

EILEEN QUINLAN

How does a photograph exist? How does it interpellate the viewer, and why? What about its aura—both imbued and infusive, ever so present and yet retractive? What is this *thing* trying to say? Eileen Quinlan is interested in the false transparency of the photographic image: it's not a window, but a mirror. Her work presents an opportunity for contemplation, accompanied by an interruptive alienation: the mechanics of presenting and consuming images, or the social and ideological sitedness of the artist's hand, surface from the deep recesses of the substrate.

"My work is about a lot of things," Quinlan says. "Aging, sexuality, mortality, parenting, environmental collapse, mass murder and guns, macrocosms and microcosms, the domestic, feminism, motherhood and mother artists, making do, confinement, misogyny, available means, lifestyles, access, the internet as the source of all things (appropriation) and how that ties to limits on time and access, art historical allusions, advertising — 'brands' both artistic and commercial — touch, tactility and ghosts, analog and digital, authenticity, screens and distraction (an opiate of the masses), destruction via war and through consumption/pollution, violent attacks on film and IRL, the sysphian/entropic, making unseen forces visible, the privileging of sight..."

Quinlan's experimental process unfolds through a limited set of materials and brute repetition, probing and demystifying the circumstances of each image's creation. It insists, by extension, on the constructed nature of all photographs. As such, the constructions themselves run the photographic gamut from the quasi-pictorial to the semi-abstract, from evidentiary document to expressive collage. The regime of the image materializes in its full heterogeneity, only to recede again under its own weight.

Quinlan's early series, such as *Smoke & Mirrors* and *Night Flight*, restage display materials—mirrors, lights, textiles, and support structures—in disorienting configurations that verge on abstraction. Produced using the most common tricks of the commercial photography trade, the sets are staged around a nonexistent product; they are straightforward tabletop still-lives, manipulated neither in the darkroom nor through digital craft, though they often appear otherwise. In the following years, the artist also took yoga mats, luridly lit and shot in close-up, as the subject of a series that gestures toward contemporary manifestations of self-maintenance through regimes of diet, exercise, and spirituality. Abstract non-space intrudes upon the surface of several prints through cascading layers of manipulated emulsion.

For *Curtains*, her third solo exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery, Quinlan presented a body of black-and-white photographs comprised of new portraits, re-photographed portraits of the same subjects from years prior, and near-total abstractions. The photos were patterned by crocheted and printed textiles that reference, respectively, the handmade and the mass-produced, both of which are mirrored in Quinlan's hybrid process. The prints are textured with scratches, tears, fingerprints, and ruptures located on the surface of the negative itself, the latter introduced by way of experimentation with the pocket of processing chemicals that accompany each sheet of 4x5 Polaroid film. The result is a complex layering of material and temporal indices that gradually reveal themselves upon extended examination.

Recently, Quinlan's works have shifted towards more existential concerns, reckoning with the digital and, in turn, telegraphing the anxiety around screens. In *Mind Craft*, Quinlan interrogated the systems of technique and content in photography: the landscape, the nude, the selfie, and the scan were presented in succession, blurring the binaries of black and white and color, digital and analog. What emerged was not only the screen as a place of projection and absorption, but also the sheer ubiquity of the photographic image. For *Too Much*, Quinlan staged a multi-panel scanner work and a decade's worth of Polaroids together. Culled from her previous series and works, the Polaroids—staged into grids—allude to her works and play with the notion of serial reproducibility of the editioned photograph. Apposed besides one another, the two materially distinct processes disintegrated the image and laid bare the photograph's *dispositif*.

Eileen Quinlan (b. 1972, Boston) earned her MFA from Columbia University in 2005 and had her first solo museum exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston in 2009. Her first survey show, *Wait For It*, at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen, Düsseldorf, was held in 2019. In the fall of 2020, Quinlan's sixth solo exhibition at Miguel Abreu Gallery, *Dawn Goes Down*, was presented concurrently with *Displacements and Dead Trees*, a two-person exhibition with Cheyney Thompson. Quinlan's work was included in *Changes*, mumok, Vienna (2022–23); *Warhol, People and Things*, Casa São Roque, Porto, Portugal (2022–23); *Invitational Exhibition of Visual Art*, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York (2022); *Artist's Choice: Amy Sillman—The Shape of Shape*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2020), *Objects Recognized in Flashes*, a major group exhibition curated by Matthias Michalka, mumok, Vienna, alongside Michele Abeles, Annette Kelm, and Josephine Pryde (2019); *Passer-by*, Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2019); *Picture Industry: A Provisional History of the Technical Image, 1844–2018*, LUMA Foundation, Arles (2018); *VIVA ARTE VIVA*, the 57th International Art Exhibition, curated by Christine Macel, Venice Biennale (2017); and *Always starts with an encounter: Wols/Eileen Quinlan*, organized by Radio Athènes and curated by Helena Papadopoulos, Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens (2016). Previously, Quinlan participated in *Image Support at the Bergen Kunsthall*, *What Is a Photograph?* at the International Center for Photography, New York, and *New Photography 2013* at the Museum of Modern Art, and in other group exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Hammer Museum, White Columns, the White Cube Bermondsey, the Langen Foundation, Mai 36, Marian Goodman Gallery, Andrea Rosen Gallery, and Paula Cooper Gallery, among others.

Quinlan's work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; CCS Bard Hessel Museum, Annadale-on-Hudson; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Pinault Collection, Paris; Aïshti Foundation, Beirut; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Auckland Art Museum; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; V-A-C Foundation, Moscow; mumok, Vienna; Kunstpalast Düsseldorf; FRAC Normandie Rouen; Brooklyn Museum; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; FRAC Poitou-Charentes, Angoulême; The Kunstpalast Abteilung Fotografie, Düsseldorf; Kadist, San Francisco; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; George Eastman Museum, Rochester; and The Art Institute of Chicago.

The artist's first monograph, *Good Enough*, was published by Osmos Books in 2018, while *Always Starts with an Encounter: Wols—Eileen Quinlan*, was published by Radio Athènes and Sequence Press in 2019. Her seventh solo gallery exhibition, *The Waves*, was held at Miguel Abreu Gallery in March 2023.