

Kyle MacMillan, "Annie Collier," *Art in America*, February 27, 2015

Art in America

Anne Collier



According to an estimate put out by Internet giant Yahoo!, 880 billion photographs would be taken in 2014. In such an image-saturated world, longstanding notions about the value and role of photographs, as framed fine-art objects or priceless keepsakes, seem outdated or just plain obsolete.

The Los Angeles-born, New York-based artist Anne Collier takes on today's fast-paced digital paradigm and its implications, indirectly if not directly, in nearly 40 black-and-white and color photographs from 2002 to the present. The images are on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in what is billed as Collier's first major U.S. exhibition. Organized by MCA chief curator Michael Darling, the show opened earlier last year at the CCS Bard Hessel Museum, and it will tour to two other institutions following its Chicago presentation.

Although other important themes, such as feminism, self-identity and celebrity, permeate this exhibition, questions about the essence and meaning of

photography in our contemporary world lie at its core. And to address them, Collier looks not forward but backward, using a manual 4-by-5-inch camera and chemical processing and printing.

Take one of the first works in the show, *Woman with a Camera (Diptych)*, 2006, a pair of roughly 45-by-54-inch photographs of promotional stills (one in color, one in black and white) for the 1978 film *Eyes of Laura Mars*. In the film, Faye Dunaway plays a fashion photographer, and the stills show her in action with a period Nikon camera. Thus, Collier's diptych consists of photographs of photographs of a pretend photographer—a thought-provoking, multilayered swirl of reality, fiction and perception.

If after one walks through the show, there is any remaining doubt about Collier's thematic intentions, she erases it in the final room with "Questions." This 2011 series, with its obvious ties to the text-based works of such artists as Ed Ruscha and Barbara Kruger, comprises five photographs of worn sheets of printed questions in open manila folders, perhaps once used for some kind of presentation. One, subtitled *Viewpoint*, contains two photographically telling queries, including, "From whose viewpoint or perspective are we seeing, reading or hearing?"

Although it might not come across as such at first, this is actually a still-life exhibition, with images of magazine spreads, calendars, coffee-table books and other found objects, all depicted against blank backgrounds with a detached fastidiousness. In the Warholian *Double Marilyn* (2007), for example, two copies of a record featuring an orange-tinged image of Marilyn Monroe on its cover are shown against a white wall, with abundant empty space around them.

This hushed, inward-looking exhibition has few bold colors, and no strident emotions. The overriding contemplative feeling, accentuated by the ample spacing between the works and the lack of spotlights calling attention to them, runs directly counter to the speed and accosting nature of Internet imagery. And clearly that is the point. In some ways, the show might seem a bit anachronistic, with its recurring portrayals of outdated cameras and recycled objects and its insistence on non-digital technology. But in dwelling on the past, Collier manages to come face-to-face with photography's explosive present.