

ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

FALL PREVIEW

VENICE BIENNALE: FOUR VIEWS

3-D CINEMA

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\$10.00



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Circus Book, both 1978, consist of photographs of *Circus* assembled into disorienting hybrids and mounted on mat board. For this recent occasion, the previously exhibited works were juxtaposed with a set of Matta-Clark's darkroom collages from the same period. The Cibachrome silver dye bleach prints (all 1978) are mostly titled *Circus*—one is titled *Circus* or *Caribbean Orange*—and were created by cutting up and reassembling color negatives, adding small pieces of red, green, and purple tissue paper, and then enlarging the composite prior to printing. Ostensibly documentation of the MCA project, the collages, with their additional layers of mediation, complicate the beholder's spatial understanding of the photographs, echoing what would surely have been a phenomenologically stirring, even dizzying viewing experience of the anarchitecture itself.

The complex relationship between Matta-Clark's canonical pieces, their documentation, and the artist's own anticipation and manipulation of his work's historicization has been broached before. Lee is dismissive of the collages and cites the distaste of Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner (who reportedly fell, unharmed, through one of the cuts in *Circus*) despite endorsing Matta-Clark's own claim that "the sacred photo framing process is equally violatable" to that of the pre-existing architectures he rent and altered. Lee prefers the "straight" photographs presented in book projects such as *Splitting*, 1974, which was included at the Rhona Hoffman show, because they "describe the limits of their own format" and paradoxically reinforce the inability of the viewer to fully make sense of Matta-Clark's installations either firsthand or at a remove. Yet the works that were on display, in addition to serving as testaments to the artist's sustained and highly critical engagement with the medium of photographic collage, suggest quixotic attempts to elide such limits between found site and indexical record.

—Daniel Quiles

SAN FRANCISCO

Zoe Leonard

ANTHONY MEIER FINE ARTS

In Zoe Leonard's "Sun Photographs," 2010–, the artist sets out to depict some of the paradoxes of light. The series, selections from which were on view at Anthony Meier this past spring, features emanations from the sun captured in gelatin silver prints. A few of the images are anchored at their bottom edge by urban landscapes—buildings, antennae, branches—while others are centered on the glare itself as it dissolves into abstraction. Together they comprise a meditative encounter with the dualities that structure both vision and photography, as Leonard points her camera at the thing that makes sight possible yet is itself impossible to look at unaided.

Some of Leonard's prints were tacked directly onto the gallery walls, the stiff paper bulging and buckling out slightly to emphasize their materiality. Small imperfections such as specks and dust spots on the surfaces of the prints further drew one's attention to the contingencies of darkroom procedures. In each photograph, the flare of rays that is the focal point of the image bleaches out the sky to create a study in subtle tonalities of gray. A diptych of nearly identical prints of shots taken on January 19, 2012, from slightly different angles, captures a sunspot that hovers over a streetscape. The direction of the glints changes as they are fixed onto film, palpably registering the shifting body of the photographer. Another photo focuses on a bright white circle that punctuates the sky like a navel, with a few bare treetops the only indication of Leonard's physical location. In *January 15, frame 10*, 2012, an airplane, frozen midflight, forms a kind of constellation with the spots of sunlight. Throughout her impressive oeuvre, Leonard

has intelligently grappled with the contradictions of time, and in this image we are reminded of the strangeness of photography's power to arrest ephemeral moments.

Cameras as seeing machines have historically made possible different kinds of sight. Each of Leonard's sun photographs is titled with a date and a frame number, a decision that suggests the series as a whole



Zoe Leonard,
January 15, frame 10,
2012, gelatin silver
print, 9½ × 11¼".

is a comment on scientific inquiries into the ability (albeit limited) of the camera to document the sun. Yet this work doesn't give one the sense that it aspires to be part of a detached record-keeping system. Rather, the photographs are the results of a more sensitive approach to temporality and to the presence and subjectivity of the artist—and of the viewer. The pictures and their titles also withhold information, and as spectators we are confronted by all the things the images cannot tell us: Are we looking at a sunrise or a sunset? Is the haze an indication of a cloudy day or is it the milky film of the sky itself? Where are we, exactly? Leonard consistently uses photography to address expectations of visibility, invisibility, and hypervisibility. What drives this work is a perverse desire to challenge a fundamental prohibition: the exhortation not to stare into the sun, lest we damage our eyes. Leonard so brazenly flaunts this taboo that to look at these photographs gives one the thrilling feeling of transgression.

—Julia Bryan-Wilson

Alejandro Cesarco

KIRIA KOULA

Alejandro Cesarco's show at Kiria Koula comprised two films, a print, and a wall silk screen, each of which revisited his abiding themes of time, memory, and the visual and textual signifiers that mediate our experiences of them—rendering (however imperfectly) such immaterial phenomena communicable. One of the artist's interests is books, as both material objects and conceptual systems that organize narrative, structuring the relationship between author and reader. He is especially attuned to those aspects of writing that are slightly marginal to the text proper. For example, in a series of works made between 2000 and 2012, Cesarco created indices for unwritten books—keywords and themes that evoke stories obliquely rather than simply tell them, as well as a book consisting solely of reproduced dedication pages, which foreground authors' personal rather than public readership. Cesarco's preoccupation



View of "Alejandro Cesarco," 2015. From left: *Untitled (Blue Frame)*, 2015; *Allegory, or, The Perils of the Present Tense*, 2015.

with texts and printed matter recalls his Conceptualist and Pictures generation forebears (whom the artist diligently references throughout his work), though he departs from the dry, "administrative" quality of much of this earlier art, instead privileging the lyrical and emotional aspects of language.

The two films on view—composed of sequences of still and moving images, interspersed or overlain with written narratives—felt almost like slide shows because the discrete clips, all shot with a stationary camera, were so uniform in duration. *Musings*, 2013, recounts dreams, visions, and uncanny incidents through which writers have gained inspiration. Spare black-and-white images—of an inscription on the back of a photograph, the sun coming through the trees, four women dressed in white, a building seen from the street—are accompanied by a male voice-over in Spanish with English subtitles (Cesarco is Uruguayan but based in New York). Clichés and gendered stereotypes about literary genius abound, starting with the mythical female figure of the muse, who appears in several engravings at the beginning of the film. Ultimately, however, the creative process is revealed to be less about the generation of original ideas than a deeply allegorical act of appropriation, translation, and interpretation—techniques that are mirrored in the film's fragmented formal structure, which brings to mind Walter Benjamin's description of the practice of allegory as "piling fragments ceaselessly."

Similar motifs attend *Allegory, or, The Perils of the Present Tense*, 2015, though here the focus is on reading rather than writing. A young woman alternately peruses a novel and stares into space as a series of generic yet evocative images pass before the viewer, like empty sets awaiting characters and action. Enigmatic texts resemble intertitles from silent films, except instead of providing explanation or dialogue, they disrupt any sense of narrative coherence. The phrases, a number of which are syntactically incomplete, combine melodramatic content with understated tone, mediating on topics such as love, beauty, truth, and the precarious construction of the self via memory and language.

Despite its thematic engagement with allegory, Cesarco's work is often surprisingly literal—more an illustration of an allegorical mode than an enactment of it. The exception (and my favorite work in the show) was *The Dreams I've Left Behind*, 2015, a diaphanous rectangle of pale-magenta paint silk-screened directly on the gallery wall. Based on a photograph of the wall where the artist's bed rests, the vague, pulsating shape suggests nothing so much as that ghostly, physiological memory known as an afterimage—an emblem of the deeply phenomenological and subjective nature of perception if there ever was one. As one stares at the piece, however, it slowly becomes what it portrays, burning itself onto the retina, and giving rise to its own hallucinated mirage, which is, of course, only visible once we look away. Here,

representation's allegorical nature is poignantly experienced as both the inexorable drive toward meaning, and its inevitable loss.

—Gwen Allen

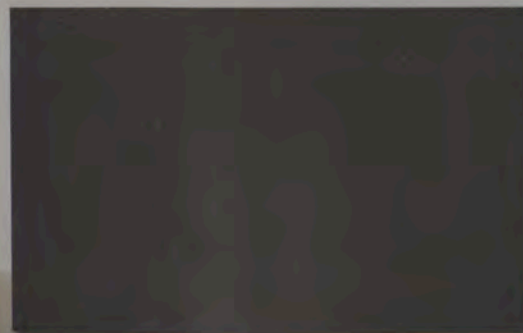
LOS ANGELES

Anne Truitt

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

With only five works filling two rooms that could have readily absorbed many more, "Anne Truitt '62-'63" proved exemplary in its economy. The three sculptures—the plinths *White: One*, 1962, and *White: Four*, 1962, and the oblong form *North*, 1963—and two related paintings on paper affirmed the parity between the intentional sparseness of the exhibition and that of the objects themselves. For all their apparent simplicity, the works are purposive, deeply considered things. As with the gallery's 2013 presentation of Truitt's works from the 1970s, collected under the rubric "threshold," "'62-'63" traces a similarly liminal period, significant both for the artist's formal innovations and her making them public. (Already by the years featured within this show, Truitt had distanced her work from the picket-fence motif of 1961's *First* and had made the insistent possibility of reference in abstraction somehow more oblique.) If the '70s saw Truitt's retrospectives at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; and the Baltimore Museum of Art; the early '60s were no less decisive, giving rise to her first one-person exhibition, held at the André Emmerich Gallery in New York in 1963.

However important this context, though, "Anne Truitt '62-'63" was fundamentally an argument for apprehending the work on its own terms. Each freestanding sculpture was given ample room to allow for circumnavigation, and there was plenty of blank wall against which one might register a piece's contours. This was especially effective in the case of *White: One* and *White: Four*, in that the white of the upright beams suggested not so much respective volumes occupying space as surfaces flattened into outlines. And the works' surfaces, too, evidenced possibilities for the emergence of composition out of the layering of paint in concert with the ground that it unevenly masks. While both began as wooden armatures fabricated by a cabinetmaker to Truitt's specifications, *White: One* is covered in streaks of paint applied in vertical strokes and *White: Four* is raked with straight-up deep grooves. Seen together, the two works effect a kind of standoff between two distinct paint applications: all-over in the former versus part-by-part in the latter. But the presence of *North* in this grouping productively



Anne Truitt, *North*, 1963, acrylic on wood. 60 3/4 x 96 1/4 x 12".