

At Large Magazine  
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X + I

Curated by Matthew Porter

COMPILING A LIST OF FIVE ARTISTS IS EASY. It's an exiguous grouping that allows you to slash and burn, to cut with efficacy, and excuses you from oversight. Expand the list to twenty, and cuts are unnecessary—now you have plenty of capital to make your point. But eleven is a cruel number, the April of list making. You have to kill off ideas to bring life to the project. So the following list is incomplete, and it's also too long. It does however, at the time of writing, bring together a group of artists, all born in the early to mid seventies, most of whom probably didn't fully integrate computers and the Internet into their lives until after college. Now, they take what they need from the digital, virtual, and binary world of bits, while keeping themselves rooted in traditional means of picture making. To be relevant, contemporary art doesn't require the exclusive use of the technology of its time—making art is also a practice of utilizing the materials left behind by innovation.

M ATTHEW PORTER



Untitled (Orange Monochrome)  
2014  
Unique chromogenic print  
© Phil Chang; courtesy M+B Gallery, Los Angeles

Untitled (Orange Monochrome)  
2014  
Unique chromogenic print  
© Phil Chang; courtesy M+B Gallery, Los Angeles

## Phil CHANG

Chang's practice is an ongoing dialectic centering on photography's main principles: longevity, depiction, and material. While his intention is often to expose the medium's fraught nature, his exhibitions bring a beautiful equanimity to these problems. His attention shifts easily from an unfixed gelatin silver print's inevitable self-effacement to the monochromatic possibilities of color printing. For Chang, the concern is less with what the pictures depict, or the meaning found within them, and more about how we think of their material properties and commodification. To understand Chang's way of thinking, consider how pictures are ranked in an online image search, and the invisible coding, or what he calls "algorithmic realism," that determines those positions. Maybe if Boris Groys made images, they would look like Phil Chang's.



Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY  
Installation view of the exhibition *Artist's Choice*: Trisha Donnelly, November 9, 2012 through July 28, 2013, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photographer: **Thomas Griesel**

**The Hand That Holds the Desert Down**  
2002  
Silver gelatin print  
Courtesy of the artist

## Trisha DONNELLY

In the presence of Donnelly's work, one feels a static pulse, a current that makes hair stand on end and awakens dormant feelings of anxiety about the worthiness of one's own artistic practice. Her selections in 2012 for MoMA's *Artist's Choice* series was a thrilling example of her eccentric and ebullient mind. Spread out over several discontinuous galleries, they created a sensation akin to standing in a river, so strong and directional was the force of her imaginative choices. Consider, also, a photograph of Donnelly's made over ten years ago. Its provenance is unknown (a post pictures picture), and it depicts a rear foot of the Sphinx. The genius of the piece lies in its title, *The Hand That Holds the Desert Down*—a string of words with the power to suddenly render weightless the crust of a whole region. The effect is visceral, and one can't help but imagine a desert immune to gravity's grasp, with the Sphinx standing in as Atlas in reverse.

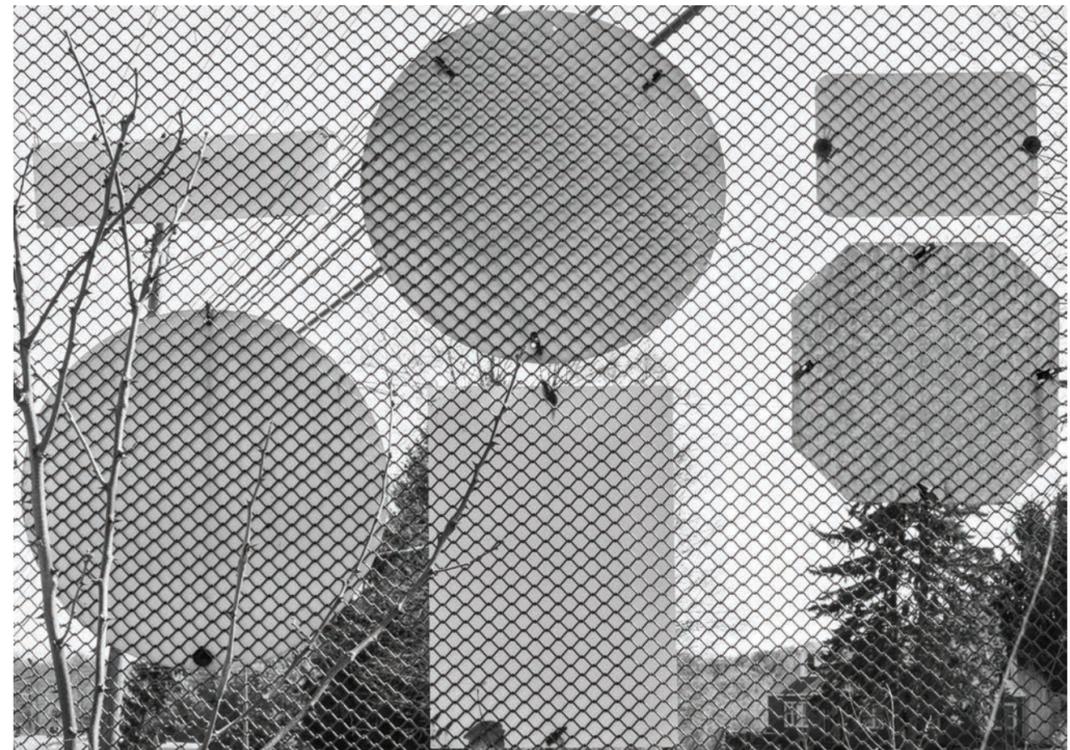
Throughout her career, Ebner has focused on photography's depictive qualities while simultaneously using language to connote meaning outside of what's visible in the frame. While what's often depicted are cinder blocks and other raw materials, the viewer is also looking at text. The work forces text and image to share pictorial dominance, and to coexist within the frame. The photograph becomes the referent, not by showing us a personality, event, or landscape, but by asking us to read. Sometimes the letters are withheld, and signage becomes shapes—the backs of signs, fastened to a fence, appear as a collection of rectangles and circles. This is her usual practice in reverse: letters are obscured in order to reveal new forms.

## Shannon EBNER

**Primer**  
2013  
Epson print  
72 x 38 in  
(SE PH13 02)

**Service Club Signs Verso**  
2014  
Archival pigment print  
46 1/2 x 65 1/4 in  
(SE PH14 06)

Courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel, San Francisco; Wallspace, New York; Sadie Coles, London; Kaufmann Repetto, Milan





*John*  
**HOUCK**

**C**ode, print, fold, photograph, repeat. That's the order. Pixels, drops of ink on paper, pixels again. Houck's work is a schizophrenic game of tag between input and output. The word *code*, for Houck, is both verb and noun, referring to equal parts task and language. Photography is about cropping and edges. Houck's edges, because they delineate overlapping planes of information, are the boundaries that give his photographs virtual space. The grid, with its implication of order, becomes a forum for possibility. As the line is for Sol LeWitt, so is the grid for Houck—a reminder that what begins as binary transforms into unlimited variation in the hands of the right practitioner.

**Peg and Jon**  
2013  
From the series *A History of Graph Paper*  
27 x 22 in  
Edition of 3 + 2 a.p.

**Untitled #288, 2 colors, #5D6C6F, #EE8A70**  
2014  
From the series *Aggregates*  
Creased archival pigment print (unique)  
24 x 30 in

Courtesy of the artist and On Stellar Rays, New York



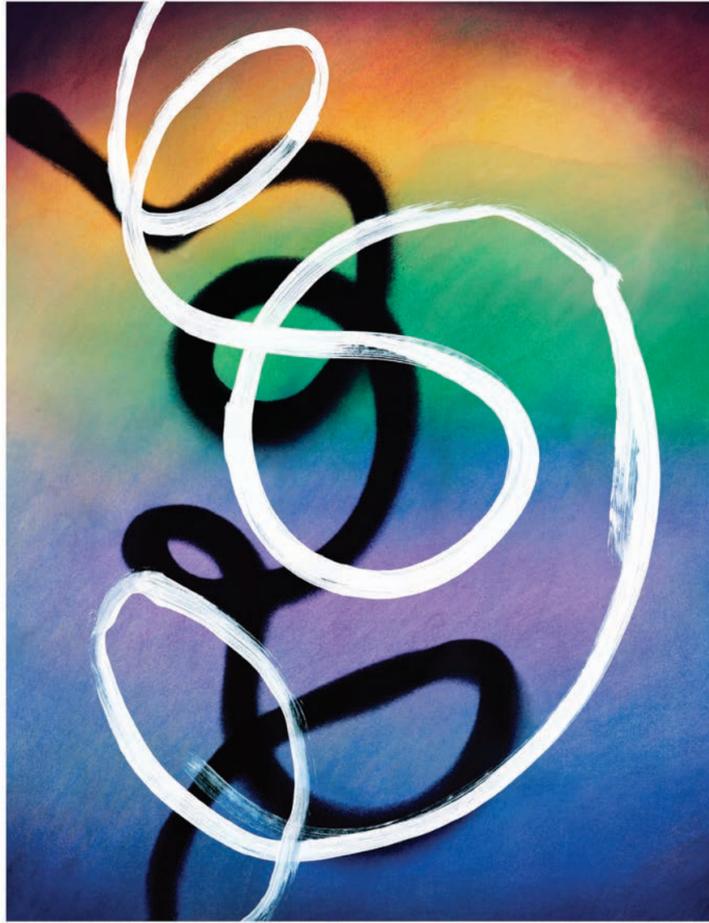
*Matt*  
**LIPPS**

**H**istory as written in images, plundered and organized; events, careers, and personalities reduced to cutouts, displayed on glass shelves like tchotchkes in a cabinet. Such are the Wunderkammern of Lipps's latest series of photograph assemblages. Considered together, his tools (a digital camera and an X-Acto knife) seem almost to represent a subversion of expectation. Images, sourced from anthologies of photography now out of print, are stripped of their indexical power and context, and given new meaning through Lipps's juxtapositions of them. Like retirees enjoying a second career in their golden years, they come from a time when there were fewer pictures in the world, and without their once grand status they take on a melancholy countenance.

**Art**  
2013  
C print  
78.25 x 50 in

**Caring**  
2013  
C print  
77.75 x 50 in

Courtesy Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles; Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco; Josh Lilley Gallery, London



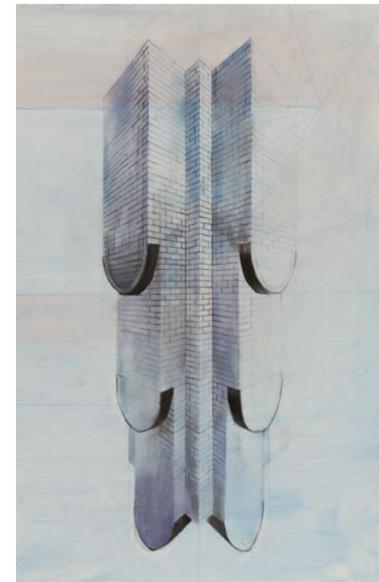
*Florian*  
**MAIER AICHEN**

**M**aier Aichen's photograph of a snow-covered Los Angeles street is a climate change what if, a disaster spectacle in place of sunshine noir. Both the peculiar architecture and the marks in the snow are all part of his considered process of image manipulation. Preproduction involves location scouting, and in post he creates form and texture by dragging his stylus pen across a tablet, essentially making digitally assisted handmade marks. Trying to parse the meaning of his decisions is part of the pleasure in contemplating his compositions, and the clarity of the photographs does not belie the mystery that persists within them.

**Untitled**  
2014  
Dye transfer print  
37 1/2 x 31 1/4 inches framed  
FMA 285

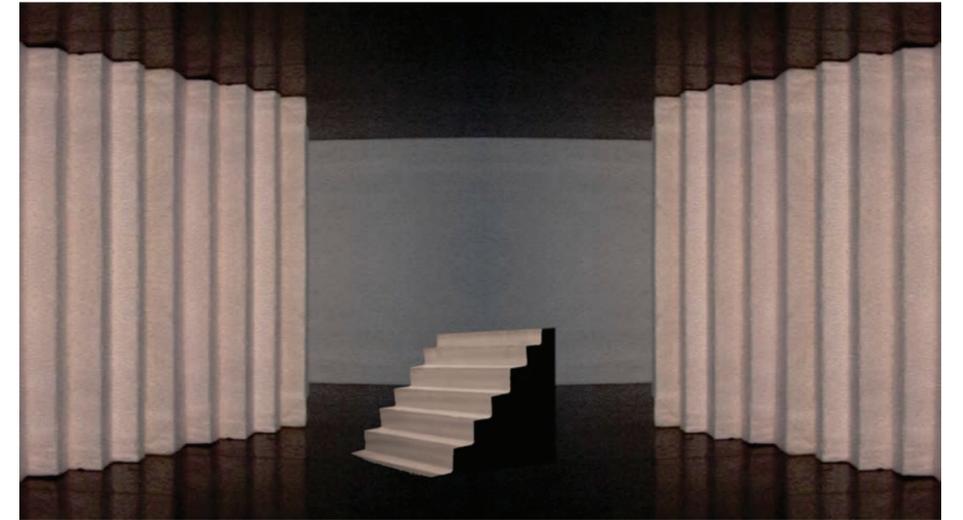
**La Brea Avenue in the Snow**  
2011  
C print  
65 5/8 x 81 3/4 inches framed  
FMA 269

© Florian Maier Aichen; courtesy of 303 Gallery, New York



*Adam*  
**PUTNAM**

**P**utnam's gaze is often steady, his attention honing in on the dark spaces below vaulted brick archways, while at other times he is manic, sequencing psychedelic vignettes into longform videos. The stillness of his crypt like interiors and studio shadow play are offset by the vivid experience of watching his performative works. Putnam has developed a language akin to that of the New American Gothic. Quoting John Hawkes, Putnam's recent exhibition in New York was an exclamation of psychic material, a merging of the physical and mental interior that allows the visual to function as metaphor.



**Untitled**  
2013  
Charcoal and pigment on rag paper  
50 1/2 x 32 1/2 in

**The End**  
2014  
00:20 video w/ sound, from *Reclaimed Empire (Deep Edit)* 2008-14, 60 short films, 27:15 minutes  
Edition of 5

Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York

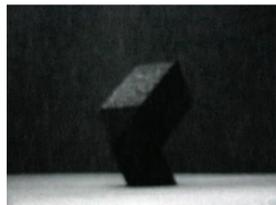
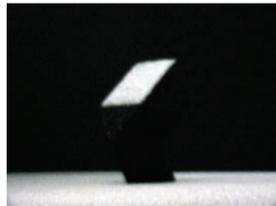


**A.P. (no. 10)**  
 2014  
 Archival pigment print  
 34 x 46 inches with fold  
 Edition of 4  
 © Erin Shirreff; courtesy of  
 Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York



**Goshute Ridge**  
 2001  
 Inkjet print  
 Courtesy of Derek Eller Gallery

**Birds 21b**  
 2008  
 Digital image  
 Courtesy of the artist and Triple Canopy



**Still from Sculpture Park,**  
**Tony Smith**  
 2006  
 Color video, silent, 37 minutes (loop)  
 © Erin Shirreff; courtesy of  
 Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

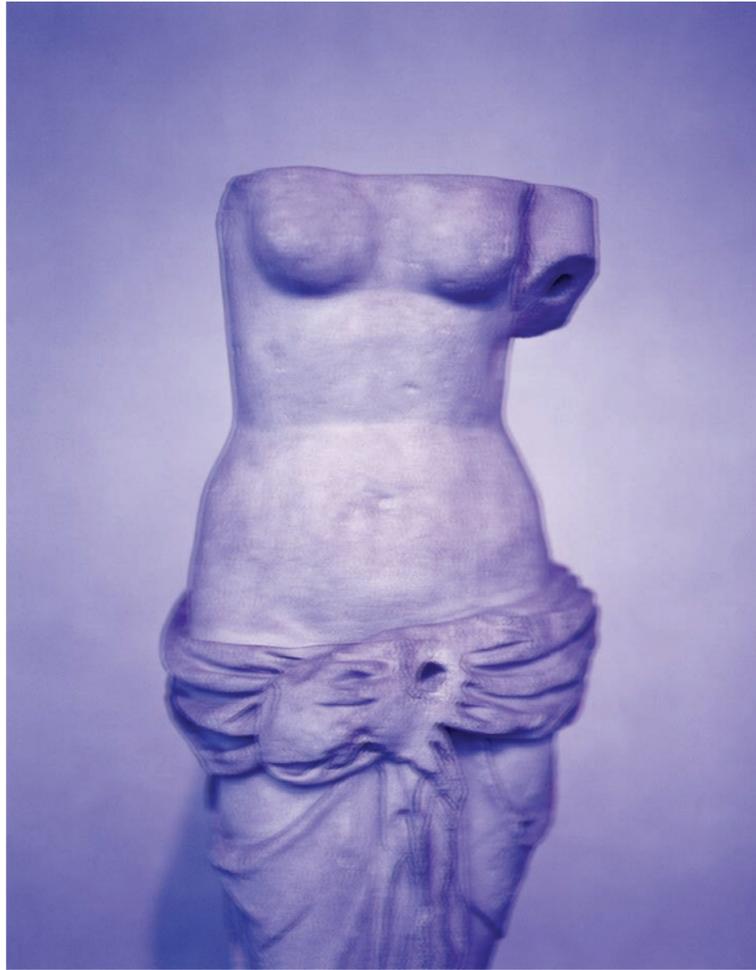
## Erin SHIRREFF

Shirreff's interest in Tony Smith's sculptures is manifested in her video *Sculpture Park* (*Tony Smith*), from 2006. Produced in her Brooklyn studio during a sweltering New York summer, Shirreff's black and white video depicts a Smith-like sculpture being snowed on at night. The mood is somber, yet the snow that slowly accumulates on the object's angular planes gestures toward weather's ability to render form. Removing sculpture from the realm of touch, Shirreff relocates the sculptural form within the planar medium of film. She has an open, easy way of talking about her work that matches the humble quality of her creations. And yet, they possess an uncanny ability to provoke feelings of melancholy and desire without the siphoning pitfalls of nostalgia. Shirreff has made it possible to feel awe in the presence of mid-century modernist sculpture again, without the sidetracks of overbearing masculinity and industrial production.



## Dan TOROP

Torop's artist talks are don't miss events—so circuitous musings on the peripatetic life of an artist in residence and his efforts to link the absurd gestures of seventies conceptual art and the formal practice of picture making. His work doesn't look like that of his contemporaries, yet what he's doing seems more relevant now than ever. But what is he doing? On one hand he's a romantic, a photographer who works on a personal scale, using analog photographs as nodes of emotional turmoil. He's often out in the desert alone, or cresting blunt peaks with his 35 mm camera. He's also the only photographer I know who comprehends the virtual dimension of the latent digital image. His knowledge of programming and code has given him access to the raw data from the digital camera's sensor, allowing him to see the image before it's assembled by a demosaicing editing program like Camera Raw.



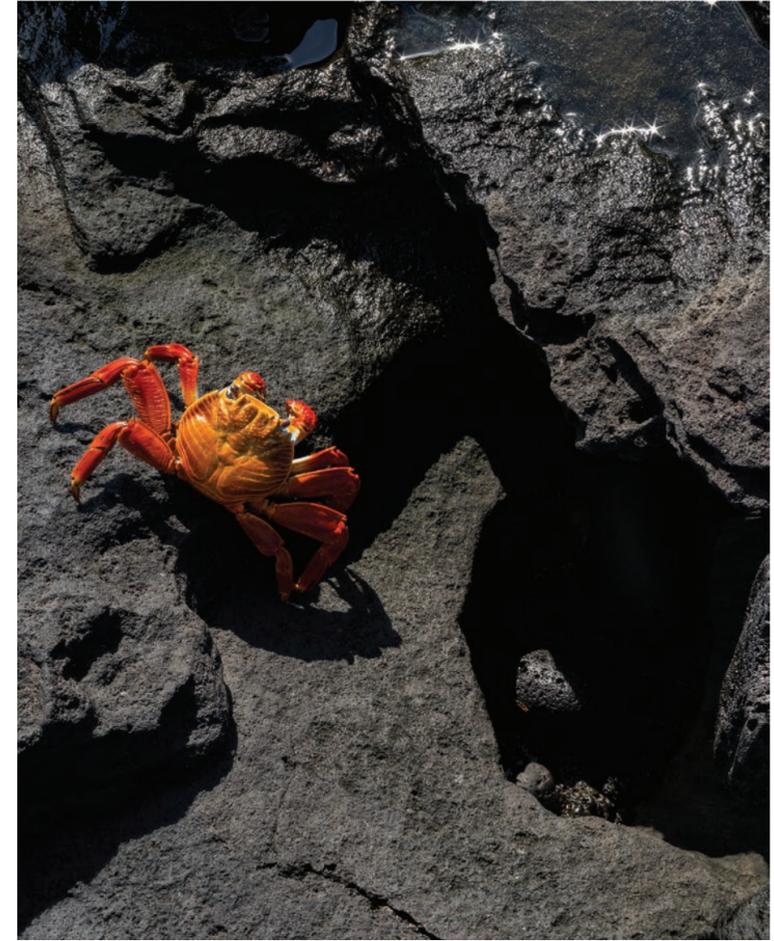
Sara  
VANDERBEEK

Roman Women III  
2013  
Digital C print  
60 x 46 in  
(SV PH13 02)

Ancient Solstice  
2014  
Digital C print  
24 x 17 3/4 in  
(SV PH14 04)

Courtesy of the artist and Altman Siegel,  
San Francisco, and Metro Pictures,  
New York

When photographed by VanDerBeek, objects often feel less illuminated than submerged in liquid; brightness flows around her subjects and gives them form. Her blue and purple hues read like confections. Several of her more recent exhibitions have been prompted by sojourns to California, Europe, and South America, grounding each respective body of work in firsthand research and experience. Possibilities unfold throughout her process, carried by currents, swept up in spinning eddies, but all reaching the ocean fully formed. VanDerBeek has a particular gift for turning her investigations into art, for blending intellectual pursuits with explorations of surface and texture. From out of her visual language of abstraction come references to traditional representation—new icons for our image based society.



SERIES 2, EPISODE 16

Photograph courtesy of Matthew Porter

Five years ago, during a long drive, I was listening to a podcast. It was part of a series in which Ricky Gervais and his writing partner, Stephen Merchant, attempt to trick their fool in residence, Karl Pilkington, into believing an absurd story. Gervais recounts to Pilkington that a New England microchip factory had been dumping silicon on its neighboring beaches, and that granular, carbon based material had been ingested by indigenous crabs. The crabs began to line up, form patterns, and behave toward each other in a way that caught the attention of the locals. When the crabs were eventually dissected, Gervais goes on to say, their miraculous makeup was uncovered and their memories downloaded. Those memories, in the form of a crude digital code, could be translated by graphic editing programs to reveal fuzzy images of other crabs. Imagine this: a baby crab might inadvertently record an image of its parent, then pass that image on to its own descendants. For their part, scientists could then look at snapshots of a multigenerational crab family. I had to pull the car over to think about this—crabs imbued with the ability to record and carry visual information. They were half machine, half crab, carrying around pictures of their ancestors. Of course, it was all a joke, but whenever I see a crab I still wonder what pictures it might've taken, what views of this world it could reveal that will forever be withheld from us.