

PLAIN SIGHT

Annette Benda Fox - 2014

Selected Paintings and Photographs

Fox Gallery - New York

"What is a work of art if not the gaze of another person? Not directed above us, nor beneath us, but at the same height as our own gaze. Art cannot be experienced collectively, nothing can, art is something you are alone with. You meet its gaze alone". – Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle, Book Two* 2013

The vitality of abstraction is celebrated in the work of painter and photographer Claire Seidl. In her current exhibition at Fox Gallery NYC, Seidl continues her exploration into the ways we see and perceive abstraction. Remarking on the title of this show, Seidl has said, "In plain sight conveys the obvious, what can be immediately perceived. Hidden in plain sight suggests something that seems to be hidden, but in fact is easy to find. The point is to stay and look. If we suspend judgment and allow a painting to unfold in its own time, its meaning will be revealed."

We experience Seidl's work in a direct way. There is clarity in her formal decisions, yet we are also invited to contemplate a narrative or journey whose directions seem obvious, but require further looking to reveal the entire story.

The act of seeing and looking at art is inextricable from our individual experiences and memories. Triggered by the light, color, gesture and space in Seidl's paintings, one can imagine possible external and internal influences. Her titles serve as portals into a private as well as familiar world. In her painting *The Swing of Things*, an active surface reveals a non-linear narrative, made visible and palpable through a loosening and dissolution of geometric drawing. The painting initially confronts and challenges and then invites

the viewer to meander. In *Merrily Merrily*, as the title suggests, there is a sense of sunny days spent in nature but also a strong, insistent composition. Seidl's willingness to imply internal dialogues feels particularly tangible in her painting *In a Heartbeat*, which is also tightly structured through color and form.

Seidl's layered paintings on translucent mylar have deep pictorial space. Simultaneously, they seem full of emotion, mystery and experience. *On the Early Side* is at once calligraphic and percussive, reminiscent perhaps of rain striking a window. *Pie in the Sky* intimates biology - tidal water teeming under a microscope. The dense layers in *Picnic* and *Clear Blue* appear as geological masses - impenetrable but light-filled and provocative. As Karen Wilkin has written in an earlier catalogue about Seidl's paintings and photographs, "Previous states and underlying incidents are often veiled, like distant recollections or like things seen briefly and now largely forgotten."

Seidl's photographs, mostly taken at night, are both familiar and strange. Seidl has said, "Some people see my photos as abstractions, but they are also deeply rooted in the real world, filled with specifics of place and people and natural phenomena. There are images in the photos that only a camera can reveal: what we can't see in the dark with our own eyes; what we can't hold in sight after we shift our gaze. The camera accumulates what happens over time (seconds, minutes, hours) in a single two-dimensional place: the photograph." The photographs remind us not of memories, but of memory itself. They speak of time passing and of mystery.

claireseidl.com