

M+B



PDN's 30 2013: Our Choice of New and Emerging Photographers to Watch: Jessica Eaton

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By Conor Risch

By investigating the basic elements of the photographic medium—including light, color and exposure—and creating studio images with large-format film cameras that express the possibilities of those elements, Jessica Eaton has captivated art audiences in recent years.

“In knowing the history of photography, she certainly plays into it, but takes it one step further,” notes Kim Bourus, director of Higher Pictures in New York City.

In art school in Vancouver, Eaton was part of a community that recognized “constructed narrative” photography and not much else. When she went in a different direction, the reaction was “What on earth are you doing?” she recalls. For her thesis she created images that emphasized photography’s ability to freeze things in midair. “We can’t experience this [phenomenon] in our day-to-day lives, but a photograph does this really well,” she says. A teacher dismissed her images as abstractions when in fact they were representational. “It drove me nuts for years,” Eaton recalls.



A move away from the Vancouver art scene to Toronto and then, more recently, Montréal, was “eye opening,” Eaton says. She committed to making the photographs she wanted to make. “If that meant I bartend until I’m 40 and make them however I can wherever I can, that’s what I would do,” she recalls thinking. A break came when a curator friend gave her an opportunity to show at a gallery sponsored by Red Bull, the energy beverage company.

Eaton pitched a series of images investigating color that she’d been thinking about for a year but hadn’t had the funding to make. She used money meant for framing to produce the work, trusting she’d find the cash for framing when the time came. She did, and the series, “Cubes for Albers and LeWitt,” has changed her career.

Eaton continues to work on new iterations of her “Cubes” series, while also creating new work that investigates light. “I am really interested in [asking]: What is the most basic thing and then how can you push it?”