

The still life has always been the domain of metaphor. Objects, staged or imagined, were gathered together to communicate meaning. Over time, a rich pictorial language emerged. In the 1600s Dutch artists made these objects operational. Capturing scenes of half-peeled oranges, oysters about to rot, books partially read, and toppled dishes that couldn't hold: a presupposition of photography.

These developments in the still life made it the perfect substrate for artists in the early 1900s to hang their Modernist experiments on: flattening three-dimensional objects by "pulling" at the edges of the canvas and collapsing the perceived space, smoothing out codified language in order to create a neutral ground on which to collage space and time. This disruption was pushed further by the breaking loose of the picture plane by artists about 40 years later.

Which brings us to today and a collection of artists who continue to use the still life as a potent contrivance:

Jason Kraus and Dawn Kasper are using the still life to address concepts of composition and authorship. Kraus' *Untitled*, 2013 consists of two small pedestals with instructions for what to set upon them (one specific item and one of the installer's choosing). While the work is always ascribed to Kraus, he will never have a hand in the choosing of the objects or dictating their relationship to each other. In contrast, Dawn Kasper's photographs of her parent's overstuffed home capture the still life *in situ* rather than through constructed composition. The edges of the frame define the collection, much in the same way that the walls of the home define the objects accumulated within.

Isabelle Cornaro's *Moulages sur le vif (vide-poche)* (in English: *Life Casts (Catch All)*), uses reframing to flatten out concepts of contextual information inherent to representation. Cropped out of a master scan of known (or almost recognizable) objects, each new print creates a new context for the objects to be considered. With the absence of a legible or static configuration the viewer is left to consider other value systems in which to define these trinkets; which like all objects, are in a state constant state of –cline.

Liz Glynn's *Still Life* compositions are concrete objects drawn from specific 15th century Dutch still life paintings. These bronze works are intended to make physical a set of objects which may never have been assembled in real life: porcelain finer than any traded at the time, silver more elaborate than the real handcraft, and flowers which bloomed in different seasons.

John Houck uses the still life to make visual the process of remembering. His self-reflexive photographs of childhood keepsakes (along with their packaging) are constructed using a process of shooting objects on seamless backdrops created from perfectly-scaled, previously shot prints of the same objects. The resulting configurations leave the viewer to question which of the objects is "real" (a very odd thought to have in regards to a photograph). In his photograph *Pine Ridge*, 2013 the "final" object is hung on a nail that pierces the constructed background, revealing the falseness of the perspective.

JJ PEET's *Stilife_1(INFO)*, 2013 is part painting and part supply shelf. Newspaper images are collaged with a selection of objects (a porcelain camera mount, a bottle of white out, a twist tie...), their function adding to their symbolism— signifiers with purpose. In contrast, Sean Kennedy creates a physical freeze-frame by confronting the viewer with an overhead Plexiglas platform on which a set of everyday objects is placed. Kennedy has removed all use value from these objects, changing them into first a *de facto* image and then a commodity (cultural and otherwise).

Isabelle Cornaro
Liz Glynn
John Houck
Dawn Kasper
Sean Kennedy
Jason Kraus
JJ PEET

Still Life Picture Plane
September 14th – November 2nd, 2013