

QT is pleased to present *Homosapien 2*, a solo exhibition by Pia Howell. For her most recent body of work Howell continues her series of *colorgrams*, a type of analog color photograph made by exposing hand-made transparencies directly onto photographic paper. Howell's practice examines the development of human expression in the light of cultural and technological evolution, particularly how emotions, implicit in expressive, gestural hand-made work, translate (or fail to translate) to symbolic, reproducible media and digital communication.

Howell's practice is dedicated to experimentation in the analog color darkroom, contact printing from stencils and transparencies rather than traditional negatives. Howell attempts to subvert photography's presupposed authenticity, challenging the assumption that photography truthfully reproduces its subjects. The images are not representative of reality in the classic photographic sense: there is no traditional negative to act as index of a specific person, place or moment in time. In contrast to traditional analog photography in which a print from a unique negative depicts the specific moment at which the negative was created in camera, Howell's prints reference not one moment but many instances from their production. They do not correspond to a specific iteration of a subject, but attempt to reach for platonic, composite representation through both technique and subject matter. This approach is in line with an historic yet still relevant questioning of what within a photograph corresponds to the real and what has merely been simulated.

Much of Howell's recent photographic work is printed from hand-painted transparencies, existing somewhere between photography and painting. No referent painting exists; the fully realized "painting" exists only as a photographic image, a hybrid borne of handmade marks plus semi-mechanized processing. These works attempt to broach an idea of symbolized expression, inherent in the history of painting. This notion is elaborated in Howell's use of iconography, such as smiley faces and emoticons, representations of fire, elements and functions of the body. Howell views these as more or less successful icons for abstract themes that are difficult to reduce to symbols: energy, passion, emotion, desire, shame, and repulsion. The absurdity of symbolized expression becomes especially stark when considering digital communication in its tension between reality and the symbolic reality of the Internet. What makes an emoticon or a symbolic image of a face expressive and communicative of genuine sentiment, or, by contrast, rigid, empty, and non-emotive?

While utilizing the hand-made expressive qualities inherent in her process, Howell's final c-prints themselves are technically flat-surface indices of this emotive process, bearing symbols of expression as subject matter.