

Thomas Erben Gallery



Untitled I, 2016. Digital C-print, 30 x 30in, edition of 5 (+1 AP).

Elaine Stocki ***Hoar Frost***

November 3 - December 16

Opening reception: Thursday, November 3 from 6 - 8:30 pm

Thomas Erben Gallery is pleased to present *Hoar Frost*, Elaine Stocki's second exhibition with the gallery. *Hoar Frost* refers to the rare crystallization that descends upon the natural world overnight, momentarily suspending it and symbolically evoking the unease that has crept into our collective present.

In these new works, the artist reverses her processes, merging abstract painting with her history of working with the figure in photography. Whereas Stocki's prior exhibition comprised primarily hand-tinted black and white photographs, the color prints in *Hoar Frost* integrate painting within the process of photographing. Gestural mark making appears in the images, uniting various elements of performance, installation and documentation.

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In the central triptych of the exhibition - *Untitled I, II and III* - large square photographs depict clusters of heads, tense crowds in which each member holds a different expression. Stocki selected portraits from her archive, applying them to fur covered lumps to create sculptural heads that are suspended from the ceiling of her studio. The ramshackle crowd is framed by an unfinished painting, existing in an environment that has been splattered throughout. The three photographs vary subtly in composition as well as deteriorated color and are displayed on a golden wall. This veneer of decadence is in contrast to Stocki's subjects, which are neither the groups of angels portrayed within Baroque churches, nor the inhabitants of a world of material luxury. Hanging by a string, these forms recall not opulence, but precarity.

In this regard, Stocki's works are very much of the moment. In her prior body of photographs, which is on display in the project space, there was a private sensibility: her subjects, largely strangers, were portrayed as psychologically ambiguous. Now, the works focus on the unease of the current social climate; marked simultaneously by insecurity and excess.

Cherry Blossom portrays a man's head as the apex of a pile of candy boxes. He is positioned in front of a brown background, with red drips contouring his shadow. Displayed beside is a painting of the same color, which serves as a physical extension of the photograph's backdrop. In *Mikki*, a nude woman appears mirrored partly on top of herself; her twinned, transparent bodies seeming to absorb the stained marks on the painting behind her.

Stocki revels in the union of photography and painting, producing constructions that join the two practices in unexpected, subtle ways and that question the interdependency of the two mediums. Through her use of formal language and ambiguous subject matter, Stocki creates intriguing images that lay outside established conventions.

Elaine Stocki holds an MFA from **Yale University** (2009) and has been awarded numerous grants including a **Tierney Fellowship** and a **Canada Arts Council Project Grant**. Her work has been exhibited at the **Art Gallery of Ontario** (Toronto), the **Deutsche Guggenheim** (Berlin) and the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**. **TIME Magazine's Lightbox**, **Matte Magazine**, **Night Papers**, **TBW Books** (monograph) and **Golden Spike Press**, have all featured her photography. The artist has been nominated for both the **Grange Prize** (2011) and the **Sobey Art Award** (2012) and was a previous resident of the **Mountain School of Arts**. Stocki, who is based in Los Angeles, is currently teaching at **Fullerton University** and is a visiting critic at **Yale**. Her work is included in the permanent collection of the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**.

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