

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

514 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001 Tel. 212 941 0012 Fax. 212 929 3265
info@lennonweinberg.com www.lennonweinberg.com

Laura Larson

Photographs 1996 – 2012

July 10 – September 13, 2014

Summer Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Friday 10am – 6pm



Staircase (Domestic Interiors)



Open Door, Metropolitan Museum
(Well Appointed)



Splatter (My Dark Places)

This exhibition includes selections from several series of photographs that Laura Larson has taken since she completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 1995. The curatorial selection is intended to explore the ways in which her approach to subject and theme has evolved in her work.

The earliest series, begun in 1996, is called *Domestic Interiors*. These small format gelatin silver prints are pictures of the interiors of exquisite dollhouses and focus on the suggestive traces of hypothetical inhabitants as clues to the narratives that these spaces invoke.

The period rooms and historic homes of the next series, *Well Appointed* (1998-99), are, in a way, very much like the dollhouses. They are carefully constructed tableaux that embody the taste and lifestyle of various places and times long passed. These spaces are associated with specific, often famous, former occupants and the rooms reverberate as much with their absence as much as the presence of their historic possessions. Larson's medium size black and white photographs evidence a keen eye for subtle detail and a formidable command of technique.

A darker side of the crafted domestic environment is explored in the following series, *My Dark Places* (1999), in which Larson photographed a collection of scale-modeled crime scenes. Built by an amateur sleuth and based on actual events, they were used to train forensic pathologists at Harvard during the 1940s. Unlike the idealized dollhouses and period rooms that project the comforts of social standing, these rooms are disordered and disturbing. But rather than exploit tabloid-style views of these strange dioramas, Larson distances the viewer from the characters of the dramas and the grisly traces they leave behind through her use of focus and depth of field, and what is by now a signature use of mirrors, doors and windows to investigate the framing and flattening of the photographed space.

Larson then takes the theme of what is left behind to a completely different simulation of a domestic environment – the hotel room. For the series, *Complimentary* (2000), she travelled to hotels in various cities and photographed certain rooms after the guests had departed but before the rooms were cleaned. She captured not only the reassuring conventions of these transient spaces, but also the inscrutable narratives suggested by the specifics of disarray in which the rooms were left.

The next three series are closely related. In *Apparition* (2003), Larson took on for the first time a theme that has long been of interest to her. Situated in dense forest, she used these photographs to explore the idea of the spirit photographer as a performer who conjures an image before the viewer's eyes, recalling how magic and truth became indistinguishable in photography for 19th Century audiences.



Boston #205 (Complimentary)



Rising (Apparition)



Large Orb (Asylum)



Eva C. (Breast Detail) (Ectoplasm)



Emma (Electric Girls and the Invisible Word)

The photographs of the *Asylum* (2005) series capture apparently paranormal events in the cells and hallways of the former Athens Lunatic Asylum in Athens, Ohio, where she is on the faculty of Ohio University. Working analog with film and props, as opposed to the readily available digital manipulation of images with software, she created ghostly presences in these mysterious and dramatically deteriorating spaces.

Her *Ectoplasm* (2003-05) photographs restage historical photographs of female spirit mediums, capturing the power of their theatrical performances while acknowledging the barely disguised fraud. For Larson there is a strong connection between these images and early feminist performance art. As she describes in the interview with Margaret Sundell published in the booklet that accompanies the show:

As a young artist, I struggled to find my identity within the legacies of first and second wave feminism. First wave, or 1970's feminism, emphasized the inherent power of women and its rootedness in the female body, which was celebrated artistically. The second, postmodern, wave theorized feminine identity and its representation as cultural and psychological constructs rooted in patriarchal society. This raised the question of how to picture the female body critically, without reinforcing those constructs.... Ectoplasm became a way for me to return to those pioneering works—Hannah Wilke's Starification series, Carolee Schneeman's Interior Scroll, Yoko Ono's Cut—and to cast these artists as latter day mediums, acknowledging both the force and poignance of their gestures.

Larson's video *Electric Girls and the Invisible World* (2008) brought these themes into the present. She cast a group of pubescent girls as friends who share an obsession with the spirit medium Eusapia Palladino and explore their own psychic powers. Three portrait photographs of the girls evidence their capacity to produce physical evidence of the extraordinary and reinforce a coming-of-age narrative of female identity.

The most recent work in the show is a small ambrotype, a mid-nineteenth century wet collodion process. The image shows a woman's arm resting on the type of neck brace that would have been used at the time to stabilize a subject of a photographic portrait during the long exposures needed at the time. Larson developed an interest in how the early photographic technologies were used and how they shaped the resulting image. *Cabinet* magazine published an article she wrote about "hidden mother" photographs and she has also curated an exhibition of these fascinating images.

Laura Larson's work is represented by Lennon, Weinberg, Inc. and this is her fourth solo exhibition with the gallery. Larson is a photographer who has exhibited her work both nationally and internationally, including Art in General, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, SFCamerawork, Susanne Vielmetter/L.A. Projects, and Wexner Center for the Arts. She recently was awarded an *Ohio Arts Council Excellence Award* for Creative Non-Fiction for her manuscript "Hidden Mother." She earned a BA in English from Oberlin College, a MFA in Visual Art from Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, and participated in the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, and Athens, Ohio, where she teaches photography in the School of Art at Ohio University.

For additional information, please contact Mary Benyo at 212-941-0012 or mary@lennonweinberg.com and visit www.laural Larson.net.