

CONTACT: Leslie K. Brown, Curator, lkbrown@prcboston.org, 617.975.0600

Exhibition to showcase photography and related media that address the language of digital information—both its meaning and aesthetics

Syntax

March 27 – May 10, 2009, Part of the Boston Cyberarts Festival
Opening reception, April 2, 5:30 – 7:30pm



Boston, MA. The Photographic Resource Center—a non-profit gallery, education, and resource center—is pleased to present a group exhibition that considers artists and photographers who address the language of digital information—its meaning and aesthetics—in their work.

"I eagerly await new concepts and processes. I believe that the electronic image will be the next major advance. Such systems will have their own inherent and inescapable structural characteristics, and the artist and functional practitioner will again strive to comprehend and control them." - Ansel Adams, 1981

Many of the artists in *Syntax* mine the popular realm and include internet image searches, social and networking sites, or the media in their process-oriented arsenal. Others look to the natural world, seeking to envision a twenty-first-century digital version of nature, or consider the basic building block of the digitally-rendered image—the pixel. After the requisite parsing and processing, the artists actively resurrect and recombine their raw materials using programs such as Photoshop, flash, or self-authored code. One can certainly imagine if Ansel Adams were alive today that he would enjoy seeing this exhibition and witnessing the digital revolution as a whole.

Syntax is held in conjunction with the region-wide 2009 Boston Cyberarts Festival (April 24 – May 10). This is the fifth time the PRC has joined the close to forty regional venues in participating in this biennial festival celebrating art and technology. More information on all of the exhibitions and events can be found online at bostonlyberarts.org. Interestingly enough, the PRC participated in the very first Cyberarts in 1999 by hosting a digitally-themed version of our annual juried exhibition via the then-new medium of computer-generated prints. It seems appropriate then that the PRC should return to its beginnings and meditate on the syntax of digital language itself. More information, including an essay, selected images, and links, will be posted online soon at prcboston.org/syntax.htm.

ABOUT THE ART AND ARTISTS

Patti Ambrogi (Rochester, NY)

Patti Ambrogi tackles iconic images of women in media in her series "Cover Girls." Frames of video and stills are distilled to their essence and re-animated using graphic icons. These elements are specifically chosen so as to comment upon the person or situation. Barbie trinkets make up Jon Benet and flower parts congregate into Marilyn. (In the image reproduced here, Martha, for example, is composed of 50,000 gingerbread cookie crumbs, one for each dollar she profited from insider trading.) These pieces are then represented as large canvases and flash animations, mesmerizing the viewer with looped re-presentations of ideological information. Ambrogi is an Associate Professor at the School of Photographic Arts at Rochester Institute of Technology and holds an MFA from the Visual Studies Workshops.



Leigh Brodie (Austin, TX)

Leigh Brodie experiments with digital information—how it is presented, translated, and outputted. Most of her work involves information that is cut up and passed through some sort of instruction set or program, to then be assembled again in an entirely novel manner. In "Pixels Enlarged and Replaced," she presented her husband's cousins and grandmother with photos of themselves and conducted a survey regarding their reactions. Each pixel in the image was either reduced or enlarged based upon her family members' answers (how positively or negatively they responded) and then the pixel was put back in the order they were removed, in rows or in a clockwise spiral. Beautiful in their decay, the results recall the degradation of an image when incorrectly transmitted or processed. Brodie is a 2007 MFA graduate of School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. www.leighbrodie.com



Benno Friedman (Sheffield, MA)

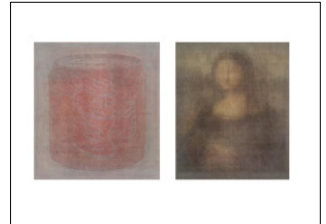
For the past twelve years, Benno Friedman has been converting his analog photographs into digital files. By creating tension between form and content he calls into question the nature of imagemaking itself, both on the computer and in our minds. Photographic elements seem to be allowed to misbehave in Friedman's world—overlapping, obscuring, or blurring each other—almost as if Photoshop had been hacked and the tools took on a life of their own. In the end, each composition becomes its own discrete universe, a visual equivalent to a metaphysical Buddhist kōan. A graduate of Brandeis University, Friedman has both worked as a commercial photographer and shown at the Whitney Biennial.



Matthew Swarts, *Untitled*, 2006, pigmented inkjet on aluminum panel, 42 x 30 inches, courtesy of the artist

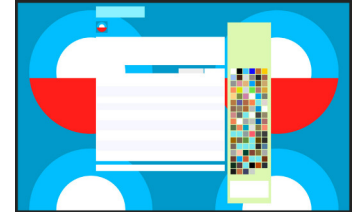
Meggan Gould (Topsham, ME)

To create her "Go ogle" series, Meggan Gould wrote a code that automatically grabs and downloads the 100 most recent images from search terms inputted to google.com. It then averages the pixel size and color and resizes and flattens the results. The end products, what Gould calls a cross between "Boolean logic and the popular imagination," are usually amorphous, but occasionally a recognizable image emerges from the digital ether. Two iterations of the "Go oogle" series will be shown: one which charts the change of four words over the course of four months and a selection of images featuring two or more words, such as "mona + lisa" or "img + 1172." Gould is a 2005 MFA graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth and teaches at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, ME. www.meggangould.net



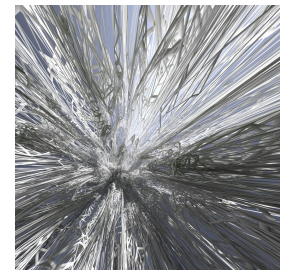
Brian Piana (Houston, TX)

Brian Piana creates abstracted versions of both static web sites as well as flash animations that reference the experience of surfing the Internet. *Barack's Twitter* takes as its source then candidate Obama's twitter page, an example of the President's deep use of social media. In another print, *Shopping for a Designer Wallet (2005 | 2007)*, we see two page-by-page renderings of a common retail quest performed two years apart. In one of his animations, *Browsing for Dannielle Tegeger*, Piana playfully abstracts the much-repeated activity of researching online. Creating in effect a new media "map," he includes variations on the referenced site's design and the browser's path in his formal arrangements. Piana holds an MS in Visualization Sciences from Texas A&M and an MFA in Photography and Digital Media from the University of Houston, where he currently teaches. www.spillsomepaint.com



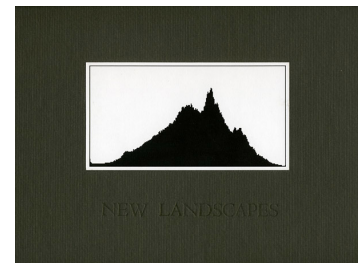
Mark Stock (Newton, MA)

Blurring the line between code and art, for each and every new artwork, Stock writes a new program that often addresses some element of fluid dynamics. These sometimes take the computer up to a week to process and the result is then pulled into a 3D rendering program called Radiance. His newest pieces reach further into the metaphorical. *Midnight in the Bathtub of Good and Evil*, for example, is a representation of a battle between armies of fluids cast in mathematical terms. In *Inside the Bomb*, we are transported to the interior of a bomb to witness the frenetic results of an explosion. A densely woven thicket of black, white, and gray lines, the piece *Perpetuity?* questions the directionality of time. Stock holds a PhD in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Michigan and is a member of the Collision Collective. www.markjstock.com



Luke Strosnider (Rochester, NY)

Luke Strosnider created the artist-book *Ansel Adams | New Landscapes* by scanning many of Adams's most well-known images and then considered their histograms in Photoshop. In choosing the final pieces, he evaluated the histogram for visual forms that either reinforced or challenged traditional notions of land forms in the pictures or the titles. Certainly, knowing of Adams's own use of what could be called a programmatic approach to printing and exposure, the Zone System, and the fact that he wished for others to re-interpret his negatives, Adams would have certainly wholeheartedly approved. Strosnider holds a MFA from the Visual Studies Workshop as well as degrees in History and American Studies from George Washington University in Washington, DC. www.lensless.net



Matthew Swarts (Somerville, MA)

Matthew Swarts is fascinated by mark making—from human, computer, to somewhere in-between. While his previous work dealt primarily with the internet—showcasing odd internet word searches—Swarts newest series hits closer to home and engages the mark of his own hand and found graphics with an old family album. After his grandfather passed away, Swarts began making high resolution scans of his drawings and patterns which he then transformed in Photoshop and overlaid over family photographs. The resulting aesthetic lattices both invite and repel viewers, creating a dense and complex matrix through which to confront issues of memory. After majoring in philosophy at Princeton, Swarts earned his MFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 1997 and currently teaches at Ramapo College of New Jersey. www.theturnout.org

UPCOMING PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

SEMINAR: Contemporary Trends in Photographic Portraiture with Roswell Angier, various Tuesdays.

POLAROID SPOLIGHT LECTURE: David Levinthal, Thursday, February 26, 7pm. **LECTURE:** Eugene Richards, Thursday, March 5, 7pm.

SEMINAR: Getting Published in Photography Magazine with Russell Hart, Wednesday, March 18, noon. **LECTURE:** Alessandra Sanguinetti, Thursday, April 16, 7pm. **THE GRIFFIN MUSEUM / PRC PORTFOLIO REVIEW EVENT**, Friday and Saturday, May 8 & 9.

BEHIND THE SCENES, March – May. Please see prcboston.org for more info and registration details.

The Hotel Commonwealth is the official hotel sponsor of the Photographic Resource Center's Lecture Series

The Polaroid Spotlight is sponsored by the Land Fund of the Polaroid Foundation



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND IMAGES CONTACT:

Leslie K. Brown, PRC Curator, 617-975-0600, lkbrown@prcboston.org

ABOUT THE PRC: Founded in 1976, the PRC is an independent non-profit organization located on the campus of Boston University. Consistently cited by the press as an important voice in photography, the PRC provides its members and the public with thought-provoking exhibitions, distinctive education and outreach programs, wide-ranging resources, and unique special events. It is supported by grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, numerous private foundations and individuals, and the ongoing generosity of its members. **LOCATION AND HOURS:** Photographic Resource Center, 832 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. 617.975.0600 (t), 617.975.0606 (f), www.prcboston.org, prc@bu.edu MBTA: B Green Line, BU West T-stop. HOURS: Tuesday through Friday, 10 to 6pm; Thursdays, 10 to 8pm; Saturday and Sunday 12 to 5pm. ADMISSION: \$3/general public, \$2/students and seniors and FREE to all Institutional Member Schools. In addition, the PRC is FREE to all on Thursdays and on the last weekend of every month. The PRC is always FREE to members, children under 18, BU students, faculty, and staff, as well as all school groups with appointments. The PRC is accessible.