

Latifa Echakhch, *The trail was at its end, the dark ferns invaded borders. Expected for some traces, to build an other story*, 2013, linen and ink, 78" x 59" x 1". Galerie Eva Presenhuber.

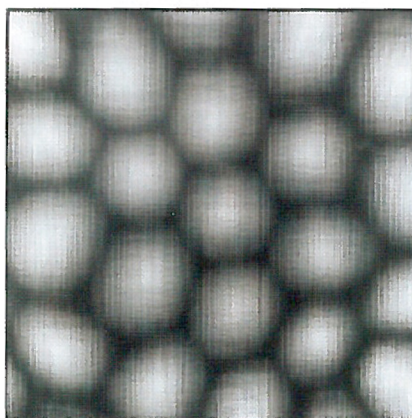
"The Scene Takes Place," the text relates the tale of a narrator lost in a forest. The eerie stage set, strewn with harps presumably left behind by departed musicians, was inspired by a 1955 production of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, one of the first operas to forsake operatic realism in favor of abstraction. As viewers wandered through the landscape of canvases, a tone of mystery and emptiness pervaded the show.

—Mary Krienke

Aitor Ortiz

Galería Max Estrella
Madrid

Aitor Ortiz's architectural photography often tends toward abstraction, with sharply cropped structural details presented out of context and visually



Aitor Ortiz, *Noúmenos 004*, 2013, backlit perforated aluminum, 40" x 40". Galería Max Estrella.

disorienting juxtapositions of light and deep shadow. In this intense show of new nonrepresentational work (all from 2013), the Spanish photographer took his proclivity for abstraction a step further, distorting and blurring numerous photos, taking some shots through layers of mesh, and printing others on sheets of undulating aluminum, like three-dimensional objects.

The show was entitled "Noúmenos," a rather heady reference to an abstruse philosophical term describing "non-phenomenal objects" rather than concrete items in the real world. In keeping with the title, Ortiz's black-and-white photographs were visually elusive, shimmering and wavering before viewers' eyes. In the manner of Op art works by Victor Vasarely or Jesús Rafael Soto, images including *Umbra 001* and *NET 018* appeared to bend and morph when seen from different angles.

A number of works on view, such as *Noúmenos 003*, featured prints—presumably of architectural fragments—on perforated aluminum surfaces that slightly shifted from two to three dimensions, like bas-relief sculptures. These were backlit, heightening the dramatic, otherworldly effect while offsetting the monochromatic gloom that pervaded much of the imagery. In these quasi-sculptural works, Ortiz seems to address the question, fundamental to all architectural photography, of the relationship between the flat photograph and volume it means to portray. But here, the terms of the question were reversed, so that the photographs conveyed three dimensions physically, extending beyond the frame into the space of the gallery.

—George Stolz

Barbara Astman

Corkin
Toronto

Born in Rochester, New York, but based in Canada since 1970, Barbara Astman has remained committed to photo-based work for more than 30 years. Early in her career, she produced images that addressed feminist and gender issues, overlaying self-portraits with typewritten texts addressed to friends, lovers, and professional acquaintances. Since the mid-2000s, however, newspapers

have been Astman's muse, inspiring the eleven collage works included in this exhibition, "It's All About Style."

To make these works, all from 2013, the artist selected images from the style and travel sections of local papers and covered them with clear packing tape. By laboriously rubbing the backs of the pages, she transferred some of the dyes out of the glossy photos and into the adhesive, leaving the images somewhat more muted than they had been originally. Then, she cut the modified pages into strips—debasement their perfect depictions of beauty and glamour—and recombined them in horizontal rows that she glued onto sheets of paper. By interspersing slivers from disparate sources, and occasionally flipping them upside down, Astman manipulated the images in order to suggest that the media uses similar mechanisms to promote arbitrarily



Barbara Astman, *It's All About Style No. 08*, 2013, collage, 22" x 30". Corkin.

selected trends in food, fashion, and home decor. From the cupcakes in *It's All About Style No. 31* to the cozy, gem-colored sweaters in *It's All About Style No. 38*, nothing feels like an innocent indulgence. In Astman's hands, every object is implicated in a cycle of coercion and every image is engineered to encourage consumption.

Also on view in the show were earlier works that further illustrated Astman's penchant for organizing images into linear arrangements. In her large-scale photos of rows of newspapers, the pages fall open just enough for us to read fragments of headlines or catch glimpses of famous faces. Here, as in the new collages, Astman presents snippets of competing information and leaves us to sort through the visual onslaught that has come to define our day-to-day lives.

—Bill Clarke