

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

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MARGOT QUAN KNIGHT

Now and There

APRIL 3 – MAY 10

Opening Reception Thursday April 3, 6 - 8

In conjunction with the unveiling of the new James Harris Gallery, we are pleased to debut a new body of work by Margot Quan Knight. Culling from a diverse range of art historical precedents, the young Seattle-based artist unremittingly explores the transformative potential of photography. While Quan Knight draws on her experience at Fabrica, Benetton's communication arts research center, she is also undeniably pushing well beyond the boundaries of a photograph's ability to communicate an actual, fixed event in time.

Just as Roland Barthes dissected a photograph as a means by which to represent "what is" as "what was," Quan Knight is also interested in how photographs capture a singular moment. But her interest in this aspect of photography is destructive. By implicating the viewer in the work, Quan Knight is able to rupture photograph's fixity; she's addressing the present in a document of the past. Inherent in this body of work is therefore a solid reminder of the way the world is constantly changing. Quan Knight not only captures what ceased to be but also what is.

This happens most obviously in Quan Knight's diptych, *Untitled Mirror Portrait*. The artist has used a laser to remove portions of the reflective coating from the back of the mirror; then she painted over it with black enamel. Standing in front of these portraits, the face of the viewer is then imposed onto the portrait of the artist, encroaching on the space defined by the printed images. On the right panel of the diptych the face of the artist looks over to the left, almost contemplating its own existence. If the viewer is positioned perfectly, his/her portrait consumes both images.

In another piece, Quan Knight silk-screens a graceful image of an elderly woman onto silver. Instead of applying paint through the screen however the artist applies a sulfur compound which encourages the silver to tarnish. Over time the image will fade just as the woman ages in real time. The impact is satisfyingly visceral as the lines between art and real life become murky.

No where does this happen more than in Quan Knight's large light box wherein the viewer again becomes a part of the completed art work. As the viewer approaches the piece, they are reflected in a two-way mirror mounted in front of the photograph, thus they become part of the cinematic composition and Quan Knight's narrative. The illuminated photograph reveals a pistol resting on an unmade white bed. As we pass in front of the austere image, the composition ruptures the gallery space so that the pictured bedroom seems to be in the gallery, and the gun within reach. Again, like all the works in the show this piece pushes the boundaries between the photograph and our reality, seeming to melt the barriers between the static world of imagery and real world.

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Margot Quan Knight studied photography at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, graduating with honors in 1999 with a B.A. in studio art. Her work has been exhibited and published internationally. She currently lives and works in Seattle and is working on her MFA from Bard College.