

Decades Apart, These Photos All Have One Thing in Common

Andrew Nunes — Dec 2 2016



Naples, Italy, 2012, Joseph Lawton, 2012. All photos courtesy of the artists and Transmitter

Photography is more alive and ubiquitous than ever before, but the forms the medium embodies today are exceedingly different from its 19th-century origins. Rather than focus on the amalgamated contemporary medium, an ongoing group exhibition at Transmitter Gallery presents a purist return to photography's roots. *An Introduction* is a showcase of black and white film photography by four artists still working with the bare necessities of the medium today.



Introduction Installation View, 2016

Perhaps a result of their stripped-down aesthetic, the images on view blend together like a singular, poetic body of work. Yet the photos by Stephen Hilger, Joseph Lawton, Paul McDonough, and Sergio Purtell were taken over the course of four decades and are not thematically linked beyond technical approach. Each presents wholly disparate bodies of work. An image of gentrified Williamsburg taken in recent years resonates alongside a 1970s shot of teenagers at a gas station, taken by two entirely different photographers 32 years apart.



Real, Williamsburg Bridge, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY, Sergio Purtell, 2009

Curator Carl Gunhouse, a somewhat traditionalist photographer himself, believes that this mode of photography is still a potent way to make interesting images, even in light of innumerable new image-making technologies. "I think a stripped-down approach to the medium is important mostly because straight photography hasn't stopped producing compelling images," Gunhouse tells The Creators Project.



'Sigmor' Gas Station, Paul McDonough, 1977

"And at least for this show, we focused on the foundation on which the medium is built, that is, using the camera to edit from the world in a way that creates meaning. If viewers can understand that, I think it opens up the medium, no matter how far photography deviates from a straightforward approach," he says.



Rome, Italy, Joseph Lawton, 2009

Despite organizing an entire group show focusing on an austere form of photography, Gunhouse isn't opposed to new techniques. "Digital has certainly facilitated lots of people getting work out in the world and allowed for a democratizing of tastes. So there is a place in the art world for straight photography to flourish, along with say, conceptual work like a Moyra Davey, or studio work like Eileen Quinlan, or work that is somewhere in between straight and conceptual, like a Roe Ethridge or a Daniel Shea," Gunhouse adds.



Real, Keap St. & Ainslie St. Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY, Sergio Purtell, 2009

In fact, *An Introduction* is only the first part of a two-part exhibition Gunhouse is organizing that examines photographers working today. A follow-up show with Eli Durst, Lindsay Metivier, Erin O'Keefe, and Irina Rozovsky, will bridge the gap between purist photography and a more contemporary aesthetic. The companion show is scheduled to open on January 6, 2017.



Waiting, Stephen Hilger, 2010

An Introduction is on view at [Transmitter](#) in Brooklyn through December 4.

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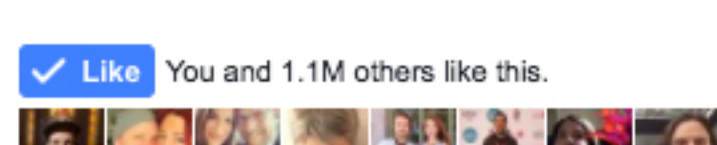
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