

ANCIENT & MODERN

'THE SUN IS THE TONGUE, THE SHADOW IS THE LANGUAGE' ERNST CARMELLE, LOURDES CASTRO, LUCA FREI, RAPHAEL HEFTI, LI YUAN-CHIA

4 FEBRUARY - 13 MARCH 2010

ANCIENT & MODERN presents an exhibition of artists' collage, hand-coloured photography, heliographs, and 'sun pictures', alongside science photography from the early 20th-century that capture experiments in which effects or phenomena are usually imperceptible.

In the US, Carl David Andersen (1905-1991) photographed proton and electron tracks in a 'cloud chamber' for research into the existence of the positron, a discovery for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics (1936). Meanwhile in Austria, Marietta Blau (1894-1970) made discoveries about how 'disintegration stars' form in photographic emulsion, travelling to the highest observatory in Europe, the Jungfrauoch, to expose photographic plates to cosmic radiation. Examples of these are shown alongside images of the sun, known as 'solar polarisations' from the end of the 19th-century.

'The Sun is the Tongue, the Shadow is the Language', titled after a quotation by Michael Maier (1568-1662), a German medical practitioner who devoted his life to researching the alchemy and the secrets of nature. The exhibition attempts to document momentary traces of forces that exist as universal laws, while connecting elements of art and the everyday with the infinite nature of the cosmos.

Ernst Caramelle (b. 1952 Tyrol, lives Frankfurt) exhibits his 'sun pictures' created by bleaching paper in the windows of his studio over a number of years. Blocking the fall of light on the paper builds up an abstract sense of space in each image. Patterns of overlapping shapes and colours emerge, each a light-altered variation of the original hue of the paper. The 'sun pictures' are intriguing and elusive, resembling a sort of photogram, collage and painting at once unified into a single image. Caramelle's works make the invisible and ephemeral real, preserving frozen moments of light and time. Recent exhibitions include a solo retrospective at Serralves Museum, Porto (2005), and - among many others - solo exhibitions at BAWAG Foundation, Vienna (2001), Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (1993), and Nationalgalerie, Berlin (1990).

Lourdes Castro (b.1930 Madeira, Portugal) is an artist little-known in Britain who makes assemblages and Perspex pictures, at the heart of which lie an interest in notions of shadow and the silhouette. In the 1970s, she embarked on

→

a series of botanical studies, creating heliographs that are akin to early Talbot-types or the late-19th century cyanotypes of English botanist Anna Atkins. Like Caramelle's sun-pictures, Castro's works have a compelling relationship to time and light. In each, the final image exists as a sort of partly obscured version or hint of its original self. Castro lived in Paris from 1958-88 where, with a group of artists, she initiated and produced the magazine KWY, publishing 12 silkscreened issues. For many years she also performed in a shadow puppet theatre, before returning to Madeira. She has a retrospective solo exhibition at Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, in March 2010.

Raphael Hefti (b.1976 Switzerland, lives London) uses photography as a starting point from which to explore his wider curiosity about the history of materials, moments and sites of scientific discovery. Here, he shows unique prints made from found photographs from a ballistic manufacturer's archive. The photographs have the quality of photograms, using light to sculpt space within the image, yet document the compressions, accelerations, explosions and movement patterns created when different objects are fired through the air. The invisible forces of time and speed are made visible, creating textured surfaces like ripples of cloth or pebbles tossed in a pond. Hefti is currently undertaking an MA at the Slade School of Art. Recent exhibitions include Things in the Air, Kriens, Switzerland (2009), Kunstpreis ZKB, Kunstmesse Zurich, Switzerland (2008), and Regeneration, Aperture Gallery, New York (2006).

Luca Frei (b. 1976 Switzerland, lives Malmo, Sweden) unearthed the quote which lends itself to the exhibition title. His sculpture, paintings, and installations explore time, transformation, and craft, always with an approach to create space, to open up means and ends both conceptual and physical. Here, he shows subtle acrylic and gouaches on board, in which the paint is applied, allowed to dry, and then washed off, leaving subtle traces fixed by the addition of collage, like hands eventually applied to the face of a clock, anchoring its complex and unseen internal machinations. Recent solo exhibitions include Art 40 Basel Statements (2009), Lunds Konsthalle, Sweden (2008), and Grazer Kunstverein, Graz (2006).

Li Yuan-chia (1929-1994) lived near Hadrian's Wall, Cumbria from the late 1960s after leaving China by way of Taiwan, Italy and London. He founded the LYC Art Gallery and Museum (1973-83), and his practice incorporated philosophy and poetry with practice, making reliefs, paintings, and experimental photography, as well as a self-pioneered form of 'participatory' art. In the words of his friend Guy Brett, Li was able "to go beyond photography's literal materiality and discover its relationship to the constant processes of transformation in the universe." Li exhibited at Signals Gallery, London (1965) and the Lisson Gallery (1967), and despite a lack of recognition in his lifetime, is now in the collections of Tate Gallery, Whitworth Art Gallery and John Rylands Library, Manchester. A solo show of Li's work was held at Camden Arts Centre, travelling to Abbott Hall Museum & Art Gallery, Kendal and Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels (2001).

Open Wednesdays - Saturdays, 12-6pm and by appointment
For more information please contact mail@ancientandmodern.org

201 Whitecross Street, London EC1Y 8QP
Tel/Fax +44 (0)20 7253 4550 www.ancientandmodern.org

Ancient and Modern Ltd. Registered in England 05936151.