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# MoCP

Museum of  
**Contemporary Photography**



COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO  
600 South Michigan Avenue Chicago IL 60605  
312-663-5554 Fax 312-344-8067  
[mocp@colum.edu](mailto:mocp@colum.edu) [www.mocp.org](http://www.mocp.org)

***PhotoDimensional***  
February 13 — April 19, 2009

**Work by:**

John Coplans  
Katalin Deér  
Leslie Hewitt  
Bettina Hoffman  
Pello Irazu  
David Ireland  
Melinda McDaniel

Heather Mekkelson  
Laurent Millet  
Vik Muniz  
Susana Reisman  
Lorna Simpson  
Florian Slotowa

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**Chicago** — In February 2009, The Museum of Contemporary Photography opens *PhotoDimensional*, a group exhibition that investigates the relationship between sculpture and photography, 2-D and 3-D, and perceptual issues that are integral to those relationships. All of them invite us to imagine the relationship between space and photography. In doing so, we are rewarded with a heightened awareness of the act of looking, and the opportunity to enter a transitive, imaginative state of moving through space and time. Approximately half of the works in this exhibition are taken from the museum's permanent collection of over 8,500 images and objects.

In her video work *La Ronde*, German artist **Bettina Hoffmann** uses a panning video camera to give us multiple points of view on subjects who are absolutely still. The effect is one of traveling through the space of a 2-dimensional photograph; it is as if the space surrounding the subjects in a still photograph has opened up for the viewer to navigate, while the subjects themselves remain frozen in time.

Chicago artist **Heather Mekkelson** makes 3-dimensional sculptural objects inspired by disaster photographs. Keeping an archive of images from floods and hurricanes, Mekkelson isolates interesting details and translates them into sculptural forms that she distresses to reference the original disaster. These forms are placed around the gallery in non-literal translations of the photographs. Similarly, **Katalin Deér** translates photographs into sculptures and back into photographs, making multi-layered renditions of simple, modernist architecture and commonplace furniture.

Always interested in exploring identity through the instant assumptions provided by her use of visual clues, **Lorna Simpson** took James Van der Zee's photographs as her starting point for *9 Props*. Made while she was an artist-in-residence at Pilchuck, a glassblowing school in Seattle, Simpson had the artisans recreate the vases that appear in Van der Zee's pictures. She then photographed the objects and later accompanied them with texts. Simpson printed the photographs and texts onto felt. By endowing the pictures with tactility and 3-dimensionality, Simpson aligns her work with the modernist concern with surface and forms.

**Leslie Hewitt's** *Replica* is a triptych in which she turns the orientation of the images upside down to call attention to the formal qualities of the still life. In her photo-sculptural works simple events between the images register passage of time and/or possibly a human intervention: the found photograph is not upright any longer, an image behind the plant is gone, the orientation of the plant has slightly turned. Leslie pays as much attention to formal composition as to the cultural significance of the found photographs and to books she includes on the subject of African-American history.

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Sculptor, architect, designer, and photographer **David Ireland's** images of the island of Skellig Michael off the coast of Ireland deliberately create a distance between the viewer and the subject — in one, an expanse of water acts as a barrier to the island, while a painted green rectangle expands the viewer's visual experience in a less representational sense. In the other, the viewer is distanced not only by the water-speckled glass surface between the foreground and the landscape, but also by the red spots painted on the surface of the photograph. Ireland's painted geometric shapes add a dynamism to the images that recalls Constructivism. **Pello Irazu** and **Laurent Millet** also combine drawing, painting, and sculpture to create the illusion of 3-dimensions on 2-dimensional surfaces.

Some of the artists in the exhibition photograph existing forms to enhance their appearance as sculptural objects. When **John Coplans** began photographing his aging body after he turned 60, for example, he created a set of images that evoke classical marble sculpture. His documentation of advanced age is alternately humorous, reflective, and disquieting in the closeness of its observation. Seeing himself as an actor, Coplans examines various body parts closely, often quoting art-historical postures with his sagging figure. **Florian Slotawa** creates makeshift sculptures with furniture in hotel rooms across Europe, documenting his interventions in black and white before he checks out of the room.

Originally trained as a sculptor, **Vik Muniz** uses unconventional materials, including chocolate syrup, sequins, and thread to recreate well-known works of art or images from popular culture. After he constructs his own version of their likeness, he photographs these new sculptural "drawings." In the series *Pictures of Dust*, Muniz took the dust collected over several months by the maintenance staff at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and used it to create drawings based on installation photographs of the museum's collection of Minimal and Post-minimal sculpture. In Muniz's photograph of

Tony Smith's minimalist cube, the dust is easily discernable and its constituent hair, pebbles, and small scraps of paper appear larger than life. Ironically, dust is usually the nemesis of the pristine photographic print and polished sculptural surface.

Finally, **Melinda McDaniel** and **Susana Reisman** both make sculptures out of photographic materials. Reisman prints photographs onto long strips of canvas and molds the strips into forms that loosely reference the original subject matter. McDaniel exposes photographic paper to varying degrees to reveal the subtle color gradations inherent in the paper's chemistry, and then exhibits long strips in the gallery that reference minimalist sculpture and also the idea of the passage of time to which photography is so closely aligned.

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#### **MoCP SPONSORS**

The exhibitions, presentations, and related programs of the MoCP are sponsored in part by the Goethe-Institut Chicago Institute of Museum and Library Services; the National Endowment for the Arts; the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs/After School Matters; the Lannan Foundation; the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation; The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; US Bank; Epson America; The Palmer Foundation; the Lange Burk Fund; American Airlines, the official airlines of the MoCP, and our members.

#### **ABOUT MOCP**

The Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP), a resident organization of Columbia College Chicago, is the only museum in the Midwest with an exclusive commitment to the medium of photography. By presenting projects and exhibitions that embrace a wide range of contemporary aesthetics and technologies, the Museum strives to communicate the value and significance of photographic images as expressions of human thought, imagination, and creativity.

#### **ABOUT THE CURATOR**

**Karen Irvine** is the curator of the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College Chicago. She has organized numerous exhibitions including: Audible Imagery: Sound and Photography; Anthony Goicolea; Tracey Baran; Scott Fortino; Shirana Shahbazi: Gofitare Nik/Good Words; Jason Salavon; Jin Lee; Paul Shambroom: Evidence of Democracy; Alec Soth: Sleeping by the Mississippi; The Furtive Gaze; and Camera/Action: Performance and Photography, among others. She is a part-time instructor of photography at Columbia College Chicago. She received her MFA in photography from FAMU, Prague and her MA in art history from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

#### **PRESS CONTACTS**

Audrey Michelle Mast  
Web/PR/Marketing Administrator  
Museum of Contemporary Photography  
600 S. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60605  
P: 773.459.5777  
F: 312.344.8067  
[audrey.m.mast@gmail.com](mailto:audrey.m.mast@gmail.com)

Jeffrey Arnett  
Manager of Development and Marketing  
Museum of Contemporary Photography  
600 S. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60605  
P: 312.344.7779  
F: 312.344-8067  
[jarnett@colum.edu](mailto:jarnett@colum.edu)

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#### **IMAGE:**

Florian Slotawa  
Hotel des Vosges, Straßburg, Zimmer 66, Nacht zum 13, März, 1999  
Courtesy of Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf