

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
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Press Release

LIZ DESCHENES
7.12.2012-10.2.2013

Press conference: December 6, 2012, 10 am
Opening: December 6, 2012, 7 pm

Artist talk with Liz Deschenes und Florian Pumhösl:
Sunday, Dezember 9, 2012, 11 am
Organized by Friends of Secession

Liz Deschenes's photographic œuvre deals with the conditions of photography and its components, with perception and the correlation to other artistic media, and with the architecture within which her works are shown. Her works allow a self-referential look at the medium, liberated of its functions, taking its own conditions as its theme.

For some years now, Deschenes has been working almost exclusively with photograms – pictures created without a camera, using a technique as old as photography itself. Traditionally, it has served to capture silhouettes: objects are placed on photosensitive paper and the paper is then exposed. Deschenes does without these external references: her works are made by exposing photographic paper for several hours, out of doors, mostly at night, before fixing it and treating it with toners. Depending on the choice of photographic chemicals and how they are used, this creates surfaces that are black, white, silver or golden, glossy or matt. The results are also influenced by external factors including temperature and humidity. The chemicals leave streaks and spots, and there are hand- and fingerprints from the artist's handling of the material. "My work is in reaction to, I think, the limited scope that photography is often understood by. I think photography is capable of much more than representing a particular moment in time. (...) I'm just working with the most basic elements of photography, which is paper, light and chemicals. There's no negative, there's no digital file. I'm bringing it back to a pre-photographic status." (1)

The photograms made in this way show nothing but themselves and the traces of the process that produced them. Crucially, once the photochemical process is set in motion, it never comes to a standstill: "I constantly have to respond to the changing conditions of the work, which is part of the reason why I'm trying to make work that also changes during the exhibition – and beyond. Because there is no decisive moment." (2)

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Deschenes's photograms change, they oxidize, their colours shift, they are in a constant state of flux. This relates her current work to earlier explorations of colour and monochromy. "The monochrome and other self-reflexive practices do not have a deep history in the photographic medium, mainly because of the medium's inherent ability to record and document. 'Painting's rejection of depiction has condemned photography to depict.'"(3)

For her exhibition at the Secession, Deschenes has devised a new series of photograms. The titles of the sixteen works produced for Vienna, *Stereograph 1–16*, refer to stereoscopy, a (historical) image production technique in which two pictures of the same motif, taken from slightly different angles, create photographs with a three-dimensional effect. With this exhibition, Deschenes touches on two fields of interest that have recently emerged in her work: architecture and exhibition displays. "The reference is cameras as rooms," she says, "'Camera' literally means room in Latin, with that in mind I'll reframe the configurations of these rooms using the photograms."*

The extremely narrow, elongated photograms are joined together in pairs at an angle, forming a kind of fold that alludes to the bellows of a large-format camera. This visual reference to the appearance of large-format cameras, which are used preferably for architectural photography due to the scope for correcting distortions of perspective by adjusting the lens, is a recurring motif, occurring in the works made by Deschenes for the Whitney Biennale (2012) and in her three-dimensional photographic installation *Tilt / Swing* (two versions, first in 2009). The title of this latter work describes the possibilities to control the image by moving the camera, for example via the lens's tilting functions. This creates pictures that do not correspond to "natural" human sight. This subtle reference to the camera's potential for manipulating reality takes the myth of photography's objectivity and resulting association with truth (a myth that has existed since the birth of photography) and renders it absurd.

The connection to stereoscopy is not literal, instead taking the form of a reflection on camera, space and seeing. For her show in the Galerie, Deschenes began by radically altering the sequence of spaces and thus the choreography of the exhibition, by moving the entrance to the side door. Instead of the familiar sequence of three rooms with very different qualities and characteristics, she created a forked space. Coming from the entrance area, referred to by the artist as the "viewfinder", visitors must decide whether they wish to enter the left or right side of the exhibition first.

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Deschenes's reference to stereoscopy is a play on the double image. Here, too, the viewers play an active role, as their movements basically perform the shift of viewpoint on which stereoscopic vision is founded. "As in all of my exhibitions, the work will most likely resolve itself through the installation/exhibition."*

(1) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhLiT5RUKyw>, uploaded 29.2.2012

(2) Liz Deschenes in the studio with Brian Sholis, *Art in America*, March 2012, p. 155

(3) Liz Deschenes, unpublished artist's statement. With a quote from Ruth Horak, "Narration and new reduction in photography (2002/03)", in: Horak, Ruth (Ed.), *Rethinking Photography I + II*, Salzburg / Graz: Fotohof edition / Forum Stadtpark, 2003, p. 92.

* all quotations from: Interview with Liz Deschenes conducted by Bettina Spörr, Secession exhibition catalogue, Vienna, 2012.

Catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue with essays by Johanna Burton and Ruth Horak and an interview with the artist conducted by Bettina Spörr.

Images

<http://www.secession.at/presse/index.html>

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Liz Deschenes (born 1966 in Boston, Mass.) lives and works in New York.

Einzelausstellungen (Auswahl) | Solo Exhibitions (Selection)

2012

Secession, Wien | Vienna/AT (Kat. | Cat.)

2010

Shift / Rise, Sutton Lane, Brüssel | Brussels/BE

2009

Right / Left, Sutton Lane, Paris/F

Chromatic Aberration (Red Screen, Green Screen, Blue Screen - a series of photographs from 2001–2008), Sutton Lane, London/UK

Tilt / Swing, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York/USA

2007

Photographs, Sutton Lane, London/UK

Registration, Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York/USA

2001

Blue Screen Process, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York/USA

1999

Below Sea Level, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York/USA

1997

Beppu, Bronwyn Keenan Gallery, New York/USA

Gruppenausstellungen (Auswahl) | Selected Group Exhibitions

2012

Liz Deschenes & Charlotte Posenenske, Andreas Melas & Helena Papadopoulos Gallery, Athen | Athens/GR

Parcours, mit | with Florian Pumhösl, The Art Institute of Chicago/USA

Whitney Biennial 2012, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York/USA (Kat. | Cat.)

Notations: The Cage Effect Today, Hunter College / Times Square Gallery, New York/USA

Carl Strüwe in the context of Contemporary Photography, Bielefelder Kunstverein, Bielefeld/D

2011

If You Lived Here, You'd Be Home By Now, CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art, New York/USA

What's Next? - Four visions on exhibiting photography, Foam, Amsterdam/NL

After Images, Musée Juif de Belgique, Brüssel | Brussels/BE (Kat. | Cat.)

Sutton Lane visits Klosterfelde: Liz Deschenes and Scott Lyall, Berlin/D

Chaos as Usual, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen/NO

Picture No Picture, Carriage Trade, New York/USA

New York to London and Back: The Medium of Contingency, Thomas Dane Gallery, London/UK (Kat. | Cat.)

How Soon Is Now, Garage Contemporary Arts Center, Moskau | Moscow/RU (Kat. | Cat.)

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2010

Free, New Museum, New York/USA
A Shot in the Dark, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis/USA
Les Rencontres d'Arles Photographie, Arles/F
Picture Industry (Goodbye To All That), Los Angeles/USA
De Rigueur, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles/USA

2009

Der Schnitt durch die Oberfläche legt neue Oberflächen frei (The Cut Through the Surfaces Reveals New Surfaces),
Temporary Gallery, Köln/Cologne, D
Collatéral, Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers, F (Kat. | Cat.)
Modern Wing Inaugural Installation of Contemporary Photograph, The Art Institute of Chicago, USA
La Vie mode d'emploi: Carl Andre, Martin Barré, Daniel Buren, Liz Deschenes, Sherrie Levine, Cheyney Thompson, Franz West, Sutton Lane, Paris/F
Constructivismes!, Galerie Almine Rech, Brüssel | Brussels, BE

2008

Photography on Photography: Reflections on the Medium since 1960, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/USA
Color Chart. Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today (Kat. | Cat.)
- Museum of Modern Art, New York/USA
- Tate Liverpool, Liverpool/UK, 2009
Le Retour, Nice & Fit Gallery, Berlin/D

2007

For the People of Paris, Sutton Lane c/o Ghislaine Hussenot, Paris/F

2006

Vija Celmins, Liz Deschenes, Zoe Leonard, Tracy Williams, Ltd., New York/USA

2005

The Photograph in Question, Von Lintel Gallery, New York/USA

2004

Liz Deschenes / Siobhan Liddell, Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen/D

2003

Rethinking Photography V, Forum Stadtpark, Graz/AT

2002

Back Grounds - Impressions Photographiques
Galerie Nelson, Paris/F
Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York/USA, 2003
Modern Photographs from the Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/USA