

UK

EILEEN QUINLAN Campoli Presti, London

Whether you call it 'new photography', 'new formalism' or, as Aaron Schuman opted for in *frieze* 170, 'constructed photography', Eileen Quinlan is exemplary. It's not that new anymore. Alongside Annette Kelm and Josephine Pryde, with whom she exhibited in MoMA's 'New Photography 2013', as well as Walead Beshty, Lucas Blalock and Mariah Robertson, Quinlan problematizes the idea – bluntly expressed in the curatorial thesis of John Szarkowski's 1974 MoMA exhibition, 'Mirrors and Windows: Photography Since 1960' – that the photograph is either a window onto the world or a mirror that reflects a portrait of the individual who made it. Often, this work exhilarates in sheer surface, marvels at abstraction, obsesses at materializing the photograph as object. Everything that wallows in the digitally extended depth of field favoured by artists such as Gregory Crewdson is gleefully, gauchely pushed to the surface.

Quinlan's exhibition at Campoli Presti, titled 'After Hours', playfully continued the artist's ongoing attempt to reveal what the photograph is in material terms, while achieving a certain dimensional confusion of external views and abstractions. Concurrently, at its Paris outpost, the gallery exhibited Quinlan's *Double Charlie* (2015) – a gridded, 12-panel work of scumbled amber-coloured textures comprising two sets of six of the same image, interspersed. *Twinned Mitsuoko* (2008–15) was this work's equivalent in the London show: 12 harshly lit, contrasty black and white photographs of scrunched mylar, displayed in the same way. *Twinned Mitsuoko's* date span begins two years before next earliest work on display here, indicating that this perhaps spans the production of each set of six images and their later combination for 'After Hours'. As such, it furthered Quinlan's claim for the exhibition as a 'field' in which to re-read and revisit pieces made over the past decade. A negation of linear relations, this reading frames the work as a complex interplay of motivating forces, a configuration of possible events.

Unlike Beshty's cameraless photograms, Quinlan's images, taken on large-format camera and Polaroid, depict an external world constructed entirely in the studio. Their

measured abstraction rarely goes far enough to lose the grip of established genres such as the nude, landscape, portrait or still life. Yet they do push at the edges of these genres. For example, the black and white diptych *Coming of Winter* (2015) stages a series of vertiginous topological collapses – of inside/outside and scale. Dazzling abstract textures are forensic close-ups of compacted icy stalactites that become, with perceptual readjustment, vast polar wastes.

In *Good Enough* (2015) – a diptych of nudes distorted by vapour, water and glass – the material effects of decomposition are more intriguing than the fragmented body parts. Surface disruptions – white dust flecks or great bruises of leaked light – index Quinlan's darkroom interventions with the developing film. If, in our habitual viewing of photographs, we suppress our consciousness of what the photo 'is' in material terms in order to see what it 'is' of, Quinlan's tactility, from laboratory to white cube, darkness into light, is a kind of liberation of material surface. The work flickers, between depth and surface, subject and object.

Recalling an earlier work of Quinlan's – *Red Goya* (2007) – *Stand-in for Red Goya* (2015) comprises two, white-framed mirrors reproduced at the same scale and dimension. Seen at an oblique angle, these held the south-facing walls' cobalt grey colour, ossifying into tablets; from other perspectives, they reflected the viewer amid a field of Quinlan's works. Beyond this wall, in a separate space, was *Twinned Mitsuoko* and, at a right angle to it, hanging on the cobalt grey wall, *Fried Sensor* (2015). Ironically, this diptych's nebulous flat black ground, cleft by noisy shocks of white light, made using a broken flatbed scanner, is just as effective, if not more so, a mirror than *Stand-in for Red Goya*, allowing for more discreet, less obviously narcissistic glances. Although there was minimal tonal difference between the cameraless images' black ground and the grey wall on which they hung – accentuating the border formed by brilliant white frames – their surface effects couldn't be more different. The gaze finds no traction in *Fried Sensor's* disquietingly hermetic image. Deflecting it in its glassy surface: me, *Twinned Mitsuoko*, the gallery windows and, through them, trains, the city – too much world.

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