
Keith Cottingham
'Constructed Photographs'

Ronald Feldman Gallery
31 Mercer Street, SoHo
Through April 17

Keith Cottingham's eerily Stepfordish photographs come across as a form of reverse archaeology. They reflect the digital present and future by showing some of the variety of pictures that can be made with very little intervention from three-dimensional reality.

On one hand, there are images that might almost be from the mid-19th century. These include two vaguely sinister, and forensic images of similar-looking girls as well as a misty landscape and a photograph-like silhouette of leaves that is actually a platinum/palladium print. On the other hand, there are weirdly familiar, nearly life-size grisaille images of one or two seated women; these suggest a generic realist style, somewhere between painting and photography, Soviet Social Realism and now.

The best works are serene, sometimes chapel-like architectural interiors that operate in the gap between Ezra Stoller's photographs of the old T.W.A. Terminal at Kennedy Airport and some of James Casebere's set-up photographs.

These are not especially likable or original images, but as a group they make the point that the entire history of photography can probably be reproduced on the computer. This connects Mr. Cottingham's work to that of James Welling (another member of Mr. Casebere's generation) in historical self-consciousness and thoroughness. Like it or not, one has the feeling that there is much more to come.

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