

In this new series of black-and-white gelatin silver prints, Quinlan exerts a kind of pressure upon the photographic substrate, and consequently upon every image in the exhibition. Quinlan alternates between a passive modality of production – allowing the development process itself to degrade the negative’s surface – and active intervention, attacking the surface of the film with steel wool. Corrosion and abrasion alternately conceal and disrupt the images in these works, which take as their subjects varied visual motifs that have rarely appeared in her previous work: new portraits and rephotographed snapshots of the same figures from years prior; a close-up of a crocheted doily; printed stripes and hash patterns; imageless negatives, in which the process of decay itself forms an accidental composition; and a rephotographed reproduction of Gutai artist Saburo Murakami’s 1955 *Laceration of Paper* performance.

In Quinlan’s photograph, titled *Passing Through*, gossamer white folds peel back to reveal gaping black voids where the emulsion layer of the negative has peeled away from its support. The picture both mirrors and masks the composition of the re-photographed image it conceals, in which Murakami hurtles through forty-two layers of paper, and bursts through the front-most sheet towards the camera with his fist raised. No such figure emerges from Quinlan’s laceration; we are instead confronted with the void by which his body has been swallowed. The photograph turns inwards, upon itself. Here, Quinlan asserts film as a thin membrane, and the photograph not as an unconditional reception of the perceived world, but as a position within a scopic regime mediated and inflected by barriers, screens, curtains.

Visual thinkers from André Bazin to Jean-Luc Nancy have likened the photograph to the death mask. Nancy describes the latter as the “casting of presence fleeting into absence”; a process of embalment. Quinlan, however, stages the mask itself in a state of compromise, in the midst of its own eradication. Decay becomes the subject of her exploration, rather than a drive towards some terminus. Putrefaction is a stage within a transitional continuum, and the artist a documentarian of this transformative rather than degenerative process.

For *Curtains*, the black-and-white gelatin silver prints are exposed: unframed, pinned directly onto the wall, and uniform in size. There are twenty-four works in total, as the hours of the day; an apt number for an artist who stages the accumulation of damage and the chemical event as temporal indices within a medium that purports to arrest the passage of time.

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