

BORTOLAMI



Gallery II: Morgan Fisher

New Work: Photographs and Works on Paper
Opening April 7th, 2011 6-8pm

Bortolami is pleased to announce an exhibition of Morgan Fisher's new works, photographs and works on paper.

The photographs in the show present boxes of still film from the 1950s. They are doubly obsolete: once for being drastically past expiration, and twice for being a medium that is no longer in popular practice. The '50s was the decade when Fisher became aware of photography and started taking photographs. Beyond being obliquely autobiographical, the photographs are acts of remembrance, and as such they resemble acts of mourning. They take note of film's passing away, not literally dying because it does continue, but gradually passing out of use and out of consciousness. The photographs also suggest the power of obsolescence to disturb. The boxes are relics of a market that no longer exists, chance survivors of a system of production, distribution, advertising, and consumption, in which for whatever reason they did not fulfill their intended purpose, to be used. They express the pathos of the unrealized: intentions, expectations, and hopes. Even though the film boxes survive as they were made, by remaining unused they are an expression of waste.

The works on paper are rubbings made of the covers of a British photography annual, *Photograms of the Year*. Photography annuals are the last gasp of the salon tradition in photography, in which a photographer is represented by only one photograph. The photographs in these books are pleasing pictures of pleasing subjects and show the utmost technical skill, but few are what we could call original. They are stereotypical subjects treated by stereotypical means: moody Venice, yachts under sail, picturesque streets in poor villages, soulful children, ebullient children, nudes (female of course) in poses and embellished with props that sometime raise them to the level of kitsch, the mysterious East, represented by men with wrinkled faces and young women, clothed and unclothed, usually accompanied by props that make sure we don't miss the point. Classical photographic modernism, even then in its late stages, is absent from these pages, instead there are the last moments of pictorialism. The photographs reflect an unhappy period when photography was unable to advance beyond its then recent past, and necessarily oblivious of the radical shift that was to come a few years later and consign such photography to the irrelevant. A rubbing is a kind of touching that expresses devotion. A classic subject for a rubbing is a tombstone.

Morgan Fisher lives and works in Santa Monica, California. A survey of his work, including films, works on paper, paintings and painting installation, is currently on view at Raven Row in London. He has had solo exhibitions at MoCA Los Angeles; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; and Kunstverein Hamburg. He started making films in the late 1960's, and in the early 1970's worked occasionally as a film editor in Hollywood. Since the late 1990's his work has been mainly in painting and recently installation, both painting and architectural. He has taught at Brown University, California Institute of the Arts, and the University of California, Los Angeles.