

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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For immediate release:

Sara VanDerBeek
Ancient Objects, Still Lives

June 5th – August 2nd, 2014
Opening June 5, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Altman Siegel is pleased to present an exhibition of new photographs and sculptures by Sara VanDerBeek.

VanDerBeek's images and objects oscillate between recognizable observed reality, and the imaginary and ambiguous. Throughout VanDerBeek's work there is a sense of historical gravity and of the breadth of human endeavor informing our present.

The show thematically derives from VanDerBeek's studies of Pre-Colombian artifacts during her participation in the 12th Cuenca Bienal, Ecuador. Organized in roughly two parts and split between the two sections of the gallery - day and night - the work suggests parallel worlds. Steps recur throughout the exhibition as depiction of the axis mundi, the point at which the spiritual and material worlds intersect, and as a universal symbol of transition and change.

In some of the still lifes, imagery is ruptured by flashes of light, alluding to a break with the real and a movement into another realm. In other images, objects fade into light or darken as with an oncoming twilight, caught in a state of transformation. Others still are doubled, implying multiple instances of perception merged into a simultaneous image.

Throughout the exhibition, there is an impression of collapsing time, so that apparently prosaic contemporary subjects, a chain-link fence or concrete steps, are imbued with historical resonance. These images of the contemporary landscape, in proximity to the photographs of artifacts of ancient ritual, become their own markers of human ceremony and action. An image of a calendar rock, an object that when filled with water was used by the Canari to observe the moon and stars' position in the night sky, here becomes analogous to VanDerBeek's process. The holes of the rock, when filled, behaved as mirrors, a proto-photographic means of capturing the moon, and cataloging time. VanDerBeek observes the particularities of cultures and artifacts while revealing the relationships that exist across time and civilizations.

Sara VanDerBeek (born 1976) lives and works in New York. VanDerBeek's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, the Whitney Museum, New York, Fondazione Memmo, Rome, Metro Pictures, New York, and the Approach, London. Recent group exhibitions include the 12th Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador, the Morgan Library and Museum, New York, the American Academy of Rome, Italy, and White Flag Projects, St. Louis.