

A Stopped World

Caroline Jane Harris

A vast textured sky, bruised blue, purple and pink, with billowing clouds of smoke simultaneously evokes a sense of stillness and motion, fragility and power. Turning her eye once again to reproductions of nature's expanse, British artist Caroline Jane Harris' new body of work explores the making and manifestation of imagery in the digital age. Combining subjects captured from books and internet videos with her signature-process of cutting-out digital prints by hand, Harris creates visually complex and arresting works that re-examine the tactility and dimensionality of images. *A Stopped World*, her solo exhibition at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery Berlin, offers a meticulous examination of our engagement with technology, habits of perception, and experience of time and space.

In Harris' work subject-matters aren't preconceived. Instead, the artist collects images that she's drawn to from various sources, which are detached from their original contexts and later, imbued with new meaning through her layered creative process. For this body of work, the artist photographed aerial photographs in found books, bestowing a lack of definition and veracity to the original source. She also took screencaptures of internet videos, a process which she likens to 'the analogue technique of a cameraless photograph', deliberately embracing the poor quality that is often the by-product of the digital realm. The artist then used a scalpel to cut into the printed images by hand, drawing on the software function of a 'bitmap' image to create artworks that investigate the mechanics of seeing in a digital world.

The process of making 'images of images' is central to the artist's practice and relates to the contemporary condition of our culture in which media no longer simply relays information but stands as a substitute for the real. The large-scale artwork entitled *A Stopped World*, which sits as one of the exhibition's centrepiece, is composed of a series of sixteen screenshots captured from an online video of a volcanic eruption. Viewed from a distance the image offers an experience of motion and time suspended in which our gaze adjusts to perceive an overwhelming sense of beauty and wholeness that reflects on historic artistic representations of nature and the sublime. However, as we step closer, the irregular hand-cut pixels reveal themselves, breaking apart the surface and complicating our perception.

A second enveloping work *In Bloom* features the same sixteen tiled cut-outs, this time cut from a delicate, natural coloured Japanese Kozo paper and installed unframed. In this work, a single eruption precariously floats off the wall, creating tension between the brutal power of the subject matter and the palpable fragility of the artistic material. Again, this recalls the Romantic tradition in which the frailty and transience of human existence is underlined in the context of nature's timelessness. Though here, Harris is not so much reflecting on nature, but questions the permanence and vulnerability of images themselves.

As with all of her works, the artist leaves the "detritus of the process" visible where paper becomes removed to the extent that it falls away, subtly acknowledging the implications of a bodily engagement with analogue media. As the title of the exhibition suggests, these are artworks that demand slow, meditative contemplation. Though complex in their making, the images allow for an experience that is not only visual, but also felt.