

Moyra Davey's exhibition *Long Life Cool White* opens, to your right, with a work called *Copperheads*. Its one hundred photographs arranged in a grid look like poisonous landscapes, aerial views of strip mines, or shots of the surface of the moon. Upon closer inspection, however, you may begin to discern the profile of Abraham Lincoln as it appears on the American penny. *Copperheads* offers the pleasure of that surprise, as well as a feeling of amazement at the debased, banal, and sometimes vaguely fecal characteristics of the depicted coins. In many ways, *Copperheads* establishes a set of working terms for Davey's oeuvre: a close attention to detail, in which the eye is trained on what is conventionally overlooked, combined with the precision that photography can offer (the enlargement of the macro lens and the ability to arrest time) and a sensitivity to psychological themes embedded in everyday objects.

Davey consistently works at a modest scale, and her subject matter is commensurate with this humbleness: still lifes, pictures of dust, and images of the outmoded, such as record albums and hi-fi equipment, recur frequently. Both her banal street scenes—the disappearing world of newspaper vendors in New York City, an old button shop—and her domestic interiors—pictures of her dog, objects on top of the refrigerator, books on shelves—suggest a steady but subtle insistence on the private realm and all of its antimonumental vicissitudes. While her photographs channel classic photographers as disparate as Eugène Atget, Jacques-André Boiffard, and Walker Evans, her interests have produced a body of work in a minor key, a series of images of things as rooted in daily life as they are precariously at the edge of it.

Helen Molesworth

Maisie K. and James R. Houghton Curator of Contemporary Art

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Copperhead No. 44

Copperhead No. 50

Copperhead No. 14

Copperhead No. 40

Copperhead No. 1

1990

C-prints

Moyra Davey

Newsstand No. 2

Newsstand No. 3

Newsstand No. 10

Newsstand No. 5

1994

C-prints

Moyra Davey

Goniff's Buttons

Simcha Buttons

Facockta Buttons

Harry the Ex-Button King

1996

C-prints

Early

Two Streaks

Film 1

Pile

1999

C-prints

Pilon

Long Life Cool White

Nakamichi

1999

C-prints

Glass

Greatest Hits

Bird Songs

1999

C-prints

Speaker

Receiver

Nyro

Shure

2003
C-prints

Floor

Paw

2003
C-prints

Fridge

Light

2003
C-prints

Bottles No. 1

Bottles No. 2

Bottles No. 3

Bottles No. 4

Bottles No. 5

Bottles No. 6

1996–2000

Black-and-white
gelatin silver prints

Calendar of Flowers,
Gin Bottles, Steak Bones

Blow

Bloom (A/P)

Bone

2007
C-prints

Otis

1996
C-print

Yma

1999
C-print

Pledge

2000
C-print

Eisenstein

1996
C-print

Greed

1994
C-print

Receivers

2003
C-print

Moyra Davey

Copperheads

1990-92
C-prints

Copperheads

1990-92
C-prints