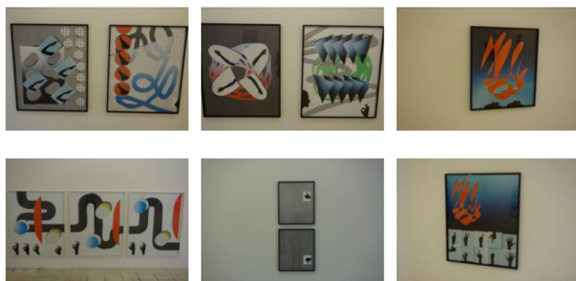


COLLECTOR DAILY

Hannah Whitaker: Hide Your Daughters @Marinara

By Loring Knoblauch / In Galleries / September 15, 2017

JTF (just the facts): A total of 9 color photographic works, variously framed in black/white and unmatted, and hung against white walls in the single room gallery space. All of the works are archival pigment prints, made in 2017. There are 8 single images and 1 triptych on view in the show. Physical sizes range from roughly 25x20 to 51x40 (the triptych is made up of three panels in the largest size), and all of the works are available in editions of 3+2AP. Note that the gallery has moved to a new location. (Installation shots below.)



Comments/Context: When a contemporary photographer consciously chooses to fully embrace analog processes, as opposed to swimming with the prevailing tide of the digital age, we often assume that this decision is rooted in some kind of throwback “good old days” impulse, an affinity for the aesthetics of particular chemical outcomes no longer possible, or

even just a rebellious contrarian streak. But Hannah Whitaker’s resolutely analog pictures don’t exactly fit into any of these neat categories – in fact, given their consistent awareness of the evolution of digital modes of production, we might happily call them Post-Internet, which is puzzling indeed. So while her works might initially fool us into thinking they were made using Photoshop, they most certainly weren’t, and that fundamental conceptual dissonance is part of where her artistic innovation lies.

In her newest works, Whitaker tweaks our digital assumptions even more than she has in the past. Swirling paint program gestures, rigid grid structures, color gradients, and overlapping layers of graphic patterns all make appearances in her compositions, but mouse-click cut-and-paste wasn’t the process of choice. Painstaking is hardly the right adjective for what she’s doing. Inside her 4x5 camera, she’s meticulously masking off sections of the frame, and then making repeated (i.e., dozens of) exposures that ultimately come together as one coherent image. Slight misalignments and edge overlaps give away the game, but this acceptance of imperfections is part of the reality of her approach – if we look closely, she’s showing us her process.

These pictures further twist our perception by actually using Photoshop to generate many of the initial patterns – so the reversal is complete, with the digital forms actually becoming the physical printed paper raw material for her aggregated analog exposures. This conceptual back and forth transformation doesn’t feel like a gimmicky trick, but more like a smart questioning process, where Whitaker is unpacking the aesthetics we increasingly take for granted in the digital world and reassembling them in ways that make their consistent motifs more overt.

Whitaker has also added in a number of silhouetted hand gestures and facial profiles to her compositions, from angled salutes and kicks to OK signs and hand-driven counting. The effect is something akin to analog emojis, with symbolic imagery returned to its starting point as gestural human communication. One pair of works offers the thumbs up and thumbs down, breaking down the “like” and its opposite into their original component parts. Others make oblique reference to the steps of the Rockettes, their stylized motions isolated into repeatable automation not unlike the guts of the software code she is deliberately undermining.

With digital mark making becoming more and more a part of both contemporary photography and our wider image culture, there is a certain quiet intelligence in the idea that Whitaker is diligently rethinking those marks inside the constraints and context of old school photography, all while making pictures that are lively and challenging without being too crafty. This is undeniably cerebral photography-about-photography, but happily, the haughty airlessness that is usually associated with such works is missing. Instead, Whitaker has playfully made us stop and think, deconstructing our burgeoning digital vocabularies with incisive style.

Collector’s POV: The works in this show range in price from \$3500 to \$7000 for the single images, with the triptych available at \$21,000. Whitaker’s work has little secondary market history at this point, so gallery retail likely remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up. Whitaker is also represented by M+B in Los Angeles ([here](#)).



Read more about: [Hannah Whitaker, Marinara Gallery](#)

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Knoblauch, Loring. “Hannah Whitaker: Hide Your Daughters @Marinara.” *CollectorDaily.com*, September 2017.