

Laura Letinsky

Dirty dishes, body problems, and other conundrums

September 13 – November 2, 2024

Opening reception: Friday, September 13, 5–8pm

DOCUMENT is pleased to present *Dirty dishes, body problems, and other conundrums*, Laura Letinsky's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery and her first in Portugal.

For over 30 years, the work of Laura Letinsky has consistently investigated what defines a photograph. In *Dirty dishes, body problems, and other conundrums*, Letinsky employs and combines both historical and modern processes to create images that challenge and elude predefined notions of temporality. The exhibition features two distinct series, produced using techniques at opposite ends of photographic printing on metal: tintypes, one of the earliest photographic processes, and dye sublimation prints on aluminum.

The artist's latest series of works, *That What Can't Be*, features snapshots taken with her phone and printed as tintypes, lending a reflective and silvery quality to the images. The subjects of these gray-toned plates range from abstract compositions and still lifes to intimate, tightly framed depictions of body parts. Letinsky turns her gaze inward, capturing overlapping and bare legs, arms, and backs. Focusing on her own body, she blurs the boundaries between self-perception and photographic representation.

These intimate images, printed on a mirror-like surface, evoke a sense of timelessness and introspection. Letinsky explains, "I've been commingling pictorial strategies and technologies, from perspectival to abstraction, as well as experimenting with different contemporary technologies, from state-of-the-art digital through to anachronistic printing methods using the sun, such as the cyanotype, platinum palladium, and the tintype, so as to shift temporal associations and stymie notions of linear and unrelenting progress." The result is a body of work that defies conventional expectations of both medium and time.

During her 2023 residency at the Dora Maar House in Ménerbes, France, Letinsky began *Who Loves the Sun*, a photographic series that explores the interplay of natural and artificial light, inspired by the bright, sun-soaked atmosphere of Provence. In these images, Letinsky incorporated borrowed objects, including ceramics and glassware from the late Dora Maar's home, alongside local flora, fruits, and found remnants left by previous artists-in-residence. The images transcend mere depiction of objects, focusing instead on the deeper exploration of the photographic medium itself.

The dye sublimation prints from *Who Loves the Sun* are bathed in natural light, their vivid colors and luminous surfaces further exploring Letinsky's fascination with how light

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interacts with objects. The reflective aluminum surfaces invite viewers to engage with the photograph as both image and object. As in her previous work, Letinsky's carefully constructed still lifes evoke the passage of time, with hints of decay and change embedded within the beauty of the compositions.

Letinsky's practice remains deeply rooted in her exploration of photography as a medium that bridges perception and reality, fiction and documentation. Her continued use of the tabletop still life—a genre associated with the slow emulsions of early photography—serves as a reference point to photography's origins while also pushing the boundaries of what the medium can achieve today.

Laura Letinsky (b. 1962, Winnipeg, Canada) lives and works in Chicago, IL. She received her BFA from the University of Manitoba in 1986 and her MFA from Yale University's School of Art in 1991. Her work has been exhibited at renowned institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Denver Art Museum; The Photographers Gallery, London; and Mumbai Photography Festival, India. Public collections featuring Letinsky's work include the Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Fine Art, Houston; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Yale University Art Gallery; and Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.

Letinsky has been the recipient of several awards, including the Canada Council International Residency (2014); Richard Driehaus Foundation Award (2003); Anonymous Was a Woman Award (2002); and the Guggenheim Fellowship Award (2000). Publications include *To Want for Nothing*, Roman Nvmerals, 2019; *Time's Assignation*, Radius Books, 2018; *Ill Form and Void Full*, Radius Press, 2014; *After All*, Damiani, 2010; *Hardly More Than Ever*, Renaissance Society, 2004; and *Venus Inferred*, University of Chicago Press, 2000. Since 1994, Letinsky has been a professor at the University of Chicago's Department of Visual Art.

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