

Flash Art

January/February 2017

Sarah Charlesworth

Campoli Presti, Paris

In Sarah Charlesworth's series "0+1" (2000), photographs are reduced to a colorless state, their subjects vestigial presences. Unlike the artist's previous still lifes, in which objects hover in the center of chromatic backdrops either intact or collaged to undercut some symbolic order, the "0+1" photographs are mere invocations of imagery. Though contextually unrelated, these pictures evoke the pale, pixelated ovals superimposed over faces to lend anonymity on the Internet. Such facelessness calls to mind dating apps that seek to speed up the process while asserting an absence of depth or substance. In Charlesworth's images, which present objects such as a porcelain *Madonna and Child* (2000) and a carved, planar *Modern Woman* (2000), one's inability to recognize a body in its totality destabilizes our vision; as with the dating apps, another kind of desire emerges out of the blur. The zero-plus-one logic of Charlesworth's work can be read as neutrality seeking company, its diffidence a strategic seduction that draws the viewer in with equal parts curiosity and apprehension. The superposition of white-on-white makes one seek out an image, be it a table as in *Altar* (2000) or an undefined *Skull* (2000). Rather than cater to a conceptual encounter with the void, now so *déclassé*, the viewer's foray into emptiness is met halfway in the milky space of the photograph. In this veiled encounter Charlesworth shoves iconography aside to contemplate how the camera can selectively direct the viewer's focus by stripping back the photograph to a bare minimum. This show is a striptease interrupted only by a single cibachrome print, *Tree* (2002), from a previous series titled "Neverland." The appearance of this digitally enhanced, green-on-green image snaps the viewer awake: the images in "0+1" fade like pleasure-filled dreams at the first light of morning. It's hard to hang on to threshold experiences.

by Sabrina Tarasoff



Sarah Charlesworth
Tree (2002)
Courtesy of the Artist;
Campoli Presti, London/
Paris; and Maccarone,
New York/Los Angeles