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The 50 Gallery Shows You Need to See This Spring

Spring is nearly here, and it's time to look ahead. We've culled gallery listings worldwide to highlight 50 must-see exhibitions over the next three months, spanning 14 cities and ranging from historical surveys to cutting-edge contemporary work, from all-female group exhibitions to debut solo shows.

Berlin

Kate Steciw at Neumeister Bar-Am
Apr. 30–Jun. 25, Goethestrasse 2

Steciw has shifted from providing incisive commentary on stock imagery to creating curious yet immaculate abstract works couched in carefully crafted frames; new works, some over four feet, will hang in clusters.

FLUXO

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‘Touch-tone’ by Rachel de Joode, Kate Steciw and Letha Wilson @ Martos Gallery

Martos Gallery is now showcasing Touch-tone, featuring new works by Rachel de Joode, Kate Steciw and Letha Wilson. Continuing their dialogue that challenges the limits of photography as an artistic medium, Touch-tone is the first time these three artists will collaborate on an exhibition together. The show will be on view November 7 – December 19.

Through their work, de Joode, Steciw and Wilson examine how the viewer systemizes, perceives and absorbs visual culture in the persistently shifting modes of media today. Whether they record in the studio, appropriate via the internet or shoot in the wilderness, each artist begins their process with a photograph. Through subtle interventions or aggressive manipulations, these photographs are fragmented, de-constructed, sewn back together, skewed, fractured, crumpled and stretched. Consequently, each image is re-imagined, endowing its content with new physical and contextual form, creating and dissipating narratives, and ultimately altering our notions of reality.

Neumeister Bar-Am

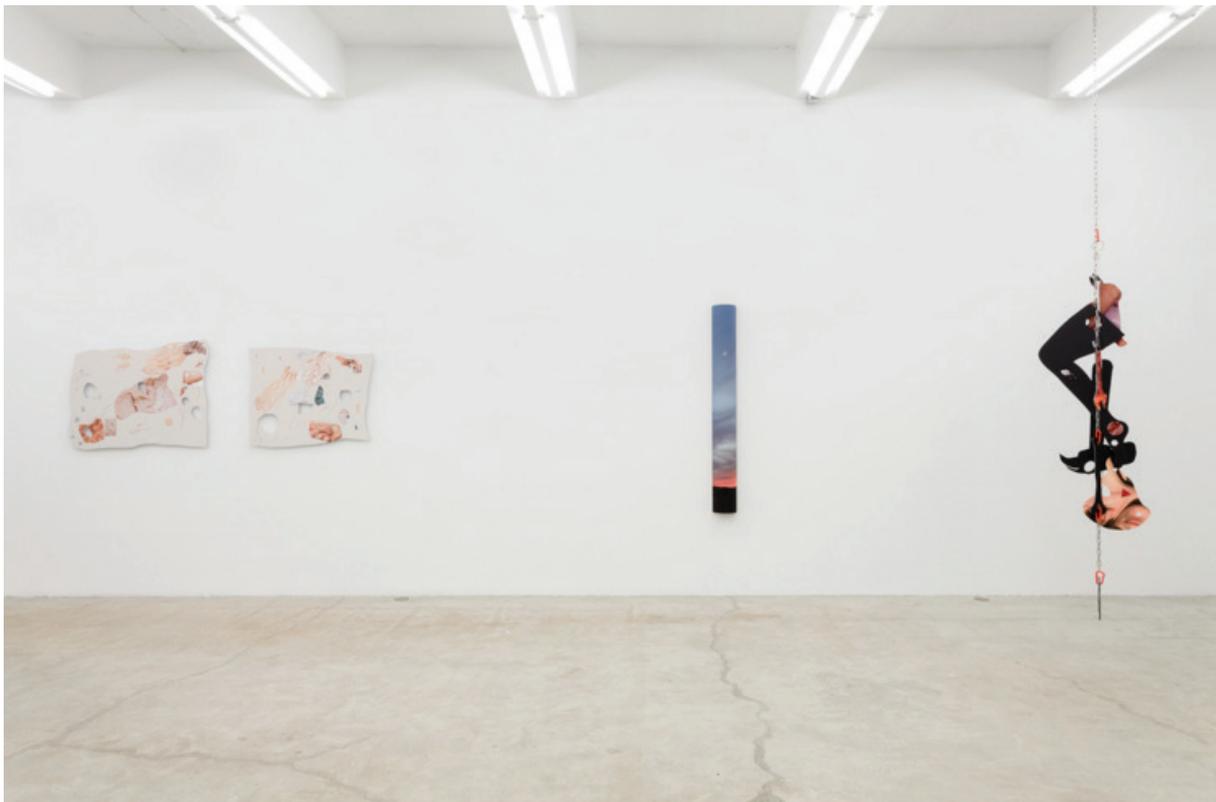


Installation View: Touch-tone, 2015



Installation View: Touch-tone, 2015

Neumeister Bar-Am



Installation View: Touch-tone, 2015



Rachel De Joode, Drawing or flowy conglomeration. Hey! VII, 2015,
archival inkjet print on Dibond, 31.5 x 39 inches

Neumeister Bar-Am

Analyzing the tenuous divides between the physical, the representational, and the abstract, **Rachel de Joode** constructs works reminiscent of another world. Juxtapositions of skin, clay, soil, and other organic elements compose flat digital shapes, which the artist repositions on pedestals and as wall pieces that perform a gestural migration throughout the space. De Joode was born in 1979 in the Netherlands. Recent exhibitions include those at Christophe Gaillard, Paris; Neumeister Bar-Am, Berlin; Kansas Gallery, New York; Tatjana Pieters, Gent; Arbank Sanat, Istanbul, and MAMO, Marseilles. She currently lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

Meditating on the power of photographic representation, **Kate Steciw** assembles imagery taken from social media, stock photography and iPhone cameras, which she then collages, prints and cuts into miscellaneous, generic shapes of aluminum mounted on Sintra PVC. Hanging from the ceiling of the gallery like mobiles, these pieces—randomly strung together with chains and ropes—allude to the jaded and anarchic manner with which we digest photography in our daily lives. Steciw was born in 1978 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Recent exhibitions include those at Retrospective Gallery, Hudson; Higher Pictures, New York; Anat Egbi, Los Angeles; Levy Delval, Brussels and upcoming solo shows at Brand New Gallery, Milan and Neumeister Bar-Am, Berlin in 2016. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Colored chromogenic prints of picturesque panoramas and verdant close-ups are cut, dipped in cement, folded and torn in **Letha Wilson**'s scenic reliefs. The result is a fluctuating, textured surface where the facets of the landscape—ridges, grooves, and vistas—are mimicked by the artwork's terrain, generating a material duality between the flat image and its physical counterpart. Wilson was born in 1976 in Honolulu, Hawaii. Recent exhibitions include those at Grimm Gallery, Amsterdam; Brand New Gallery, Milan; Higher Pictures, New York; Retrospective Gallery, Hudson; Marianne Boesky, New York, and Jack Hanley, New York. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

Touch-tone

Rachel de Joode
Kate Steciw
Letha Wilson

November 7 – December 19, 2015
@ Martos Gallery, NYC

www.martosgallery.com

POST

CUT OUT

by Louise Benson | June 18, 2014

IN HER LATEST EXHIBITION, KATE STECIW DISLOCATES STOCK PHOTOS FROM THE EVERYDAY AND UBIQUITOUS, TRANSFORMING THEM INTO NEWLY PHYSICAL COMPOSITIONS.



Cut and paste. From scissors and paper to the ubiquitous tap of our computerised commands, imagery and text are set in motion. Transformed, transferred, rotated and mutated, they are stripped of their context and given new ownership. Kate Steciw takes on these tools in her latest exhibition 'ACTIFE PLASSITY' at Neumeister Bar-Am, Berlin, her first solo show in Germany. Five stock images form the basis of her large-scale prints, selected by Steciw from a vast networked database of picture files, and then layered and manipulated within a single Photo-

shop file. "I usually start with an image I'm instinctively drawn to or have wanted to work with; then I start following keywords and visual cues from it to find others," she explains. "I like to use images that are highly recognisable and commonly used in the advertising and media that surrounds us." These images are Steciw's "raw material." Taken out of their everyday surroundings, she pushes us to see beyond their associated banality. Her situating of her material within the art world enables a new elevation for them, but also raises a question of the function of the art world within our lives. As the role of the digital realm increasingly comes into play in today's cultural echelons, how do the two successfully overlap? "The internet and digital media have introduced new aesthetic possibilities in the form of editing and output technologies. It is always a good thing when the art world is challenged to reassess how it succeeds or fails to reflect a changing cultural milieu," Steciw says.



Neumeister Bar-Am

“IT IS ALWAYS A GOOD THING
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“The art world has the power to help us as a culture assess our own relationship to materials and aesthetics by providing space for where these things, in the best case scenario, can be decontextualized and understood in new terms. I think we are in crucial need of this right now with the recent drastic changes to our physical, emotional and intellectual worlds brought on by the internet and other massive technological advances.” Steciw forges her own terms. Her adopted stock images collide with one another, woven together in a new dance of distortion. Even once framed, her flattened compositions are cut away in jagged shapes, at times angled away from the gallery wall. Mass produced automotive embellishments, wall decor and bumper stickers are also latched on to the frames, lending a newly three-dimensional layer to Steciw’s self-proclaimed drive towards the familiar. “The physicality of the sculptural interventions, for me, help to extend the gestures of the initial digital composites,” she says. The inclusion of these interventions heightens the sense of saturation latent within the show, celebrating our ordinary and unsung desires. “I am interested in how and under what circumstances these things act on us psychologically and emotionally.” The trajectory from Dadaist Assemblage to Photoshop is clear. Citing influences from Robert Rauschenberg to Kurt Schwitters, Steciw takes forward their tools for a new digital era of picture-perfect ubiquity. Spliced content clashes and associative overlaps propel Steciw’s recycled images into new imaginative possibilities. In ‘ACTIFE PLASSITY’, the spotlight is turned upon her viewers’ own relationship to the littered memorabilia of our time.

ACTIFE PLASSITY shows at Neumeister Bar-Am until 19th July 2014.

COOL
HUNTING

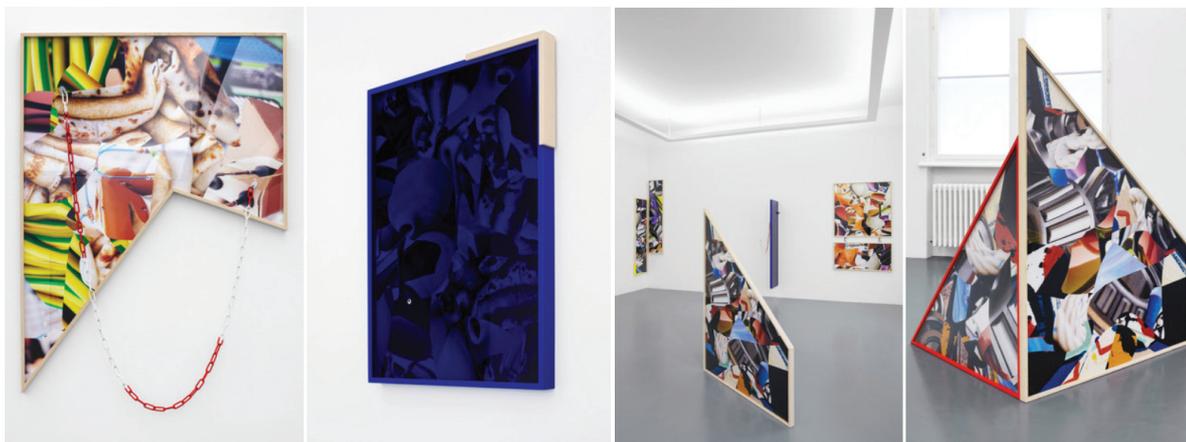
Kate Steciw's Manipulated Stock Images

The artist turns 5 images intended for much more mundane use into hypnotic pieces that transcend the rectangular photograph

by Jonah Samson in Culture on 03 June 2014



In her first solo exhibition in Germany, artist **Kate Steciw** manipulates a very limited number of stock images into unique layered compositions, blurring the line between representation and abstraction. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania-born and now Brooklyn-based Steciw adorns each piece (framed in unique shapes that often come out of the wall or sit on the floor) with decals, wheels, hooks and chains to further challenge our traditional concepts of how photographs should be presented. We spoke with the artist about her show "ACTIFE PLASSITY" (now on view at Berlin's **Neumeister Bar-Am** gallery) and asked her how she both loses and finds new meaning in photographs originally intended for a much more mundane purpose.



Cool Hunting, June 2014

All of the works in this show were produced using just five different stock photos. What was so enticing about those five images? At this point in my practice, the process of choosing images is really instinctual (though, I imagine, somewhat influenced by the viewing software). I see images, patterns and color combinations that have potential. Once I've settled on the five images, they were all layered into one file and manipulated and reconfigured from there. There are really infinite potential outcomes of this way of working. The 12 resultant works in the show represent a fraction of the possible pieces that could be derived from this single file.

Occasionally there is something clearly identifiable within the construction of the image. How considered is the balance between representation and abstraction in each picture? The balance between representation and abstraction is somewhat arbitrary. I see all of the images I use (even in an unaltered state) as abstract and am attracted to images that exhibit this kind of inherent abstraction. The most successful compositions, to me, are the ones that include some recognizable aspects, but somehow allow them to exist in a state of representational flux. (For example, a ball bearing is visible, but could also be the rings of Saturn.)



Your work avoids the tradition of the rectangular photograph, and the pieces don't end once they are framed. What determines the final shape of each piece, and why do you further alter your images with stickers and chains? As a continuation of the digital work performed on each piece, further work with or on each piece via framing, installation and subsequent sculptural intervention seemed logical after a certain point. Shapes are determined by slicing the image either in Photoshop or physically. This is somewhat at random, although a lot of the triangular pieces I produce are two halves of the same 40" X 50" print file. I am interested in fragmentation as a gesture. To purposefully truncate what was originally a complete or "finished" image is another way of intervening in the picture plane. Furthermore adhering something—anything, really—to the surface of the frames is a simple way of introducing another dimension and, in the case of the wheeled floor pieces, another potential action (movement) or attribute (speed).

Your work was recently included in the well-received group show at the International Center for Photography in New York called "What is a Photograph?" Do you see your work as pushing the boundaries of contemporary photography, or would you prefer to have it considered outside that particular medium?

I am thrilled to have my work considered at all.

"ACTIFE PLASSITY" is now on view at Berlin's Neumeister Bar-Am until 19 July.



Steciw and de Joode | Open for Business

*For Gallery Weekend Berlin, Kate Steciw and Rachel de Joode came together to produce *Open for Business* at gallery Neumeister Bar-Am, an exhibition that straddles the divide between performance and installation while displaying the artists' collaborative photography. Having exhibited *Open for Business* and other projects in the past, Steciw and de Joode's relationship alludes to a promising future. Marvin Jordan reached out to the duo via email.*



Can you tell us about the history of your collaborative relationship? Do you approach your exhibitions as part of a cohesive or cumulative body of work?

Kate Steciw We'd both admired each other's work online for some time so when Rachel approached me about participating in an auction she was organizing I was excited to be in touch. Emails and chats ensued. I remember exchanging a lot of images (we still do) just for fun and as conversation starters. I think it was Rachel who formally introduced the idea of collaborating in some way but it was so hard to decide what exactly that meant and what we'd produce being that we live in different countries most of the time. Ultimately Rachel was going to be in NYC for her solo show with Interstate Projects and we'd secured a venue for the weekend at Stadium Gallery yet were still "brainstorming." It was then that we realized that we should make our collaborative work about the work of collaboration and furthermore about the performance of artistic labor.

Rachel de Joode So true! I think it had a lot to do with chance as well, for the first one in New York, we realized that we only had a few days to 'do something' and so the 'doing something' also got to be the thing. And let's not forget the performance evening 'Important Things' that I curated at Interstate gallery in the summer of 2012. Kate participated with a great performance together with her dog, both were dressed up as 'each other' – this was pretty amazing and opened a dialog between us about the notion of the contemporary artist, openings, networks, being (acting as) an artist in the existing art-market, capitalism.

As far as the media that people traditionally expect to see in an exhibition, you employed photography as a central feature of Open for Business. However, there were many more factors at play beyond a simple photo exhibition, such as your performative immersion in the art space. Did you ever think strategically in terms of the relationship between your photography and the other, 'unexpected' factors of the event? Was the photography an instrumental pretext for other possibilities, or was it just as important?

KS Photography or images were a logical starting point for us as they are central to both of our training, individual practices and/or day jobs. Also they were a primary form of communication with one another. We've always thought of the photographic element as a kind of catalyst for the physical work in that aside from some very basic "art" supplies, the actual output exhibited begins with a photograph. That initial photograph or photographs is then manipulated, composited and printed only to find its way into further photographs, sculptures or other interventions. In this sense, the photograph or act of photographing is the essential practice, generative of all of the other final works in some form or another.



RdJ True, we use photography as on-the-spot documentation, then, we work with this 'documentation' as material (as an 'art-supply') we rework it and document that process: back-forth, back-forth, till we stop. The photograph and the physical work are fluid, like a dance. On a basic semantic level, "performance" connotes dynamism and fluidity whereas "installation" implies construction and fixity. The fact that Open for Business intersects these two art forms raises interesting questions.

Would you characterize your collaboration as an installation performance or a performance installation? To what extent did you intend to deconstruct or problematize these notions?

KS My gut response is to call it a performance of exhibition rather than installation per se. I am hesitant to call the final product an installation because, there is a concerted effort to transform the site of making to a site of display implying an exhibition of discrete but related works rather than a display the environment of making. Deconstruction is less of a motivation in general but the idea of "problematizing" resonates. I think the concept "problematizing" is an inspiration for both of us on a personal and an artistic level.

RdJ I agree with the notion of 'performance of exhibition'. Concerning deconstruction, there's actually something to it I believe, in a sense that we work a lot with fragments; we point to objects, things, situations, maybe deconstruction is not the right word, perhaps a 'problematic reconstruction'.

There is a stock-like quality to your photos but also a deep-seated disturbance of the concept of stock photography, in addition to self-referential representations of artistic production. Do the both of you share a consistent aesthetic vision prior to your actual collaborations, or is your collaborative process more spontaneous than it is calculated in advance?

Neumeister Bar-Am

KS Our collaborative process is definitely spontaneous at its core. I think whatever aesthetic overlap we share is informed by our participation in the world of commercial photography on some level or another. As for the resultant works, its not so much a sublimation of our individual aesthetics for the sake of a collaborative aesthetic as it is a kind of exquisite corpse or call and response in which Rachel's distinctive palette will mix with my digital compositing which will then be intervened with again by Rachel either digitally or physically and onward until we call it 'done.'

RdJ So true! I think we both agree that the truly fun part about our collaboration is that for us it's like playing, like acting. We have different solo-practices and that's the beauty of this project; for one day only we have a public, high speed dialog out-loud, which results in a solid body of work in only a few hours, blending both our practices into one. It's spontaneous within this one-day border that we set. The only thing we decide upon in advance is a table full of art-supplies and our 'opening hours'. The way it's photographed might remind of Stock-Photo, but, I think it's more somewhere between stock-photo and the present-day internet-art-documentation aesthetics. Which are two topics we both work with in our own practices; Kate more with stock-photography and I work more with the notion and aesthetics of the art-documentation.

You livestreamed your activities in the art space as the day unfolded, making Open for Business accessible to anyone with an internet connection. What were your goals in integrating digital broadcasting into your exhibition? In general, does the internet inform how you work as artists, both individually and collectively?

KS The internet is integral to the collaboration as it is integral to our contemporary lives. We likely wouldn't have even seen each other's work or as much of it had it not been for the Internet. Furthermore, we'd certainly never have been able to move forward as rapidly as we have given our physical distance from one another had it not been for Skype and chat. There is also the fact that the internet facilitates a more image-based exchange which has definitely played a role in our collaboration. As for broadcasting, it was initially an impulse to expand our audience which is an essential part of the idea. The idea that an audience could access the secret realm of the artist's studio has always been interesting to us as a way of demystifying the creative process — making the studio more like a "shop" than a site of secretive and/or magical production of highly valuable art objects.

RdJ I believe that streaming Open For Business really finishes the work. This time we had more visitors online (over 100) than IRL. How incredibly interesting is that! It's funny cause on the one side we try to 'de-romanticize' the art-making process, but then through the stream I feel there's something extremely warm and romantic happening, people watching us make mistakes: glueing our fingers together, dropping things, printing the paper upside down etc, from their beds, sofas, workspace (with a 'romantic art-making process' I mean it in a Vincent van Gogh solitary artist kind of way).



There seems to be a conceptual interplay occurring between the materials depicted in your photos and the processing entailed in their portrayal — the fact that artisanal craft resources are being extensively photoshopped. Moreover, a tension between process and product is also spotlighted: we see that something is being produced with clay, we don't know what it is, but nonetheless that itself is the product. Is there a deeper critique of artistic process taking place here?

KS We are definitely interested in the aesthetics of art supplies. For us, incorporating things like blocks of clay, a daub of paint or an unused brush call to attention to the pre-aestheticized nature of the tools of art making. In this way, these objects act as an extension of the performative element of our collaboration. They too are performing a part in the mythology of the studio so to introduce them as sculpture or a layer in a digital composition reinforces their own formal and aesthetic attributes. We also like to aestheticize the process of making (dirty hands/clothes, fingerprints on prints, splashes and splotches of all kinds). Unfinished works have a greater set of potential outcomes and by photographing works in progress, fragments or discarded materials, we generate more materials for future works. The process is kind of fractal in that way. Furthermore, by photographing a cast in progress or wet paint, we are able to access a moment of flux that is traditionally excluded from the final art object. The potential to introduce an image of a liquid state and have that image act as material for a three dimensional within minutes of its capture speaks to the speed of contemporary art/image/content production.

RdJ I believe we work from an 'alien perspective', we observe clay, using it maybe without knowing how- to properly, but knowing it's an important asset when you make a sculpture. Most of the materials we use fragmented, we point them out, we 'handle' them, partly. Our shopping list contains mainly art-supplies, we use them as products and we use the images of those products (sometimes 'handled' by with hands) as material. This again has to do with the de-mystification. By using these art-materials, that have a strong aura, as products we definitely engage in a critique concerning worth of art: What is art? What is artistic labour?

What does the future hold for Steciw/de Joode, both short-term and long-term?

KS In the short term, Rachel is going to have a baby who we hope will be a willing and enthusiastic assistant to our collaboration at some point. We are always really excited to produce/perform in new locations (the more disparate the better) because the way that artwork is produced (the speed of production, the materials available and the pre existing aesthetics of those materials) always varies so much from location to location and the more opportunities we have to work in different places around the world, the more we are able to call attention to those differences and discrepancies we find so interesting. In fact, the more widely disparate those experiences are, the better. For example, the differences between producing in Mexico City and producing in Berlin are vast and extremely interesting. We'd like to work in China for instance. Language barriers and miscommunication are interesting as there are often sub-collaborations that are essential to our practice that we also like to have play an active role in the final outcome (galleries, assistants, printers, etc...).

RdJ True, I am days before exploding! And yes, we need to do the next OFB on a different continent. I think locality versus globally is part of the work as well, as it is about internet-culture and art-production, art-value, the artist as producer. The project benefits from changing environments. China, Africa, Antarctica; here we come!

Interview by Marvin Jordan
All images courtesy of Steciw / de Joode and Neumeister Bar-Am





art &
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digital &
motion

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events

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gallery weekend berlin: steciw + de joode @ nba

reviews

graphic

transmedia



The death of affect.

by Eva Folks on 14/05/2014

From May 2 - 4, all the nooks and crannies of Berlin were filled by 50 pop-up exhibitions as part of the annual **Gallery Weekend Berlin**, now in its 10th year. The celebrated contemporary art event, supported by prominent partners like Tate London and the Centre Pompidou Paris, consistently attracts collectors and patrons from across the world, with over a 1000 visitors rolling in this year for the short weekend programme. Hopping from gallery to picnic to gallery again, I spent that weekend roaming Berlin like a tourist, trying to find hidden gallery spaces tucked behind the greyscale walls of banal DDR-era buildings, and my favorite artists among them.

The moment we set foot into the **Neumeister Bar-Am (NBA)** gallery space, co-owned by Barak Bar-Am and Jean-Pierre Neumeister, we are greeted by associate director **Ché Zara Blomfield** who walks us through NYC-based artist **Kate Steciw's** newest (and first solo German) exhibition, *Actife Plassity*.

We walk the edges of the single exhibition room around walls strewn with flattened collage-style works sliced and sporadically fitted into structural shapes littering the floor. All the pieces are comprised of stock images, for example, five to be exact, which are duplicated and layered into a single Photoshop file and exported into the physical exhibition pieces shown in the gallery. The works on the wall appear swarming, the five stock images echoed repeatedly and layered over the smooth rounded lines of one another.

I immediately recoil, having always been taught to look for acute angles and generally more drawn to sharper geometric shapes, but there is something soothing and innocuous in Steciw's work, like a blue popsicle on a hot summer night. The stock images dart on the canvas, the low hum of pop culture blended and bent into a singular piece that says everything and nothing at the same time.



When I ask about Steciw's inspiration, Blomfield points me in the direction of *The Overloaded Man*, a short story J.G. Ballard in which the protagonist, suitably named Faulkner, narrows his perception of the world which in turn becomes nothing more than an array of abstract forms and colours. As Ballard writes:

"Gradually these too began to lose their meaning, the abstract masses of colour dissolving, drawing Faulkner after them into a world of pure psychic sensation, where blocks of ideation hung like magnetic fields in a cloud chamber."

The death of affect, which forms the moral thread of Ballard's tale, is how one feels walking through Steciw's work. The bland, saccharine images of the stock archives compete weakly with one another, losing all representational meaning through their composition. At times, they disappear into each so completely that all one detects are the skeletons of patterns, infinitesimal fractions of the whole.

But once completely devoid of meaning, they begin to find it once again –in the rose petals that hang suspended in the corner of the canvas, in the netted image that curls across the bright orange of an indeterminate shape. The abstraction obliterates shape as experienced every day, blurring and distorting it and giving it the freedom to become something else. Tentatively, then joyfully, the shapes begin to tell a story outside of their own contours.

We see a different means of freedom in the upper floor of the gallery space, where Steciw and **Rachel de Joode** have set up studio for the day with the third installment of their performance and installation project *Open for Business*. In the attic-style studio we find the two artists –de Joode curled before the glowing screen of her computer, Steciw floating across the studio in a state of arrangement. In the far corner rests a tripod with a camera fixed firmly in place, and on the opposite walls are the products of the day, now coming to a close. Trading roles, the two artists spent the day photographing objects, everything from clay moulds to close-ups of their hands holding various objects.

Neumeister Bar-Am

“Is that sushi?” I ask incredulously, leaning in to take a closer at one of the finished pieces displayed on the wall. “Yes,” Steciw answers matter-of-factly. “We had sushi for lunch.” The whole thing feels a bit silly and thrilling, and we all giggle, because, sushi. Later, de Joode spins around in her chair to tell us that Open for Business is about the de-mystification of art more than anything else. That taking the process and opening it to the public acts as a means of connection, as a way to counter the insulation of artists within the cocoons of their industries.

We loop the small studio space a few more times, playing Paint By Numbers-style games with the various objects scattered across the studio, threading pieces of salmon to the disembodied fragments that span the wall, the clay mould to every echo of grey, the fingers of a hand directly back to Steciw’s own wrist.

It’s like the Internet itself, I say half-aloud, and Steciw jumps to agreement. Dynamic, hurried, leaving traces of its earlier self behind like shed skin, the studio space seems like the physical representation of the digital process. As we filter out of the space and say our goodbyes, I think to the end of “The Overloaded Man” where Ballard writes:

“Steadily watching it, he waited for the world to dissolve and set him free.”

I think back over my life to the ways in which I’ve invariably chased the abstract, devouring poetry, obsessing over expressionism, and I feel at that moment that I know exactly what he means. **



Open for Business studio installation view. Image courtesy Neumeister Bar-Am

ARTFORUM

“What is a Photograph?”

ICP - INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Avenue of the Americas

January 31 - May 1

Many of the artists in this expansive exhibition place an emphasis on the physicality—or lack thereof—of photography rather than on its capacity to represent the outside world. As a whole, “What Is a Photograph?” might be taken as a diagnostic inquiry, with the title reading as a rhetorical question. Curated by Carol Squiers, the exhibition includes twenty-one artists, ranging from Gerhard Richter and James Welling to Liz Deschenes and Eileen Quinlan, and has tasked itself with surveying the medium since the 1970s.



Letha Wilson, *Colorado Purple*, 2012,
concrete, C-print transfer, C-print, wood frame,
21 x 21 x 2".

The work of both Matthew Brandt and Letha Wilson exhume a long-standing tradition of American landscape photography with fresh invigoration. In Brandt's large-scale *Grays Lake, ID 7*, 2013, Technicolor abstractions stem from an actual processing bath in the depicted lake waters, while Wilson's monolith *Grand Tetons Concrete Column*, 2012, employs industrial concrete to sculpturally engage her iconic views of the American West. Draped through the gallery's foyer is Mariah Robertson's *154*, 2010. This single photograph measures one hundred feet in length and has been meticulously hand-processed by the artist in a highly toxic photochemical environment. The remarkable result validates its production, as every inch of this dangling photograph reveals a labyrinth of glowing hues and pictorial intricacies.

Parallel to romanticizing the darkroom are the several artists who wholeheartedly embrace the more conventional, digitalized avenues associated with the medium. Travess Smalley's *Capture Physical Presence #15*, 2011, exploits the imaging systems of a flatbed scanner to manipulate his collages into what he describes as mind-numbing "feedback loops." Kate Steciw's approach in *Apply*, 2012, takes advantage of a Google-based research method, purchased stock imagery, and sculptural tack-ons that recall the slick advertisements of commercial photography. Elsewhere in the gallery, a wall text accompanying Jon Rafman's eerie and unadorned busts reads, "The age demanded an image / Of its accelerated grimace, Something for the modern stage / Not, at any rate, an attic grace."

- Gabriel H. Sanchez



Kate Steciw

New Custom Wall Art

Open day: saturday 25 january 2014 at h. 11,00.

In her first Italian solo show, *New Custom Wall Art*, **Kate Steciw** continues to explore the matrix of image production, consumption and manipulation. Images act as raw material for a digitally mediated yet highly personalized gesture drawing attention to the hand, often hidden, at work in producing contemporary image culture. Paired whimsically with items like bumper stickers and decorative decals, Steciw endeavors to destabilize the limitations of context and intended use - unlocking new aesthetic potentials via the recombination of elements within the existing commercial lexicon.

Licensing stock images as raw material, then compositing, manipulating and layering them in Photoshop, the artist bypasses the camera as well as the concept of image authorship originating within the camera to emphasize gestures of editing as sites of aesthetic production. Once framed and installed, she revisits the frames and the surrounding wall space as fodder for further intervention disrupting expectations of traditional picture plane and highlighting the mutable nature of the contemporary viewing experience.

The show's title, a play on the search terms associated with decorative art available for purchase online, belies Steciw's ongoing interest in systems of valuation and the influence of commercial aesthetics on contemporary human experience.

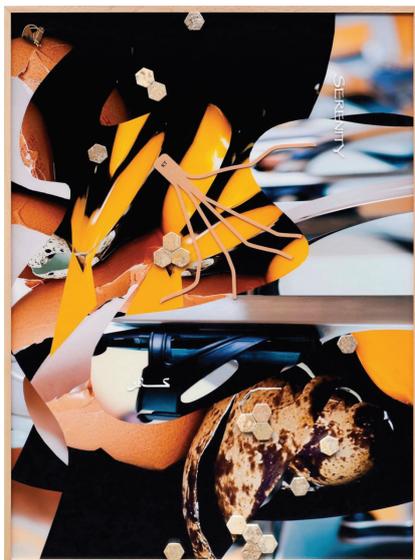
"Electronic aids, particularly domestic computers, will help the inner migration, the opting out of reality. Reality is no longer going to be the stuff out there, but the stuff inside your head. It's going to be commercial and nasty at the same time."

J.G. Ballard (b. 1930), British author. repr. in Re/Search, no. 8/9 (San Francisco, 1984). Interview in Heavy Metal (April 1971).

Art in America

Kate Steciw

by Charles Marshall Schultz



Kate Steciw's work investigates the shifting relationship between objects in the physical reality of everyday living and their two-dimensional representations on the Internet. Desire is at the core of this connection, playing out in the networks of commerce that are essential to the artist's practice. Intensely hued stock photography and scads of inexpensive Internet purchases are transformed into sleek, voluptuous wall-hung assemblages that attest to the manic saturation of online consumer society.

Steciw's is an art of gathering and ordering; associative logic and optical intuition seem to be guiding forces. Of the five pieces in her recent exhibition, "Boundless Hyper," three feature altered photographs the artist pulled off the Web. These C-prints hang in unfussy oak frames and are variously adorned with bric-a-brac, such as stickers, Scotch tape, glass beads, bandages or car ornaments. In each work, two photographs have been completely recomposed into a single abstract image, notable for its lush colors and textures. Objects can be recognized within the composite images, and the combinations are eccentric: an egg and a fitness machine, pipe fittings and flames, sweaters and glass. The works

have listlike titles that suggest connections having to do as much with form as with content, for example: Adhere, Adhesive, Aqua, Alter, Base, Based, Bauble, Blase, Blend, Blending, Blue, Crease, Decanter, Dimension, Elan, Filter, Faulty, Gaiety, Gauge, Glass, Grain, Mason, Masonic, Melange, Mystery, Opal, Opalescent, Own, Owned, Pwn, Pwnd, Sconse (2012).

Central to Steciw's process is a reckoning with the forces that motivate Internet shopping. Desire to enhance one's vehicle, for instance, is spurred by an online image of an automotive ornament. The image stands in for the thing. In Steciw's works, the objects themselves have little inherent value, which might be understood as an inversion of William Carlos Williams's dictum "no ideas but in things." Here, all things are reduced to representations of ideas.

These three assemblages have a seriousness that is less present in the accompanying wire sculptures. Each titled *Live Laugh Love* (2012), the two twisting balled-up forms sat elegantly on bright white plinths near the gallery's picture window. The artist created the sculptures by bending and conjoining wire signs she purchased online that spelled out the works' title. On their own, these pieces are close to conceptual one-liners. However, on the afternoon I visited, they cast weblike shadows across the gallery floor. The curvilinear lines of the sculptures and the abstract patterns of their shadows corresponded neatly to the dynamics of the assemblages.

Photo: Kate Steciw: Action, Active, Adult, Adjust, Background, Break, Breakfast, Blast, Ceramic, Close, Crack, Cuisine . . . , 2012, C-print with mixed mediums in custom oak frame, 60 by 44 inches; at toomer labzda.

COMPLEX ART+DESIGN

25 Photographers to Watch in 2013

BY COMPLEX MAGAZINE / JAN 9, 2013 7:57 AM



Kate Steciw

Based in: Brooklyn

Kate Steciw (born 1979 in Bethlehem, PA) had three solo exhibitions in 2012: *Boundless Hyper* at toomer labzda and Popular Options at Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery in New York, and *Live, Laugh, Love* at The Composing Rooms in London. Her digitally distorted photographic works were also on view in group shows at Wilkinson Gallery in London, Higher Pictures, Printed Matter, toomer labzda, Foxy Production and Stadium in New York, Prairie Productions in Chicago, Gregor Staiger Gallery in Zurich, Friends of Freiheit in North Adams, MA, Nudashank in Baltimore, and Hungry Man in San Francisco over the course of the year. The early part of 2013 brings three more group shows: a four-person at Steve Turner Contemporary in Los Angeles, *Color Shift* curated by Jordan Tate in New York, and *The Web is a Lonely Place; Come Play* at The Center for Photography at Woodstock.

Above: Kate Steciw, *Love My Way*, Installation View, 2011, Primary Photographic, New York



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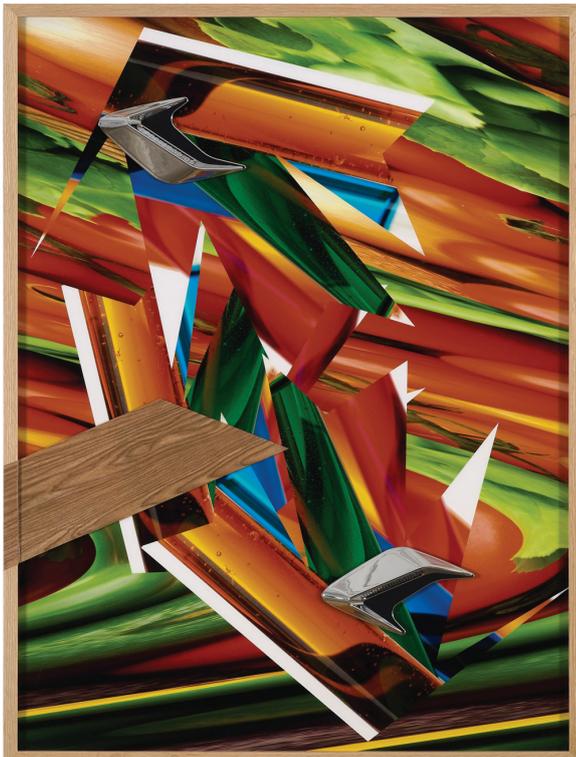
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SCIENCE & TECH

OCTOBER 22, 2012

ATTACHMENTS

POSTED BY JESSIE WENDER



“Attachments,” a group photography show featured in this week’s Goings On About Town section, opened this Saturday at The Hole. Curated by Kathy Grayson and Tim Barber, the show features work by nine contemporary photographers: Barber, Andrew Kuo, Asger Carlsen, Jason Nocito, Jessica Eaton, Jim Mangan, Kate Steciw, Peter Sutherland, and Sandy Kim.

I asked Grayson about the title. “ ‘Attachments’ was a suggestion by Tim that we both loved because it emphasizes the digital nature of image making and viewing—most people will only see this show on the internet or in an e-mail attachment,” she said. “But it also emphasizes the community nature of the show. All these photographers are friends and know each other. I was interested in photographers who blurred the boundaries of what photography is. Jason Nocito is a book maker whose publishing instincts lead him to install works like he lays out pages; Tim is a curator whose curatorial practice influences his own work. Sandy Kim’s life is one major documentary project which she releases a little bit of online every day. Jim Mangan treats photo like cinema.” Here’s a selection of the work, on view at The Hole through November 3rd.

THE GREEN ROOM

Kate Steciw - Live Laugh Love

11th May - 17th June

The Green Room is delighted to be exhibiting work by Kate Steciw, made over a three year period in her first European solo exhibition.

Live Laugh Love is representational of Steciw's exploration of ideology in the uses of, and personal relationships to, both 'image' and 'imaging'.

The title work (Live Laugh Love, 2012) exemplifies how commercially manufactured objects customarily purchased upon the appreciation of their images, can dictate an ideology of "personal" desires. By simple manipulation of these objects, the typical ideological association comes under scrutiny, physically the decorative wall pieces 'Live Laugh Love' become unreadable in sculptural manifestations of themselves.

In works; Exercises In Spatial Mnemonics, My Dog, My Wife (all 2011) and Versions on a Calico House Cat (2010) Steciw references common photography; travel, family snapshots and photos of pets; that may otherwise be forgotten, lost in data, to transgress to the status of "other". This is achieved through editing techniques, such as the stretching and blurring of images before making use of readily available, online printing services.

These services cater to a public domain where, again, projected ideals associated with the consumption of objects and their uses proliferate. "Such systems are entirely reliant on context and composition and are fatally disrupted by even minor interventions. The assumed rigor of this relational system of symbolic language is what drove me to experiment with re-contextualising objects and images in an effort to create new or alternate ideologies, or simply disrupt the delivery of the intended ideology." - Kate Steciw

The Green Room has commissioned a special limited edition by Kate Steciw of 50 such objects in the form of "photo-tiles" for distribution during the exhibition.

Kate Steciw (PA, 1979) is interested in the relationship between imaging and image consumption. Her work explores the production and distribution of photography and how images stimulate human memory and desire. With 10 years experience in image retouching, Steciw articulates and abstracts images to transgress their typical ideological associations. In recent practice she subjects photography to various new forms by "making the photograph 'other'" and exploring how "photography creates appetites for physical objects".

Exhibitions include; Popular Options - Klaus Gallery and Aude Pariset/Kate Steciw/Letha Wilson - Toomer Labzda, both New York and That is the Dawn' - Gregor Staiger Gallery, Zurich [all 2012] and Love My Way - Primary Photographic Gallery [solo] and Notes on a New Nature - 319 Scholes, both New York and A Small Forest - Kunsthalle New, Chicago [all 2011].

Kate received a BA in Sociology from Smith College and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Kate's photobook 'The Strangeness of This Idea' was published in 2010 [Hassla] and her work has been featured in 'The Collector's Guide to New Art Photography Vol. 2' [Humble Arts Foundation].

THE GREEN ROOM

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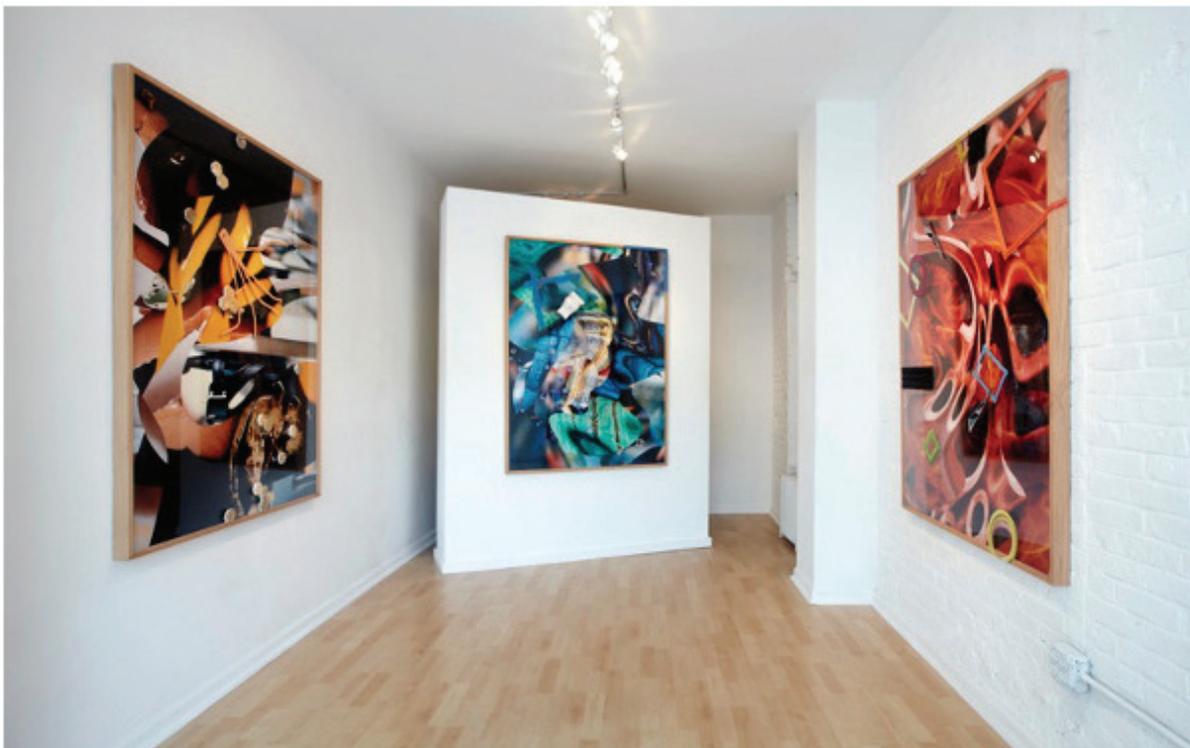
A Still Life of a World that Is Never Still

by [Howard Hurst](#) on September 20, 2012 0

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Boundless Hyper, Installation View

How many hours do you spend a day looking at cat pictures on the internet? The fact is our already media saturated lives are constantly becoming more image dependent. We shape much of our experience based upon the associations and decisions we make on the internet. Whether we are seeking information or shopping on eBay it is no secret that we rely more and more on stock images. It is this reality that informs artist Kate Steciw. Her current exhibition Boundless Hyper is on view at Toomer Labzda Gallery in the Lower East Side.

Her three large scale multimedia pieces are drawn from the boundless flood of imagery we are exposed to on a daily basis. The artist began her hyper-complex digital collages from her experience as a photo retoucher. As she helps to populate the web with pixel perfect commercial images during the day it is her immersion into this image heavy world that spurns her artistic practice.



Kate Steciw, "Apply, Applications, Auto, Automotive, Burn, Cancer, Copper, Diameter, Fire, Flame, Frame, Metal, Mayhem, Pipe, Red, Roiling, Rolling, Safe, Safety, Solid, Strip, Tape, Trap, Trappings" (2012), 60"x44", C-print, oak frame, mixed media.

The artist mines pictures from her exploration of the internet and stock image databases. Each of her pieces are titled for the list of search terms from which she gleans her sources. The artist embraces the highly polished aesthetic of the digital marketplace . In each of her works we see the bright hues and glossy finish that accompany the promised pleasures of commerce. For all the references to popular culture it would be easy to make the connection to the legacy of pop art however the work balances on the thin line between painterly formalism and conceptual commentary. Rather than embracing the thin pleasure of the commercial world, the artist's work seeks to blend the disparate narratives and expose the fragmented, often visually schizophrenic nature of our overly stimulated existence. She weaves a tapestry of images, drawing from the intuitive advertising on sites like Amazon or Google. Other decisions encompass the personal. By inserting herself into the preexisting systems

of information that govern images in the various databanks of the internet, the artist renders the highly intentional universe of the screen into a mesh of conflicting narratives.

Unrelated images blend and collide. It is the push and pull between the digital relic of our online detritus and the formal possibilities of Photoshop that throw this work into tension. Alchemy is a tricky business, one usually associated with rendering lead into gold. Steciw transmutes the base materials of every day e-drudgery into a reality caught somewhere between free association visual poetry and the photo based communication that seems to dominate our digital reality. Spun around in a vortex where content arm wrestles itself, we are denied as much as we are given.

Perhaps the most visually compelling work in her current exhibition is "Apply, Applications, Auto, Automotive, Burn, Cancer, Copper, Diameter, Fire, Flame, Frame, Metal, Mayhem, Pipe, Red, Roiling, Rolling, Safe, Safety, Solid, Strip, Tape, Trap, Trappings" (2012) is a tour de force of honesty and negation. Her alphabetically ordered search terms form a framework of basic understanding. As much as they allow us entry into the surface of her work they provide a level

Neumeister Bar-Am

of latency that denies us understanding. Each decision sparkles as if a synapse burning itself out of memory. By scrambling and pushing the information in her digital files to their utmost limits Kate Steciw seems to forge an additional level of meaning based in a realm of pure abstraction, beyond the literalism of our everyday visual culture.

In "Live, Laugh, Love #3 (2012), the artist's sculptural contribution to the exhibition, she appropriates the domestic, text based wire sculptures that adorn yuppie apartments and ambitious dorm rooms everywhere. These faux motivational non-arts are contorted beyond recognition, rent as if a guard rail pried from the highway and mangled by some sort of monster. The result is as if Alexander Calder got into a fight with a gift shop owner and decided to fuck some shit up.

Steciw does not limit the conflict at work in her art to the flatness of her printed surface. Rupturing the plexiglas confines of her frame as if a computer screen, she bedecks them with the detritus of internet shopping carts. These finishing touches have an off color charm. They seem to relish their lack of finish, an ironic turn for images that seem to revel in their own over saturation. It is this contradiction and lack of direction in Steciw's art more than any final conclusion that seems to reflect the reality of our laptop generation.



Kate Steciw's Boundless Hyper is on view at Toomer Labzda Gallery (100 Forsyth Street, Lower East Side, Mahattan) until October 28.

ARTFORUM

Kate Steciw
PRIMARY PHOTOGRAPHIC
195 Chrystie Street
July 12-September 12

People like to call digital images immaterial, a figurative description evoking specters who can appear in space of their own accord. But data can't be beheld without the twofold vessel of a file format and a device that can read it. A better metaphor might be liquid. Water is the central figure in Kate Steciw's *The Swimmer*, 2011. A pool's blue ripples warp a woman's body, and the image is distended across six floor mats. They form an asymmetrical crest



Kate, Steciw, *Exercises in Spatial Mnemonics*, 2011, color photographs, 4x70"

that stretches across one wall and onto the floor, where it gathers dirt from viewers' shoes. Steciw ordered the rugs from an ordinary online print-on-demand service, the kind a mom might use to put a photo of her kids on a mug. Even as printed photographs grow relatively scarce, printed objects have become commonplace. The exhibition's title, "Love My Way," highlights Steciw's choice to divert the tools of sentiment toward a heightened sensuality: The rug's soft tactility opposes the wetness of the photographed pool in a way that makes you want to reach out and touch it. Like the veneer of fake brushstrokes applied to prints to make them catch light like paintings, the brush mat of fibers asserts the acquired objecthood of Steciw's printed images.

In *Exercises in Spatial Mnemonics*, 2011, a smile, a chandelier, pine branches, car headlights, and other things are stretched beyond recognition and frozen on the surface of thin wooden planks. Like sticks cast in a divination ritual, the pieces are splayed at various angles along the walls. The coloring and lighting of the photographs, distorted in the fluidity of Photoshop, lose connections to their origins and become properties of the solid planks and the patterns they form in the room. Besides being Steciw's first solo exhibition in New York, "Love My Way" inaugurates a series of exhibitions in the storefront of a digital print shop, and lends substance to the labor performed in back.

— *Brian Droitcour*

Artist Profile: Kate Steciw

YIN HO | Wed Mar 28th, 2012 9:49 a.m.

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Anima, Animal, Beheaded, Candle, Chocolate, Cloak, Carnal, Darkness, Deity, Dreamlike, Gradient, Headless, Heparin, Ignite, Ignat, Lament, Occult, Partial, Pink, Smoke, Smokey, Smother (Kate Steciw, 2012)

Your photography and sculptural installations use image manipulation, often resulting in disconcerting perspectives. What is it that draws you toward “making the photograph ‘other’” as you write in your artist statement?

I guess this impulse comes from a drive to reevaluate the predominant media via which so much of our culture is produced and disseminated. The conceptual drive in the work both online and off, two dimensional and three, has a lot to do with the ways in which photography creates appetites for physical objects that are then fulfilled to varying degrees of success or failure by the objects themselves — in particular, commercially manufactured objects. In a way, I see the objects and materials I use in the sculptural work function as images themselves. Similar to the tools used in Photoshop or other editing software, many of the objects we interface with on a daily basis come with prescribed uses. I believe that hidden in these prescribed uses are assumed ideologies that through misuse, omission or

recombination can be revealed, reconsidered, or at the very least, interrupted.

Popular Options (Yellow Diamonds in the Night) at klausgallery.net shows a Flash animation of the most searched Google items in 2011. Those searches offer a glimpse of zeitgeist. What in particular are you approaching with this montage?

In Popular Options, my aim was to access a kind of snapshot of a culture via its preferences — a time capsule generated by the desires of a population rather than it’s aspirations. I wanted to let what we were searching for coalesce into a singular audio/visual experience. While aesthetic decisions were made for the purposes of continuity or impact, much of the sequence was randomized and transitions were selected without much thought.

I am also consistently amazed by the juxtapositions and transitions that occur naturally on the web and television — we are completely accustomed to seeing an image of Osama Bin Laden followed up by an ad for Pizza Hut or something similar. I wanted the piece to emulate that kind of flow of imagery that is, while visually unrelated, connected by unseen, commerce driven forces.

How do the actions and journeys of virtual selves, as documented in Perenium Twist/ The Sleeper Awakens, figure into your work?

I think virtual selves play a large part in all of our lives at this point with applications such as Second Life only presenting the most integrated or reflexive option. We are constantly formulating and presenting virtual selves, often as an extension of the multiple selves we present in our day-to-day lives — the selves we present to our parents, our co-workers, our friends. These virtual selves have different email addresses, tones of voice, etc. But, they also have different appetites and aptitudes, and I think the virtual world, from the simplest email interaction to the most developed avatar, provides a unique venue in which to explore these multiple and sometimes contradictory modes of self-actualization. That said, it is the impact of these virtual strategies on our physical world that most interests me.

In general, I am interested in the collision between representation (mostly virtual or computer-mediated) and materialization which I think is so characteristic of contemporary experience. I am interested in the trust we continually place in representation and the ways in which representational schema have influenced physical phenomena.

What contemporary experiences do you see exemplifying the collision between representation and materialization? In regards to representational schema influencing the physical, how do you think the visual search for bounding lines and preconceived notions of form shapes the physical? Do you think the same applies for the digital?

I realize that this may come off as pessimistic, but I think that many of our interactions both with other people and the objects that surround us can fit into this characterization: online dating, for instance, buying anything (really!), and more specifically, anything online, Home Depot and DIY culture...We are inundated with and actively perpetuate false representations of ourselves, our potential, and our output. I think this has a lot to do with the shared trajectory of photography/digital imagery and consumer culture. That is, we take for granted the levels of abstraction in what we are presented with, both online and off, as it is more often than not delivered in the form of a photograph or some derivative thereof. That image is taken into the brain and logged as representational (regardless of how wary we are in our conscious minds). Connections are made between disparate or even obtuse images and reconfigured or perceived as ideology. I think the digital realm complicates this further by teaching us to expect or pre-empt even stranger visual configurations and approximations — again, mostly commerce driven. I guess in that way, I see elements of our physical world reflecting the inverse: a series of approximations and appropriations of structures or schema that originated in the form of an image.



Age: 33 **Location:** Brooklyn, NY

How long have you been working creatively with technology? How did you start? I consider all of my work regardless of media an interface with prevailing technological realities.

Describe your experience with the tools you use. How did you start using them?

My experience with the tools I use is similar across the board whether it be Photoshop or a hammer. I am interested in the emotional/psychic space of the user/consumer which is to me the predominant relationship we have to the tools available. In that sense, I try to maintain a level of distance from whatever tool I am using; eschewing any drive toward expertise or mastery. I find a lot of breakthroughs come to me in the form of misuse of tools both traditional and related to new media.

Where did you go to school? What did you study? I went to Smith College for undergrad where I studied Sociology and Political Science then SAIC for my MFA.

What traditional media do you use, if any? Do you think your work with traditional media relates to your work with technology? I try not to differentiate between the two as I see all tools available to contemporary artists as technologically mediated and in that way in direct conversation with that mode of production. Anything is up for grabs in my practice.

Are you involved in other creative or social activities (i.e. music, writing, activism, community organizing)? I dabble in oils.

What do you do for a living or what occupations have you held previously? Do you think this work relates to your art practice in a significant way? I have worked a day job in or around the retouching industry for almost 10 years now and that has greatly influenced my practice.

Who are your key artistic influences? Knut Hamsun. For some reason, reading his work always gets me somewhere artistically. So, I guess rather than an influence, I'd call him an inspiration.

Have you collaborated with anyone in the art community on a project? With whom, and on what? I am currently building a fountain with my friend and studio mate Amelia Bauer.

Do you actively study art history? I do.

Do you read art criticism, philosophy, or critical theory? If so, which authors inspire you?

I do and it is something I feel really passionately about. I continually revisit the usual suspects; Weber, Marx, Bourdieu, Benjamin, Baudrillard, Deleuze, etc... Right now, I am really digging into Kracauer.

Are there any issues around the production of, or the display/exhibition of new media art that you are concerned about?

I guess I am most concerned with a tendency of new media art to be ghettoized by both practitioners and curators — a practice that, at worst, I think limits the potential for transmedia dialogue and dissolves into a kind of technological showmanship.



A Conversation with Kate Steciw



Springtime Entropy, 2009
C-Print, 50 x 40
© Kate Steciw

Kate Steciw is an artist living and working in Brooklyn, NY. Born in Bethlehem, PA, Steciw received a BA in Sociology from Smith College and an MFA with a concentration in Photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her first book, *The Strangeness of This Idea*, was published by Hassla in June 2010. She currently has work on view at Hungry Man Gallery in San Francisco, Gregor Staiger Gallery in Zurich and a solo exhibition opening this May at The Composing Rooms in London.

Lucas Blalock: Over the last few years your work has shifted from a sculptural space within the frame of the picture to sculptural objects partially made of photographs. Can you talk about this turn in your work?

Kate Steciw: I would like to be more eloquent or philosophical about this transition but really a lot of my explorations in three dimensional work have developed out of having access to studio space for the first time in a few years. Having the ability

to literally take up physical space rather than virtual or implied space has led me to the realization that it is not so much the space of a photograph as confined to two dimensions and the problematic presented therein, but the ways in which that representational space enacts certain psychic and ideological demands on our physical world that interested me. That is, I found that the conceptual drive in the work had more to do with the ways in which photography creates appetites for physical objects that are then fulfilled to varying degrees of success or failure by the objects themselves – in particular, commercially manufactured objects. In a way, I see the objects and materials I use in the work as images themselves.

LB: I remember talking to you a little while back about this and you drew a relationship between .jpgs and commercial products like those produced for IKEA. I walked away thinking about qualities of exchange and interchangeability, as well as about surface. Here you seem to be thinking more in terms of the body of the object, frustrated by its inability to always “put it’s best face forward,” or that our desire is not for the material but instead it is the material that, in the end, interferes with our desire?

I want to return to what you said about space as well, that having a working space clarified the spatial considerations in your practice. I feel like you are saying that contemporary physical objects act greatly the same way as photographs do, as representations of desire, and maybe that a photographic universe not only informs but creates the terms of these new objects? Maybe this is closer to what you were actually talking about regarding the .jpg and modular products?

KS: The relationship I was interested in at the time was not so much between “.jpps” and commercial ephemera but images in general and their relationship to manufactured objects. In a social system in which so much culturally relevant information is transmitted via images, it is in the form of images that we most often encounter the objects of our desire. The image is representational of both the desire and the desired, and if/when the object does materialize it is often represented and disseminated again as an image (documentation). No only that, but due to the objects origins in mechanical reproduction it too behaves as an image unto itself – an image both of it’s representational intention (a mold injected decorative sconce as an image of a hand hewn wooden sconce) but also it’s ideological function (a chair acts as an image of or stand-in for romantic love, casual whimsy or intellectual integrity). Images and objects function as delivery systems for commerce-driven ideologies. That said, such systems are entirely reliant on context and composition and are fatally disrupted by even minor interventions.

The assumed rigor of this relational system of symbolic language is what drove me to experiment with re-contextualizing objects and images in an effort to create new or alternate ideologies, or simply disrupt the delivery of the intended ideology. I think of images and objects as words that can be arranged to form a sentence, and that sentence can be didactic or absurd but must always point back to the nature of the elements comprising it. That is, the strategy is to reveal or rethink what is said and how it is being said via the increasingly complex visual schema with which we have become so accustomed. Much in the same way as in our day-to-day lives, omission, repetition, and juxtaposition become the primary creative gestures or points of agency over an otherwise highly prescribed matrix of use.

To get back to your question: I agree that, in this way, a photographic universe creates the terms of the objects represented. The photograph or grouping of photographs used to initiate a desirous response dictate not only the prescribed use but the emotional/psychic intention of the object as it exists in that perceived space. You are no longer being sold the chair but the concept of everlasting love and the chair is simply an element in the larger constellation of products or objects that represent that elusive concept. All images exist in an implicit relationship to the production of desire whether it be for a chair, the past, a person, or a feeling.

Neumeister Bar-Am



“black, bokeh, celebration, color, cool, copyspace, decor, decoration, defocused, deliverance, design, elegant, element, eve, event, feast, festive, flakes, flash, gala, garland, gleam, glint, glitter, glittering, glow, intuition, light, magic, magical, new, night, occult knowledge, purple, space, stars, symbol, text”, 2012

Duraclear print, Household Items, Dimensions Variable

© Kate Steciw



“antelope, ancient wisdom, all-seeing eye, arizna, background, canyon, color, effect, flame, glowing, heat, illuminated, image, important, iridescent, light, luminosity, nature, navajo, orange, order, orbs, page, pattern, red, riverbed, rock, sacred spaces, sandstone, shadow, shiny, silk, spring, stage, texture, upper, usa, yellow”, 2012

Duraclear print, Household Items, Dimensions Variable

© Kate Steciw

Neumeister Bar-Am

“abstract, assistance, bed rest, biology, blade, botanic, clean, clear, close-up, closeup, detail, dew, dew-drop, drop, droplet, flora, foliage, fresh, green, grow, harmony, hope, leaf, life, light, macro, morning, mourning, nature, organic, pure, purity, purpose, rain, reflections, scattered, spring, survival, water, warning, weather, wet”, 2012

*Duraclear print, Household Items, Dimensions Variable
© Kate Steciw*



LB: I want to push further with these ideas about transmission and specifically “resolution.” I am really interested in the way that both the image and the manufactured object deliver these promises in terms that privilege the ease of the delivery system over the integrity of the delivered. This is what I meant by the “interference” of the material, that the actual existence of the object or images gets in the way and becomes a limit in both the efficiency of exchange and the fulfillment of desire. I feel like your sculptural impulse addresses these failures of objects but in the positive – developing a formal or libidinal economy for the very material concerns that interrupt or drag in the commerce model.

I also want to try and to get to something about materiality that is proving sort of slippery.

I am wanting to approach these sculptures in terms of photography and the kinds of material solutions recent photo practice has proposed. I think we can say that there has been a widespread re-consideration of the photograph (both materially and conceptually) of late and that each practice exploring these questions hinges on an implicit definition of what the photograph’s material “is.” These investigations have been fraught with dead ends and potholes and I think that considering the image’s material in terms of a container for manufactured desire (that needs not be photographic at all but simply act “like a photograph”) is a really inventive solution. I want to relate what you are doing in these sculptures to the implications addressed by the advent of the collage in Cubism, except here it’s not the representational economy of painting that is being expanded and undermined, but instead you are shifting the implications of the image as carrier of desire/information onto the object. Both situations propose a movement from “within” to a solution of “on.” I was wondering if you could talk a little about the object language and formal vocabulary in the pieces. Maybe I am too hung up on Cubist collage as a starting point, but I find myself wanting to relate to them as figures.

KS: I like that you used the word “slippery” because I feel that we are living in a time that materiality as such is a rather slippery concept and I think you are absolutely right to address the ways

in which both photographs and manufactured objects “privilege the ease of the delivery system.” I think that this may be exactly why the photograph and photography have been reconsidered so extensively in recent years. Working from the attitude that photography, a product of the industrial revolution, presented a machine to match humanity’s newly formed appetites for both mechanical efficiency and a kind of anomic abstraction (I see a relationship to the death drive here), it is not a big leap to conceptualize the medium as an extension of our relationship to industry and, in turn, commerce – the perfect mode of production for a culture enslaved by modes of production.

Cubism: I think this is an apt connection to make to a lot of the conceptual and formal investigations (perhaps even your own!) occurring in and around contemporary photography, not only because we find ourselves at a similarly challenging aesthetic junction but also because new technologies again have created new spatial and perceptual potentials that must be considered from the vantage point of the current artistic paradigm. I think this is what is most compelling about both Cubism and recent photographic trajectories is that they represent a kind of conceptual bridge between movements. This would probably be as good a time as any to introduce the fact that, in general, I view much of contemporary human experience through the lens of either the user or the consumer, or a conglomeration of the two. As consumers of media, it is almost as if we are no longer concerned with the content so much as the stylistic elements of the delivery system itself. Not that style privileged over substance is a new concept, but that it is perhaps more pervasive than ever and, in my opinion, reaching a tipping point into the realm of style as concept, or style as philosophy. This is where I think Flusser’s ideas about image literacy are more poignant than ever. There is a kind of fractal world of meaning embedded in these photographs and objects whose very aim is to remain hidden yet, as I said earlier, sometimes the simplest shift in position or association can lay bare otherwise arcane information.

LB: I am curious how you see choice fitting into this? I mean the word to simultaneously refer to both the “choice” of the marketplace as well as the very specific “choice” or selection that often constitutes the work in contemporary art. I am thinking of your works where you have “photographed” weapons designed for 3D gaming environments and made traditional black and white prints. On your website these works are captioned as, “Silver Gelatin Prints, 40 x 30in * Also available as C-Prints, Ink Jet Prints, Giant Wall Stickers, Duvet Covers, Couch Throws, Personalized Kellogg’s® Rice Krispie® Treats, Chenille Photo Pillows, Photo Tote Bags and Custom T-Shirts...”

KS: I see choice as a mechanism that is both liberating and oppressing in contemporary culture. On one hand, we can do whatever we want whenever we please with whomever we want. On the other, there are so many choices so readily available that it seems like there is little time left for anything other than choosing.

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Commodity Derivatives, 2012
Silver Gelatin Prints, 40 x 30in

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© Kate Steciw

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The body of work you are referring to is a series called *Commodity Derivatives* and represents an investigation into the evolving concept of the commodity in the computer age. Using the economic concept of the derivative (essentially an investment tool that allows investors to profit from certain items without possessing them) as a starting point, I was interested in investigating the similarity between these kinds of ephemeral financial products and objects rendered for online and/or manufacture using online services. The idea was that an element (a sword, a diamond, or some chain) in the form of a 3D digital file, purchased at a nominal fee, could find its use in any number of online or computer-generated media as intended, yet that initial purchase could render additional objects or commodities that would enter the market at different points. Depending on qualities like rarity, material, size, and longevity, these objects would then command a certain monetary value – acting as derivatives of the initial purchase. Regardless of the fact that the “original” is immaterial and belongs to me, the material derivatives generate value based on their own circulation in the market. Certainly not a new concept in the discussion of photography, but one thrown into relief by digital culture.

Kate Steciw: Popular Options (Yellow Diamonds in the Light)

January 31 – February 13, 2012

“You affect the world by what you browse.” - Sir Timothy Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web

The logical ideal of the Web as an infinitely diverse information-based parallel to our world is much different from the online reality we see today. The distribution of Internet content and usage today is shaped by user trends, as well as sociological factors such as the various forms of the so-called “digital divide” which affect the demographic of Internet users. Analytics tools such as Google Trends have recently given us the means to compare the types of content Internet users want most. The result is a view of another, newer type of popular culture.

Kate Steciw’s research-based artwork Popular Options (Yellow Diamonds in the Light) selects images based on the most popular American search terms of 2011, and combines them using a free web-based slideshow tool along with the highest-rated song of 2011, in an effort to distill the manifestation of popular culture through the peculiar anthropological bias of the Internet.

Steciw has referred to this new form of popular culture in an artist’s statement:

Search terms arise from a confluence of world events, individual curiosity and algorithmically generated preference; these forces come together to encapsulate a cultural phenomena in a single word or grouping of words optimized to retrieve the most relevant data. Google Search presents a cross-platform search allowing results that span media and application to deliver a plethora of information at once exhaustive and absurd (i.e. one can retrieve “shopping” results for Osama Bin Laden). The search has revolutionized the way in which we seek and receive vital cultural information – if you don’t know what “planking” is, you can find out privately and long before you can be derided for your ignorance publicly.

The search terms which define the tastes of the Web are non-authoritarian, decentralized, and are to some extent free from the factors of the professional entertainment world; but, as Steciw’s piece shows, they also reveal the isolated, misplaced, and at times desperate nature of the whims of Internet consumers on aggregate.

ART
*KATE
STECIW'S
DISTORTED
VISION*

By ASHLEY W. SIMPSON

Interview



"Less than a year ago, I made a decision to only shoot with a digital camera or phone," says 33-year-old Brooklyn-based photographer Kate Steciw, who previously also worked with film. "I really wanted to access the way that people are taking photographs now, but also think about memory in a spatial, 3D way and give these images a physical presence." The result of this meta-technological exploration is Steciw's first solo show, "Love My Way," a Tim Barber-curated exhibition of Photoshop-inspired, digitally distorted photo installations—such as a massive, disjointed image of a swimmer made up of pictures Steciw took of six custom photo rugs ordered online and a series of multi-colored, long sintra sculptures composed of the artist's photos. Steciw's work draws heavily upon the artist's day job as a retoucher at Art + Commerce in its concentration on manipulating images in post-production, examining the the extent to which Photoshop can double as an expressionistic application. "I just sort of stumbled into a career in post-production," says Steciw, "but it's influenced my entire artistic process."

"LOVE MY WAY" OPENED LAST NIGHT AT PRIMARY PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE. IT RUNS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 12.