

For immediate release:

NATURE MORTE

December 7, 2011 – February 10, 2012

Opening Reception: Wednesday, December 7, from 6:00 to 8:00pm



This exhibition highlights three contemporary artists who utilize still life photography as a central part of their process. More widely recognized as a genre of painting, the still life was integral in the development of photography as an art form. Each artist in the exhibition – Sharon Core, Corin Hewitt, and Miranda Lichtenstein – honors and subverts the traditions of the still life and explores how photography in turn has influenced the genre.



Our term “still life” comes from the Dutch *stilleven*. The Romance languages use the phrase “dead nature” – *nature morte* in French, for example. Central to both terms is the concept of capturing a moment and presenting it as a comment on mortality and the temporality of life. As a technology designed to freeze time, photography is an appropriate medium to explore the still life genre.

Typically, plants – primarily flowers, fruits, and vegetables – have been a constant in still lifes, providing artists with subject matter that illustrates the effects of time and a moment to be captured. While each of these artists’ works utilize plants, the moment they choose is not exclusively reserved for a perfectly ripened fruit or the impressive bloom of a flower, but also the fruit as it rots and the blossom as it begins to wilt.



Sharon Core takes her inspiration from art-historical still lifes, creating uncanny facsimiles of hyperrealistic paintings. Her series, *Early American*, is based on works by the early 19th century American painter, Raphaelle Peale. Her recent floral bouquet images reference a broader range of styles and techniques that have informed the still life genre from early Dutch painters through Modern artists. In both projects, Core’s photographs are nearly identical to the original paintings, going as far as replicating the light and tracking down authentic period glassware. She even cultivates many of the fruits, vegetables, and flowers she uses in her Hudson Valley garden. Core’s work is a highly researched and meticulously rendered version of appropriation art that explores artistic production in a time before photography’s influence.

In **Miranda Lichtenstein’s** series of untitled Polaroids, originally exhibited at the Hammer Museum at UCLA, painting and photography merge to create dramatic still lifes on an intimate scale. In low-light conditions, she photographs flowers and traditional still lifes against backdrops of painted shadows. By mixing and matching backgrounds and arrangements, she produces a sense of displacement between the still life and its setting, giving these seemingly quotidian images a disorienting atmosphere. The shadow becomes the focus in Lichtenstein’s recent series, *Screen Shadows*. Using natural light, she arranges a still life in her studio window and photographs the silhouette it makes on patterned paper screens. In these layered images, the screen operates as a filter and the stage for these arrangements.

In 2008, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the multi-disciplinary artist **Corin Hewitt** created *Seed Stage*, an installation that was equal parts studio, laboratory, theater, and kitchen. Working with materials that were organic and inorganic, homegrown and store-bought, he assembled sculptural arrangements that were documented in photographic still lifes. In *Drying Flowers with Microwaves*, a recent installation and performance for Dorsch Gallery in Miami, Hewitt set up a similar studio in the gallery to create his unique still life photographs. Behind a wall – and only obliquely visible to gallery viewers via convex security mirrors – he dried flowers and created sculptures that are inspired by *ikebana*, the Japanese art of flower arranging. In both of these projects, the still lifes were arranged, photographed, and produced within the installation and hung on the walls of the gallery as they were created. They represent the end-product of an experiment and the documentation of the process.

Sharon Core is represented in New York by Yancey Richardson Gallery, where her solo exhibition, *1606-1907*, is on view through December 23. Corin Hewitt is represented in New York by Laurel Gitlen. His solo exhibition, *Medium/Deep*, is on view there through December 22. Miranda Lichtenstein is represented in New York by Elizabeth Dee and is currently included in *Underemployed*, a group show at Galerie Zürcher, on view through January 20, 2012.

The Horticultural Society of New York provides programs that sustain the vital connection between people and plants, growing a community of New Yorkers that values horticulture and giving even those with limited resources the knowledge and opportunity to cultivate plants, benefitting the environment, their neighborhoods, and their own lives. Our gallery encourages gardeners and artists alike to appreciate the creative intersection between art and nature. Our exhibitions showcase emerging and established contemporary artists who are inspired by botany, landscape, horticulture, and the environment.

For more information, please contact Chris Murtha, Curator, at 212.757.0915 x121 or cmurtha@thehort.org.

Images: Miranda Lichtenstein, *Untitled #8 (flower)*, 2002-05, Polaroid, courtesy of the artist; Corin Hewitt, *Untitled #1, May 8, 2010*, from *Drying Flowers with Microwaves*, 2010, digital pigment print, courtesy of Laurel Gitlen; Sharon Core, *1886*, 2011, archival pigment print, courtesy of Yancey Richardson Gallery.