

Art **Reviews**

Photography's Impossible Attempt at Freezing Time

A photo's presence suggests the fear of its absence, the artist's fear of time slipping away.



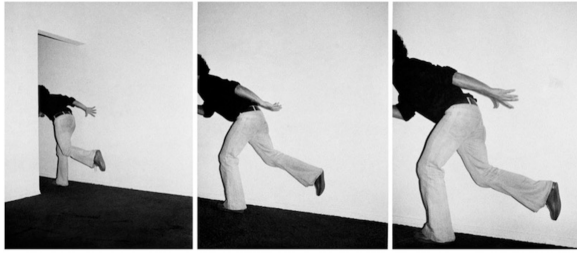
by Max Blue
May 10, 2022

SAN FRANCISCO — In order to experience the passage of time, we must freeze it in place. This is the subtle paradox at the heart of *Considered Interactions*, a group show of black-and-white photography at Casemore Kirkeby in San Francisco. The five artists included employ a range of tactics to activate space and time within the static image as a means of interrogating the medium's ability to collapse both into a singular, suspended moment.



Detail of John Divola, "ENSO: 36 Right-handed Gestures" (2018), AZO Gelatin silver contact prints mounted on archival mat board paper, 8 x 10 inches each; 14 x 16 inches each framed

The centerpiece of the exhibition is John Divola's "ENSO: 36 Right-handed Gestures" (2018), a grid of 36 gelatin prints of pictures made in the abandoned housing tract at an Air Force base in Southern California. Divola has altered the deteriorating space by painting circles on the walls around specific details within each picture frame (stains, bullet holes, water damage). By highlighting elements of the ruin, Divola reveals particularly how photographs preserve.



Steve Kahn, "Running" (1976/2016), archival pigment print, 9 5/8 x 22 1/2 inches

Steve Kahn, who also shot in dilapidated interiors — notably one apartment complex in Los Angeles throughout the mid-70s — approached the subject of photographic entrapment differently, staging spaces which often appear inescapable. "Running" (1976/2016) is a cinematic, triptych pigment print, in which a figure is seen dashing toward a doorway, appearing to move forward in each frame. Clever cropping gives the piece its heightened sense of motion, the figure's front end cut off by the edges in two pictures and then by the doorway in the third. It becomes hard not to see each frame as a doorway in and of itself to be entered or escaped, each picture a moment of time held hostage.



Raymond Meeks and Adrianna Ault, "Winter Auction #17" (2019), carbon pigment print, 14 x 11 inches

Artist duo Raymond Meeks and Adrianna Ault experiment most didactically with the medium's power to seize time. In the seven-print series *Winter Farm Auction* (2019), the two memorialize the titular event by photographing farm tools tossed in the air. The pictures capture the essence of letting go: the uncertainty and underlying dread of what will come next.

Detail of Tarah Douglas, "Untitled (no 1-15)" (2020), archival pigment print, 10 x 15 inches

Tarah Douglas's series of pigment prints, *Untitled (no 1-15)* (2020), alternates frames between two figures — one roaming a hilly landscape in search of something, the other kneeling on a beach, performing what looks like a series of rituals with various objects, such as flowers, a book, and a pair of binoculars aimed back at the viewer. Here, Douglas reveals how photography, too, is a ritual of searching, a record of looking for and at something, a collection of moments made with a wide-cast net.

Installation view of *Considered Interactions* at Casemore Kirkeby, 2022 (photo by Chris Grunder, image courtesy Casemore Kirkeby, San Francisco)

There is something anxious about photographs. Whatever the particular visual subject of a photo, its implicit subject is always the passage of time itself; a photo's presence suggests the fear of its absence, the artist's fear of time slipping away. The works in *Considered Interactions* stress this tension, each artist choosing visual subjects elucidating the transience that photographs defy. The idea that one could steal a moment of time always feels a little transgressive to me. But that's one of the great pleasures I take from looking at photographs — watching someone attempt the impossible.

Considered Interactions is on view at Casemore Kirkeby gallery (1275 Minnesota Street, San Francisco, California) through May 28. The exhibition was organized by the gallery.