

renwick gallery

Talia Chetrit

March 12 – April 23, 2011

Opening Reception on Saturday, March 12th 6-8PM

Excerpted from 'Talia Chetrit' by Ruba Katrib

With images reminiscent of black and white photography instruction books, Talia Chetrit's work is less a disavowal of the medium's developments over the past twenty years, but a meditation on how we can look at pictures today. With the continued saturation of images in all aspects of life as well as the availability of consumer technology to create them, our perception, awareness, and relationship to images is shifting rapidly. Chetrit withdraws as much as one can from this visual noise to examine the impacts of nuance.

Her approach is stripped down; she uses analog effects, manageable props, and shoots mostly on site in her studio. Many of the objects that she uses, likely found in a commercial photographer's studio, reappear in subsequent images. The vases, pedestals, and sculptures turn into familiar characters whose roles shift in the context of a new staging.

In *Drip Vases*, Chetrit uses a historically common and frequent prop, the vase. The vase has almost been emptied of meaning, however, it still creates and defines space, which can only be inferred in the photograph. In this work Chetrit physically turns the print upside down and through this simple gesture creates an entirely different understanding of the objects. In *Handstand*, Chetrit photographs a woman in the nude in a handstand position. Around the woman are the objects, pedestals and vases, which are recognizable from Chetrit's other photographs. The woman similarly can be read as a prop, like the other objects in the photograph, and her physical position, upside down in a strained posture, draws attention to the performative aspects of the medium. In a sense, Chetrit is employing a "double allegiance," what historian Susan Rubin Suleiman has called, saying "yes, but..." by certain woman artists to misogynist examples of surrealist art that also manipulated women's bodies. This implies that there is simultaneously an acknowledgement of the reference as well as a rejection of the approach, which allows for a more complex reading and avoids an oversimplified position.

Chetrit questions how our knowledge affects the way we perceive an image. How do we assess the knowledge we bring to any image and how does it affect our reading? This is central to Chetrit's work; she employs art historical references and techniques, but there is something askew, you have to look again. Within the images themselves there is a resonance, a vibration that moves from one point to another and back again. When the images come together, syntax is formed that also furthers this resonance.

† In the catalog for the exhibition "Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation" (1998), Suleiman discusses the work of women artists, who like their male colleagues and influences also manipulated and fragmented the female body. She argues that these artists (Francesca Woodman, Cindy Sherman, Annette Messager, etc.) were employing a "double allegiance," interested in the references of their male counterparts, but also resisting their often-misogynist positions.

Renwick Gallery is located at 45 Renwick St between Canal and Spring. The gallery is open from Tuesday to Saturday from 11am to 6pm and by appointment. For more information email info@renwickgallery.com or call 212 609 3535.