



Still Life with Camera: The Apple of Our Eye

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A paradox of art is that it often must strive against itself to discover itself. It is precision without control, or control of imprecision. It can be the careful application of chemical science in the service of improvisation.

My influences range from surrealists Max Ernst and Rene Magritte to Cary Wasserman's manipulations of SX-70 film emulsion. Using standard photographic techniques, miniature constructed environments, and selections from a collection of discarded objects, I meticulously lay the groundwork for the absurd.

I have been influenced by photographers such as Andre Kertesz, especially his work in small format cameras in still life, Lucas Samaras, who works with SX-70 film, and by Norman Locks and Cary Wasserman who worked extensively with SX-70 film and manipulation.

I have also looked for inspiration to surrealist Max Ernst, particularly his work in collage, and Joseph Cornell, whose box constructions from the 1950's affected my sensibility towards cut-out fragments from books and magazines.

Locks photographed familiar objects, then created three-dimensional textural effects by drawing into the photograph while the film emulsions were still drying. Cornell's box constructions contain striking juxtapositions of cut-out and constructed elements.

Methods and Materials

I have a collection of curiosities such as old anatomy books, butterfly collections, dolls, feathers, street discards, and I gather together objects that strike me as beautiful, mysterious, historical or ambiguous. I visit city museums to photograph objects such as fossils and Egyptian artifacts.

The basic material used in this work is SX-70 Polaroid film, currently the only film in which emulsions can be manipulated during the drying process. An etching tool is used to draw into the film emulsions and permanent paint markers in fast dry-

ing colors are used to paint on top of the photograph.

Standard photographing techniques are employed with special attention to the use of light in defining the surfaces of objects and establishing mood. I also use a tripod to obtain maximum exposure times.

Colored background papers to create a painterly effect. Continuous shooting, with the awareness that I'm working with instant photography, provides the option of altering and/or adjusting the set-up in order to obtain the desired effect.

Results

"The Eye in the Palette" is a photograph of my painting palette with a pastel drawing of my eye inserted into the finger hole of the palette. The edges of the photograph are painted with paint markers.

The work contains several layers of meaning for me. The palette, with its many layers of accumulated paint, is a history of my visual thinking. But "thinking" visually is done as much with the eye and hand as with the brain. So the "eye" in the palette is the subverbal, sense-oriented "creator" of the art. The paint on top of the photograph and on its borders is a visual pun against the photographed paint on the palette. It is also my way of subverting the mechanical process of the photograph.