

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

ArtReview
Summer 2016

Erin Shirreff

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo 23 January – 8 May

Brooklyn-based Erin Shirreff produces work that encompasses photography, sculpture, installation and video. Her wide-ranging practice is characterised by references to analogue methods of image-making, and an overarching interest in how the presentation of three-dimensional objects in two-dimensional formats complicates our interpretation of them.

This survey, co-organised with the ICA Boston, where it appeared last autumn, focuses mainly on projects developed between 2008 and 2015. Shirreff often employs found images, or photographs of objects she's made herself, as starting points. Here the show opens with three prints from the *Relief* series (2015). Each is a composite of two abutting photographs of small sculptures made out of cardboard and foamcore that the artist photographed and then printed at a large scale. A similar approach was used to construct *Monograph (no. 3)* (2012), a set of five prints found later in the exhibition. One can't discern the actual size of Shirreff's rephotographed sculptures, situated as they are against neutral backgrounds: the forms might either be the size of tabletop tchotchkes or of a midsize Richard Serra sculpture. Shirreff also folded or rolled the *Relief* images and creased the *Monograph* photos through the midpoint of the prints, evoking the gutter of a book or magazine in which visual information spans and gets lost. This impedes our ability to read the images in full, demonstrating how our

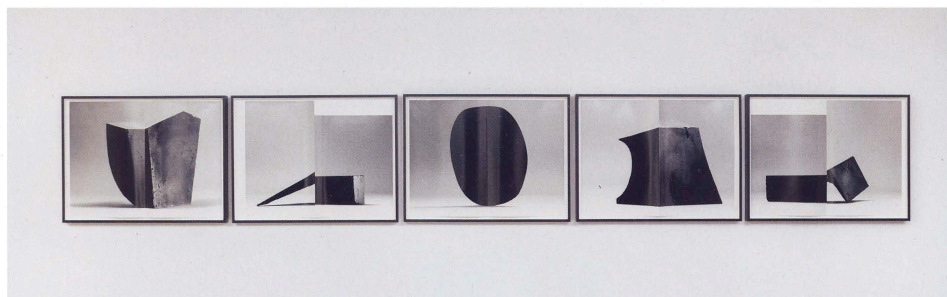
understanding of many three-dimensional objects is shaped by imperfect two-dimensional reproductions.

Two of the videos featured here, *Roden Crater* (2009) and *Medardo Rosso, Madame X, 1896* (2013), build on this idea. An image of James Turrell's massive Land art endeavour found on the Internet acts as source material for the first video, while an image of a sculpture by Rosso, a postimpressionist Italian sculptor, is used for the second. Over the course of 15 minutes, *Roden Crater* presents sequential images – sort of like a slideshow – of the now-extinct Arizona volcano captured under what appears to be different atmospheric conditions. Shirreff created the video by hanging the original picture in her studio, and repeatedly photographing it as the light quality in her studio changed. The overall effect is sublime, especially since the video is projected at an enormous size. We almost feel like we can step into the landscape. The 24-minute *Medardo Rosso, Madame X, 1896*, meanwhile, is projected against the flat surface of a vertically oriented white box jutting from the wall. As with *Roden Crater*, the photo of Rosso's sculpture has been rephotographed several times under different lighting conditions and organised sequentially using computer software. Over the course of 24 minutes, the sculpture fades into darkness or very slowly becomes obscured by a halo. The irony at the centre of both videos is that despite being

presented with multiple visual impressions of the artworks, we remain unable to grasp what they actually look like.

Appended to this version of Shirreff's survey is a small display of archival photographs from the museum's library, selected by the artist. The images – photographs of curators plotting out exhibitions using maquettes, or museum visitors looking at sculptures – illustrate how our interaction with objects is shaped by the museum setting. This is a clever addition, considering that Shirreff's precarious-looking tabletop assemblages and wall-based sculptures in the exhibition's main space make us self-conscious as we move around them. Of these, the large *Drop (no. 14)* (2015) is the most successful, because it looks the most likely to cause injury. Consisting of several irregularly shaped hot-rolled Corten steel forms, which were derived from scraps of paper lying around the artist's studio, the assemblage brings into three dimensions the small-to-large size adjustments of the sculptures pictured in the *Relief* and *Monograph* prints.

Given the range of work presented here, and the many tangential threads that run throughout Shirreff's practice, it's remarkable that this exhibition feels as cohesive as it does. Although Shirreff's art sometimes reveals itself at a glacial pace, patient gallerygoers are rewarded with viewing experiences that stimulate and challenge the eye. *Bill Clarke*



Monograph (no. 3), 2012, set of five black-and-white inkjet prints, 94 × 123 × 8 cm (each). Collection Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo. © the artist. Courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York

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