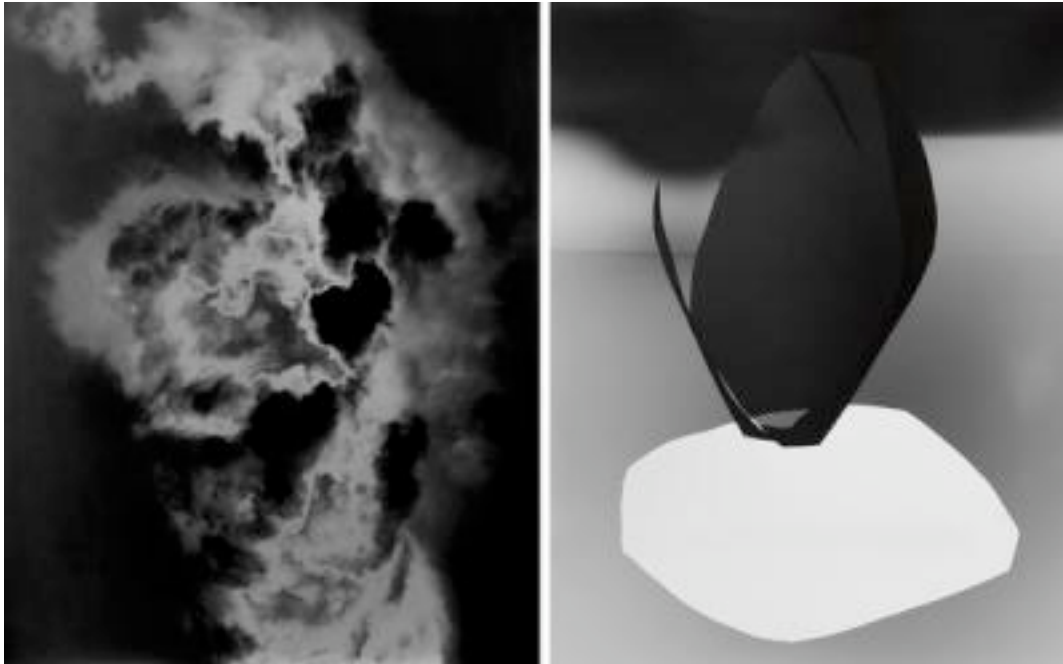


Godsill, Benjamin, "Photorealism: Talia Chetrit, Sheree Hovsepian, Andrea Longacre-White, Lisa Oppenheim - Bischoff/Weiss," *Artlyst*, July 2012.



Photorealism: Talia Chetrit, Sheree Hovsepian, Andrea Longacre-White, Lisa Oppenheim - Bischoff/Weiss

By Benjamin Godsill

Photorealism is a selection of recent art that remediates and reimagines the possibilities and definitions of abstraction and its intersection with photographic representation. The works assembled by the four artists included in *Photorealism* -- Talia Chetrit, Sheree Hovsepian, Lisa Oppenheim and Andrea Longacre-White -- all use photographic modes and dark room techniques to make photographs that are not just documentary but are representations of the mode of photography itself. Each of the works, and the artists' individual practices, result in photographs 'of' things -- representations of objects and events that do or did exist in real time and space. And yet they look, to varying degrees, abstract -- they seem 'unreal,' imagined, constructed. And thus, by their very nature, they perform an imperative task of calling into question the ontological categories that we use, but also, the very ways in which we see.

Talia Chetrit's photographs blend views of the human form with found items that are imbued with an aura of modernist industrial production. Each work employs a perspective and framing that displaces the viewer's point of view, making one question the mode of the photograph's construction. Relying on neither digital or analog post-production tools, Chetrit makes 'straight' photography that is fundamentally queer. Straight in that she relies only on her studio, her camera, found objects, and bodies of her

to make her work. But queer in that the work assaults our notions of body and evidence: the perverse perspectives and angles in the work makes one wonder if the work has been photoshopped or otherwise altered in the dark room. It has not. But this very question illustrates how Chetrit's practice both lies in and plays with the shadows of our current age of abstraction.

Lisa Oppenheim's work is always a productive disturbance of cultural and technological frames of image construction and distribution. Working primarily in film and photography, Oppenheim often mines existing images, engaging in an elegantly destructive process of addition and subtraction. Included in *Photorealism* is her most recent body of work, collectively titled *Smoke*, comprised of cropped photographs of smoke rising from the fires of various sources - including the 2011 London riots. In this series, those sourced images act as a filter through which photographic paper is exposed over several iterations by the flame of a torch; smoke and fire become both the image's subject and its mode of production. While seemingly abstract and lyrical, the final images are both 'of' and an 'instance of' destruction; as in the case of abstract painting, representation and creation become collapsed and confused.

Sheree Hovsepian creates work that blends studio photography and dark room techniques in a manner that confounds our usual expectations of image-making. Using a variety of everyday materials, Hovsepian pares back the strictures of photography to their barest components - the interaction of light on surface. The results are expressive geometric photograms imputed with a very human energy. Though working in a darkroom and using what is most commonly thought of as a mechanical process, Hovsepian allows her hands and the decision she makes with them in the moments of her image's creation to reign supreme. It is difficult not to think of painting when we think of this work, of her manipulation of objects in the studio and darkroom in real-time as a form of painting with light. Beyond this romantic connotation, there is a real affinity in the work for a format of material abstraction. Yet, these are truly photographs and truly representative in the purest form - they capture the deployment of real objects and light in an actual moment and place.

Andrea Longacre-White is the only digital artist included in *Photorealism* but like her three colleagues she too is interested in the documentation of real objects and occurrences no matter how abstract the outcomes seem. Her work marks the generations and the digital ephemera of our age. Her practice is one of encompassing a continual cannibalisation of itself. Longacre-White takes digital photographs (and scans) of everyday objects, events, and even websites, and then prints them without any processing. These prints are then hung on her studio walls and placed on tables where they become marked, scuffed and torn throughout the course of everyday activities. These material objects are then re-photographed - and the process begins anew, over and over. Wherein a similar analog process would lead to a loss of resolution with each successive generation, this digital reimagining means that each generation actually gains information in the form of the physical degradations that occur for each printed edition. The abstraction we see in each generation is actually a highly realistic representation of

the act of entropy as captured by loss-less digital means.

Despite the abstract results and often expressive modes of production, all the photographs included in *Photorealism* are the most documentary documents possible. Each accurately portrays events and phenomena as they happened. They are hyper-real. Beyond real -- representations of their own construction that can only fully tell their truth through their abstract and other-worldly appearance.