

ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

KONRAD KLAPHECK
JOHN CHAMBERLAIN
ALGORITHMS OF TASTE
STURTEVANT

\$10.00



cyanotype. The allusion to painting, therefore, is both in the title and in the pudding: Shades of Frankenthaler, Twombly, and Still are pervasive in these surprisingly gestural pieces that cross the painterly histrionics of AbEx with the blue horticultural prints of early cyanotype master Anna Atkins. Yet no matter which process Kasten used, exactly *what* she was shooting is always tough to determine. Her hypnotic photos refuse to congeal as logical pictures of the world.

This exhibition (which was directly followed by a show of Kasten's most recent work) pointed the way to the artist's great, if garish, series of "Constructs." Made between 1979 and 1985, these are variously sized Polaroids of miniature, architecturally dynamic constructions made by Kasten in her studio using wire, mesh screens, mirrors, and other props. In the best of the Constructs, concrete object relations are almost impossible to discern and the viewer is prisoner to a trippy vortex of two-dimensional space. Yet no matter how complexly composed, these images nevertheless depict real sites—albeit ones that existed only briefly. One of the clearest precursors to the Constructs is Kasten's "Amalgam" series, 1979, which now appears as so many pared-down prototypes of the work that would follow, without the flamboyant use of color or labyrinthine complexity. These strange, gorgeous works—for instance, *Amalgam Untitled 25*—may depict nothing but coy arrangements of hardware and mirrors, but the beguiling uncanniness of these nether-dimensions is simultaneously exhilarating and dreadful. *Photogenic Painting Untitled 75/23*, 1975 (probably the most purely concrete photographic work in the show), is a close-range view of what appears to be burlap. The picture requires a good long stare before one can determine whether its fold exists in the photographed material or the actual rag paper on which the image is printed. Clues such as this in a Kasten composition serve variously to enhance or deflate the experiential quality of her literally puzzling work. At her best, Kasten makes simplicity and complexity overlap and merge. This is the sensation David Lynch has become so effective at conjuring—that of reality and its doppelgänger becoming indistinguishable.

—Nick Stillman

Weegee

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES

Chatting with Peter Sellers on the set of *Dr. Strangelove* in 1963, Weegee (aka Arthur Fellig) recounts his summer: "It's been a strange one. . . . I was sent by a magazine to photograph famous photographers. . . . Of course, I included myself." Though the conversation happened in London, it nevertheless underscores the photographer's particular relationship to fame and therefore the premise of "Naked Hollywood: Weegee in Los Angeles," which showcases the Eastern European-born, though quintessentially New York journalist's stint in Tinseltown. Trading grizzly crime scenes for the soundstages and back rooms of the "dream factory," Weegee penetrated the glossy surface of Hollywood to document the unsightly scaffolding that, between 1947 and 1951, was making it all possible, along with its lurid cast of characters: gossip columnists and topless dancers, nameless starlets and screaming fans, studio heads and silver-screen icons (in various stages of glamorous composure or disarray), and even an award-winning mule.

Following *Naked City*, his 1945 photo monograph chronicling the underbelly of the Big Apple, Weegee released *Naked Hollywood*, 1953, which featured his relatively bloodless but no less lascivious snaps of L.A. Yet the bounty of work on view in this show—including never-before-exhibited proofs and working prints as well as how-to photo pamphlets and pages shot for girlie rags—exceeds the ambitions of that

pulpy tome. In this selection, much credit is due to the expertise of Richard Meyer, who, aided by assistant curator Jason Goldman, forged a coherent path—via thematic threads such as "Stars," "Showgirls," and "Bitparts"—through what must be a spectacularly unwieldy trove of material.

Through Meyer's filter, we were given Weegee as the ultimate outsider-insider saboteur—both a master satirist able to deconstruct fame while savoring the spoils of the famous and an elusive figure, with a penchant for bathroom humor, who relished occupying the fringes even while training the spotlight on his own myth. Perhaps this was most poignantly evident in the circa 1951 series "American Tragedy: no autograph," in which a fan's desire for a star encounter was tracked from hopeful anticipation to ensuing heartbreak. Distilling the effect of the culture industry on the individual body via the idiosyncratic contortions of a single fan girl, the shot yields an afterimage that is difficult to shake. Larger-than-life figures were also cut to bite-size pieces when Weegee zoomed in close on the stars. Employing the techniques of tabloid journalism, he sought out the grotesque—picturing famous actresses while eating, or experimenting with multiple exposures and special lenses so that bodies appear distorted, faces like mutant caricatures.

If Walter Benjamin noted how the photographic process erodes the aura of the original work of art, bringing it, through repetition, closer to the masses, Weegee, we might imagine, embraced this process to the fullest, deflating the aura of the image-conscious high and spreading their refracted likenesses low and wide with unabashed urgency. As one took in "Naked Hollywood," it was impossible not to draw a line forward to later "art" agents of tabloid journalism—e.g., the Pictures Generation (several of Weegee's "elastic lens" Marilyns on view here were lent by Cindy Sherman). Though not quite a revisionist history, this exhibition caused us to recalibrate our focus, if only just a couple degrees, to accommodate the wider-than-previously expected frame of Weegee's ever-dazzling spectacle.

—Franklin Melendez

Farrah Karapetian

LEAD APRON

Early on in the protests that prompted President Hosni Mubarak's resignation and the end of a nearly six-decade-long secular dictatorship in Egypt, an illustrated tactical brochure was leaked online and translated into English for Western readers. The pamphlet, titled "How to Protest Intelligently," assumed the voice of the Egyptian people and listed demands and goals alongside instructions on how to carry out acts of civil disobedience as effectively and safely as possible. Among these, a diagram of "necessary clothing and accessories" demonstrated the ways in which everyday items could be strategically deployed to outfit a makeshift, nonviolent people's army: comfortable sneakers to run in; a hoodie, goggles, and scarf to protect the upper body, face, eyes, and mouth; thick gloves for handling hot tear-gas canisters; a



Weegee, *The Gold Painted Stripper*, ca. 1950, black and white photograph, 9 1/2 x 7 1/2".

pot-lid shield; and a can of spray paint with which to thwart police by obscuring their vision through visors and windshields.

LA-based artist Farrah Karapetian adopted this document as the basis for "Accessory to Protest," a series of photograms and objects (all 2011) through which she continues her exploration of the shared concerns of photography and sculpture. Entering the exhibition space of Lead Apron, a rare-books store and gallery, visitors were confronted first with the photogram *Accessory to Protest 4 (Red Hoodie)*. At about four by two-and-a-half feet, the work features a ghostlike and seemingly incandescent hoodie floating against a burnt-umber background, the garment's zipper a gleaming streak. Karapetian's placement of this work seemed meant to implicate the viewer in the pamphlet's provocations to action, as displayed on a clothes hanger nearby was *Negative: Hoodie*, the very object—what she termed a "constructed negative"—the artist had crafted out of diaphanous organza in order to make the image. In all, eight unique photograms depicted as many "accessories," each life-size and aglow in vivid cadmium red and yellow hues evocative of X-rays and burns. Joining these prints were two additional constructed negatives, *Negative: Spray Can* and *Negative: Sneakers*, cast in transparent resin and effervescent with bubbles of captured air. Save for the print featuring a scarf, *Accessory to Protest 7 (Yellow Scarf)*, which appeared as a jellyfish-like mass of tentacles, almost all the photogrammed objects were readily legible. They were also doubly exposed, indexing a temporal gap that implied both motion and the proliferation of individual gestures into that of the multitude. The urgency and utility of Karapetian's subject matter was further amplified by the prints' hastily cut edges, appearing as though torn from the zine's original binding. Finally, the pamphlet, too, was replicated—to scale, in an eight-page set of photograms.

In contrast to twentieth-century modernist engagements with the photogram, which pressed the technique into the service of formal abstraction, Karapetian has explored its "hyper-analogue" qualities, emphasizing the connection of her images to three-dimensional space. And while the photogram has continued to figure in the abstract, cameraless photography of several generations of Los Angeles artists from James Welling and Barbara Kasten to Walead Beshty and Kelly Kleinschrodt, Karapetian's engagement locates a revolutionary metaphor in the short-circuiting of mediation

that happens when the camera is abandoned. "Accessory" here alludes, of course, not only to the objects, but to the abettors of revolution as well: the protester, primarily, and secondly, the imagemaker, who transmits the protester's actions to the eyes of the world. This second role has been instrumental in the domino effect of recent popular uprisings, from the Arab Spring to the American Fall. In re-creating the Egyptian pamphlet's protest accessories on her way to picturing them, Karapetian explicitly recodes photography, turning an act of reproduction into one of production, transforming the indexical "that-has-been" of the medium into the proleptic "this will be." And yet photography has not been entirely instrumentalized here; ultimately, the works' beauty (and, in some cases, preciousness) tempers that possibility.

—Natilee Harren

LONDON

Donald Judd

SPRÜTH MAGERS LONDON

Although works on paper were included in Donald Judd's midcareer surveys at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1968 and the Pasadena Art Museum in 1971, the artist's drawings for various Wall Units, Floor Boxes, Stacks, and Progressions have remained largely under the radar for the four decades since then. With pencil or ink, Judd executed spare, lean schematics on paper of various sizes as preparation for his three-dimensional works. In terms of skill, these sheets occupy a middle ground that's neither virtuosic nor amateurish. Their most idiosyncratic quality is that many were made on yellow architect's paper.

Because this portion of Judd's substantial corpus has, for the most part, been out of sight, out of mind, the mistaken impression has been that the Minimalist pioneer merely phoned his fabricators to order his metal structures and objects. "Working Papers: Donald Judd Drawings, 1963–93," curated by Peter Ballantine, revealed that this was not the case at all. Moreover, the exhibition conveyed a picture of an artist who was not always as decisive and hold as he appeared to be. Among the thirty-three sketches and diagrams on view—all are illustrated in an exhibition catalogue—there's one that's peppered with question marks. A few depict pieces that were never realized or else were fabricated in a modified form.

Some aspects of Judd's objects seem to have been more "specific" to him than others. Early on, he was particularly preoccupied with fine-tuning proportions and getting mathematical sequences just right. As late as 1986, he was arranging sequences of numbers in rows to figure out how to proceed. Then there are sheets that record the nature of works that had already been realized. They're portraits, if you will. Regarding these, Judd wasn't at all concerned with rendering how they would be experienced in person. Often, instead of depicting a work from the front, he drew three-quarter views. Similarly, the drawings portraying stacks are slightly awry: If these were portraits of people rather than metal boxes, one would say they were anatomically incorrect.

Quite different from Judd's working papers—and displayed in a long, narrow, Plexiglas-topped case—were order sheets from the archives of New York-based Bernstein Brothers, the roofing, heating, and ventilation specialists who became the artist's fabricators. The company's records stole the show. Accompanying wonderfully precise descriptions of, say, ONE (1) "JUDD SCULPTURE" 100 3/4" PROGRESSION CLEAR ANOD TUBE WITH GREEN (AEN) ANODIZED BOXES CRATING were dates, buyers, costs, measurements, and graphic sketches of fronts and sides as well as the braces on which such works were hung. Some sheets itemized the hours it took to fabricate a work as well as who worked on it. In 2012, who wouldn't be intrigued by regarding a sheet stamped DEC 4 1964, with an order from Don Judd 53 East 19th St for four boxes 30" x 30" x 30" costing \$40 each?

This show covered, from soup to nuts, everything you ever wanted to know about

View of "Donald Judd," 2012.



Farrah Karapetian, *Accessory to Protest 4 (Red Hoodie)*, 2011, chromogenic photogram, 47 x 30".

