

AND/ALSO: Photography (Mis)represented

297 TENTH AVENUE
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Lucas Blalock, *Old Mail, parallax*, 2017, archival inkjet print, 48 x 60 1/2 x 2 in, 121.9 x 153.7 x 5.1 cm. © Lucas Blalock, courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich/New York

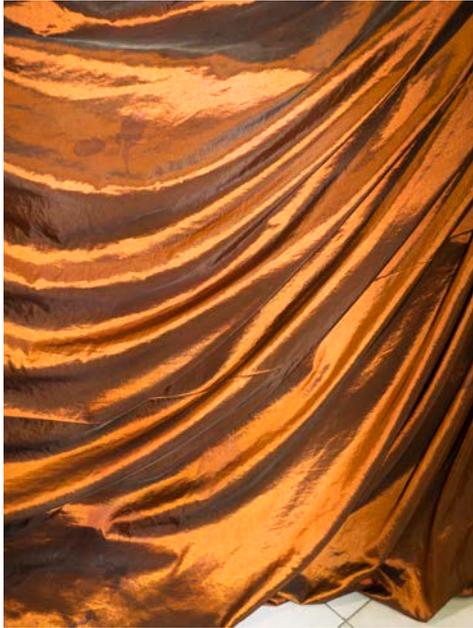
In the last ten years, the boundaries between photography and sculpture, architecture, painting, drawing, media and computation have become increasingly porous. Central to the efficacy of photography today is its relationship to language. Like language, photography is a communicative medium that belongs to every discipline, allowing it to shift from commercial to critical and across media. *AND/ALSO: Photography (Mis)represented* unites six photographers based in New York whose divergent practices all demonstrate the easy slippage between one medium and the next. Their methodologies contend with medium specific conceptions historically associated with photography, like authorship, deadpan documentation, and chemical composition, to imagine a system of representation that exists in quantum states, oscillating in and out of its own parameters. Taken collectively, the thirteen photographs exhibited make evident

that a new approach to formalism is emerging within the contemporary construct, one that is multidisciplinary and upended by new technologies and advanced editing softwares.

Using the Clone Stamp and Brush tools in Adobe Photoshop, Lucas Blalock (b. 1978) has devised a mechanized approach to painting within images that transcends the limitations of traditional photographic production. Appropriating the codes and conventions of surrealist and expressionist painting, he applies digitized brushstrokes to otherwise straightforward photographs of everyday objects. Each stroke scores the image, obscuring the object depicted and leaving traces of activity that point back to the absent author. Occasionally, he uses the tools to add figures that appear to occupy empty space. This tendency to breathe life into images is exemplified in his billboard for last year's Whitney Biennial, for which Blalock created an augmented reality application that visitors could download to make the desert landscape three-dimensional and the animals animated.

Michele Abeles (b. 1977) manipulates the flow, exchange and disruption of data in photographs that alter, share, and intentionally misrepresent the referent. In her series, *Find Out What Happens When People Start Getting Real*, Abeles abstracts the human figure and positions it as a readymade object. Taking previously shot photographs of people on the street, she crops into the body and covers up areas of the image by applying ceramic tile and acrylic paint to the surface. In the process, photographs made using a digital camera, and thus intended for reproducibility and widespread dissemination, become unique objects. The configuration of ceramic tiles reference a 1969 work by Marcel Broodthaers and an 1887 poem by Stéphane Mallarmé, both titled *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (*A throw of the dice will never abolish chance*), which propose that language be liberated from typography.

As if to answer their proposal, much of the work of Roe Ethridge (b. 1969) visualizes the coded system of semiology. For example, photographs like *Model Prints on Broken Pencil* reveal how meaning is produced by laying out the network of signs and signifiers within a series of editorial images. Here, Ethridge uses collage to communicate the



Farah Al Qasimi, *Closed Kiosk, Brown*, 2019, archival inkjet print, 15 x 11 inches, 38.1 x 27.9 cm. Courtesy of the artist, Helena Anrather, New York, and The Third Line, Dubai.

denoted and connoted messages behind the final photograph. Less direct, yet still a study on myth making, *Chubbs (Celine Horse)* depicts a pony displaced from its natural environment now regal against a red backdrop, in concert with pictorial strategies of the Romantic era. Throughout his career, Ethridge has combined a wide variety of source material to make images that collapse historical genres into commercial and critical contemporary photography, drawing attention to the unstable ontology of the medium.

Like Ethridge, Farah Al Qasimi (b. 1991) sequences images in nonlinear narrative structures that allow for the cross-pollination of fine art and applied practice. Her work reflects her life, a tandem of culture and commodity from the United Arab Emirates and the United States in photography, performance, and video that speak to a strong-willed, feminine power. For her latest series, taken in Dubai, Qasimi photographed five closed kiosks in Dragon Mart, the world's largest hub of Chinese manufactured goods outside of China. The flowing fabrics, and what they conceal, reify industrial postwar production while also acting as abstract studies of color, texture and painterly design.

Epitomizing abstract efforts in photographic production, Erin O'Keefe (b. 1962) builds dioramas of hand carved wooden blocks and velvet cutouts only to photograph them in compositions that strategically flatten space. Trained as an architect, she pursues spatial relationships with mathematical precision until dimension and depth are difficult to discern. Her work is as much sculpture as it is photography, volumetrically unfolding within the picture plane. A testament to the hybridity of her practice, for the first time in her career, O'Keefe is exhibiting unique photographs.

In his impetus to make the ordinary extraordinary, Daniel Gordon (b. 1980) is engaged with the surrealist pedagogy. Similar to O'Keefe, he photographs assemblages he constructs from foundational materials. Paper cutouts and shredded cardboard somehow support large-scale entropic landscapes and still lifes that embrace formalist notions of color, form, line and composition. Once photographed, the two-dimensional made three-dimensional reverts back, forcing us to look at photography rather than through it. Currently, Gordon is working on a monumental outdoor sculpture made of printed images on aluminum sheets to be installed in 2021 at the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in Boston.

Within these artists' practices, it is clear that formalism in photography today is not a study of one medium, but rather a study of how one medium can be all mediums.

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