that remind them of what they're doing.

Sounds weird and lonely. I came to this way of working through the trajectory I came to it through, and was in a position to discover all this other work that was going on that shares some of my concerns. But it doesn't feel scary to me, it feels...

Zeitgeisty.

Eileen Quinlan is someone I was aware of a long time ago, but I didn't totally understand what she was up to until I was on this side of photography and struggling with some of the same things.

How do you feel about formalism? Have people applied that term to your work before?

I think that my primary response to the world is like this retinal, formal response. There's this sort of primal situation, where the work is not mediated by language. When I first saw the work of Robert Irwin—there's this primary response of like, POOF [makes gesture of mind being blown through eyeballs]. Then you're trying to sort it out in your head, like, what's going on exactly. At a certain point, I do feel like the giving up to that is a very pleasurable experience. The lack of control when you can't quite work it out. I think that's positive. It's like wonder, or awe. Those are big words, but the not knowing is a thing that I'm interested in.

I guess I'm wondering what you're chipping away at. I liked what you were saying about the stone carving, which is sort of a translation anyhow.



Right, until it becomes this sort of mirrored box of who knows what's what. Since I'm interested in space, I'm interested in creating a condition that reads one way, but isn't that way. There is a tension there. That's what photography can do I think, because there is this other way of translating that experience. [...] The camera is taking this thing that I know is one way, and it's flipping it. This is something I explored in sculpture as well. The way that you see is like a fly's experience of the world, or a bunny, or my daughter whose eyesight is really terrible is like radically different than yours or mine or whoever. It's a subjective experience. So I'm thinking about that.

Between architecture and photographs, there were sculptures?

The whole time I was an architect I was making sculptures. I started taking photographs of them, and people told me they were cool on their own. Those sculptures were very concerned with cubism, and thinking about fracturing a view. So, the concerns here are very much the same here as in the sculpture, but with the interjection of an idea about colour.

It does seem like you're using a specific colour palette. Lots of synthetic colours, right?

Well, it's all paint, right behind you.

But you like fluorescents.

Yeah I always kind of liked those. But then, the other day, it was like, OH MY GOD, TAUPE. (laughs) That's what I am going to do. So, it evolves. I can't say that anything's really fixed.

The studio can be like a laboratory for you, or a place of potential that doesn't necessarily require a plan in advance.

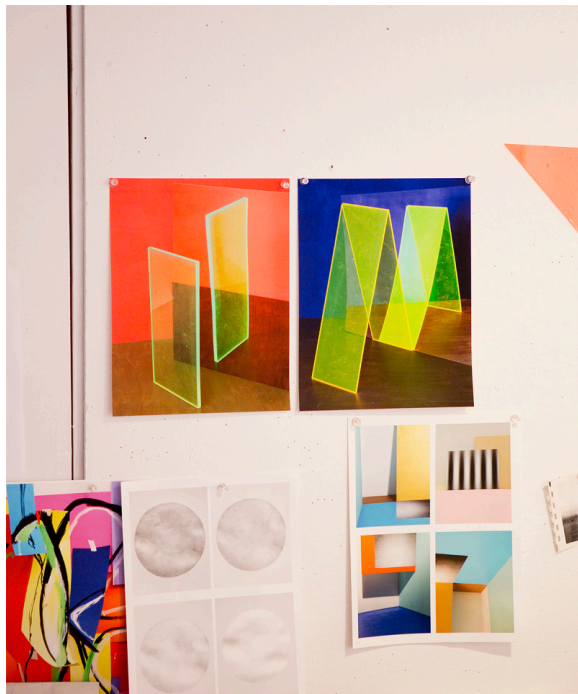
Yes, you made a comment when you came for your last studio visit that I got a lot of mileage out of a corner. Literally, since then I've made literally 800 photographs of corners. Can I make stuff with the stuff I find around here? Can I make things only out of things I generate with the printer, and then print them back out of the printer, so this Epson printer becomes sort of a snake that ate its tail?

How many days a week do you spend here?

4 usually.

And you have two kids?

Daughters, 14 and 18.



So you have like, a life.

Oh, yeah, there's that whole thing.

How does your life outside of this room come into it? Does your family life or your personal life come into the pictures at all?

When I was making sculpture, colour did come into it a bit, and it was definitely because of having kids, because of having all this brightly coloured crap around. I was like oh I like Barbie, these are great pinks! And so, you're less serious about things because you can't take yourself very seriously when the primary people in your life don't.

(laughs)

So there's that. And my husband is an architect. So that part of things is always there, always looking at stuff in the world critically. And I think that's the primary thing that we do. We go and look at work...

Do you take your kids to see art?

I used to when I could make them go. But my 14 year old is starting high school, and she is not so interested in doing things with us. But, they both went to Roden Crater, which was awesome.

It was good?

Yeah. So they've done some of these amazing art things that I'm not sure they appreciate yet, like, one of my daughters fell asleep there under the dining room table with James Turrell.

How did you get to do that?

My husband was working on drawings for the Crater. Terrell has collaborated on a few projects with the firm where he works.

So there is actually a connection between you and California Light and Space.

Oh, his work was like [mind blowing gesture]. And having the opportunity to see Roden Crater was, you know, that was pretty peak.

Will you ever make installations? It seems like you're not set on making flat photos. I'm interested in where this is going... but of course you don't know either. Do you see going back into the third dimension?

That is a frustration for me. The surface of a photograph is cool, it has that window/mirror thing. But sometimes there is something that I want that I can't quite get at. So I would say that the sculpture will come back.

www.erinokeefe.com

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Erin O'Keefe's exhibition *Things as They Are* opens tonight, September 9th, 2015, at Denny Gallery, 261 Broome Street NYC. It will remain on view through October 11th.

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Interview by Matthew Leifheit / Photographs by Max Marshall / Published 9 September 2015

Barbara Kasten: New Peers in Contemporary Photography

Posted: 04/22/2015 9:01 pm EDT | Updated: 06/22/2015 5:59 am EDT

“Barbara Kasten: Stages,” curated by Alex Klein at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, is the first major survey of Kasten’s work, from her fiber sculptures from the early 1970’s, to a newly commissioned site-specific installation involving a nearly 30-foot-high video projection interacting with the architecture of the gallery. For a practicing artist with nearly five decades of work to survey, some might duly note that this first museum retrospective is long overdue. Certainly it is, and there’s no doubt that Kasten has long been underrecognized, however, this exhibition comes at a time when Kasten’s work is perhaps at its most relevant.

Though she never trained formally as a photographer, Barbara Kasten is best known for her highly staged photographic series of studio constructions and architectural spaces, particularly for their lush, saturated colors and perspectival manipulation of light, shadow and space within the photographic frame. Influenced by the Light & Space movement in California, Constructivism and Bauhaus experimentation, in particular the work of László Moholy-Nagy, Kasten uses sculptural forms, mirrors, props and lights to investigate the interplay and tension between three-dimensional and two-dimensional forms, abstraction and material and the object and image.

These concerns have come to the forefront of consciousness due to the work of a new generation of artists and curators, particularly with respect to the medium of photography. This next generation engages with photography not as documentary medium, but as a medium with inherent formal properties -- digital and

analogue -- ripe for experimentation. Kasten’s work, with its absence of narrative and precisely staged constructs built for the camera, situates her right in the midst of these new contemporaries, artists such as Kate Steciw, Elad Lassry, Sam Falls, Eileen Quinlan, Jessica Eaton, Lucas Blalock and many others. On April 7th, the ICA hosted a panel discussion entitled “Kasten in Context: New Peers” between Kasten and Sara VanDerBeek, David Hartt and Takeshi Murata, to discuss shared processes and precedents. And in an interview with Liz Deschenes in the exhibition catalogue, Kasten comments on this exchange with a new generation of artists: “I never felt that I had a peer group before, and now I do. There are younger artists who respect what I do, and I respect what they do. So what if there is a thirty-year age difference between us? We are talking on another level.”

To explore this intergenerational conversation I invited four young artists to comment on and provide insight into Kasten’s photography vis à vis their own, to provide a lens or frame or mirror by which we can understand



Erin O’Keefe, *Much Ado*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist.

various aspects of Kasten's work, and her impact on contemporary photography. I asked them how and when they had become familiar with Kasten's work, and how it made an impact on their work and their view of photography.

“I don't remember exactly how I first became aware of Kasten's work, but I know when I did, it was a revelation.” Erin O'Keefe, a visual artist and architect based in New York, makes photographs that exploit the translation of three-dimensional form and space into two-dimensional images. For her, Kasten's work “presented a range of possibilities for photography that felt really important to me, and deeply relevant to my own interests as an artist. It set out an alternate method of working -- that it could happen in the studio, and investigate phenomena of light and space within a pretty tightly controlled still life. These were not things that I had encountered much in photography -- and it was both inspiring and validating to find an artist working this way.”

Hannah Whitaker...

Jessica Labatte ...

Jaclyn Wright ...

Kasten's practice provided a new paradigm to look at and respond to, drawing out new possibilities beyond portraits, landscape and street photography -- those “windows on the world” the photographic frame was meant to represent. “In my experience, being a photographer seemed to mean taking pictures, as a kind of keen observer,” O'Keefe remarks, “the decisive moment ethos kind of thing. Kasten's way of being a photographer was another model altogether. She was making photographs -- not so much finding the frame as filling it.”

“I find it interesting how much of the writing on her contextualizes the work an amalgam of sculpture, installation and photography,” notes Whitaker. The retrospective exhibition at the ICA indeed emphasizes Kasten's interdisciplinary background and practice -- but Kasten's work can provide us with a more expansive view of what potentialities the medium of photography can hold. Whitaker continues, “There is a persistent and unnecessary insistence that her work is not just photography. [Kasten] shows us our own narrow view of the medium -- that photography can involve making pictures, not only taking them.”

Kasten, when reached for comment, expressed a feeling of gratitude and perhaps some sense of vindication, at the renaissance her works are currently enjoying. “Twenty-plus years ago I set out to do a documentary video on women artists in photography who I felt were not getting the recognition they deserved,” she told me. “I never thought that I'd be the recipient of similar attention later in my career. Thanks to Alex Klein and the ICA Philadelphia, my career is being looked at by a younger generation just as I did in *High Heels* and *Ground Glass*. It's a return of all the good karma I set in motion in the 1980s.”
--Natalie Hegert