



711, 2014. Hand-tinted silver gelatin print, edition of 5 (+1 AP), 36 x 29 in.

## Elaine Stocki

### *The Palms*

May 29 – June 28, 2014

*Opening reception: Thursday, May 29, 6-8:30 pm*

Thomas Erben is proud to present the first US solo exhibition of photographer **Elaine Stocki** (b. 1979, Winnipeg, Canada). Through her unique and formally eloquent images, Stocki highlights the tenuous connection between photography and reality. While invitingly cerebral and layered with art-historical references, the work also resonates on a fundamentally emotional level.

There is something decidedly strange about the imagery of Elaine Stocki. Her large silver gelatin prints are firmly rooted in American photography traditions, but hand-coloring, a decisive formal vocabulary, a juxtaposition of the documentary and the constructed – as well as subject matters veering toward the surreal – make them difficult to pin down, in time as well as in space. Contrary to the idyllic postcard scenes and intimate portraits

Continued...

Thomas Erben Gallery  
526 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10001  
212-645-8701  
info@thomaserben.com  
www.thomaserben.com

commonly associated with hand-tinting, Stocki appropriates the technique on an expanded scale, both in terms of size and content. Her photographs seem simultaneously current and dated, uniting the fragmented visual mindset of the present with the elevated “decisive moment” of the past.

The display of snapshot-style documentary material side by side with overtly staged scenes – where the peculiarity of the latter makes us question the truthfulness of the former – casts a shadow of unreality over the entire exhibition. Paradoxically, as many of the photographs are so obviously constructed performances, it is difficult to read them as anything but an accurate documentation of exactly what the artist wants to show us. By crafting scenes as peculiar as these, and using a technique that emphasizes materiality and presents each print as an object in itself, Stocki may have found the only way for a photograph to truly and objectively represent its subject matter.

This becomes especially apparent in the triptych *Nudes Moving an Abstract Painting*, where three women, as directed by Stocki, maneuver a painting made by the artist in front of her own paint-stained studio wall (referencing, among other things, Yves Klein’s nude model painting performances). The stark contrast between light and animate shadows, the sensuality of the bodies and their outlines set against angular planes, and the perfectly uncomfortable cropping where a tiny sliver of an object may hover right at the edge, all generate a high degree of formal complexity. Combined with intricately composed documentary images like *Ellice* and the pure surrealism of *Albert*, this makes for a complex whole, a set of works performing a precarious but precise balance act in the awkward space right in between all the things photography has a potential to be.

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 in the US and Canada, and in Germany at the **Deutsche Guggenheim**. In 2011 Stocki’s photography was featured in **TIME Magazine’s Lightbox** as well as published in a monograph by **TBW Books** (Oakland, CA). The artist has been nominated for both the **Grange Prize** (2011) and the **Sobey Art Award** (2012). In 2014, she will be in residence at the **Mountain School of Arts** (Los Angeles). Stocki’s work is included in the permanent collection of the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**.

Thomas Erben Gallery  
526 West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10001  
212-645-8701  
info@thomaserben.com  
www.thomaserben.com