

## Erin Shirreff

Pictures

April 19 to June 16, 2013

B. C. Binning Gallery



Above  
**Erin Shirreff**  
*Lake* (2012)  
Colour video still, silent loop

Opposite  
**Erin Shirreff**  
*UN 2010* (2010)  
Colour video still, silent loop

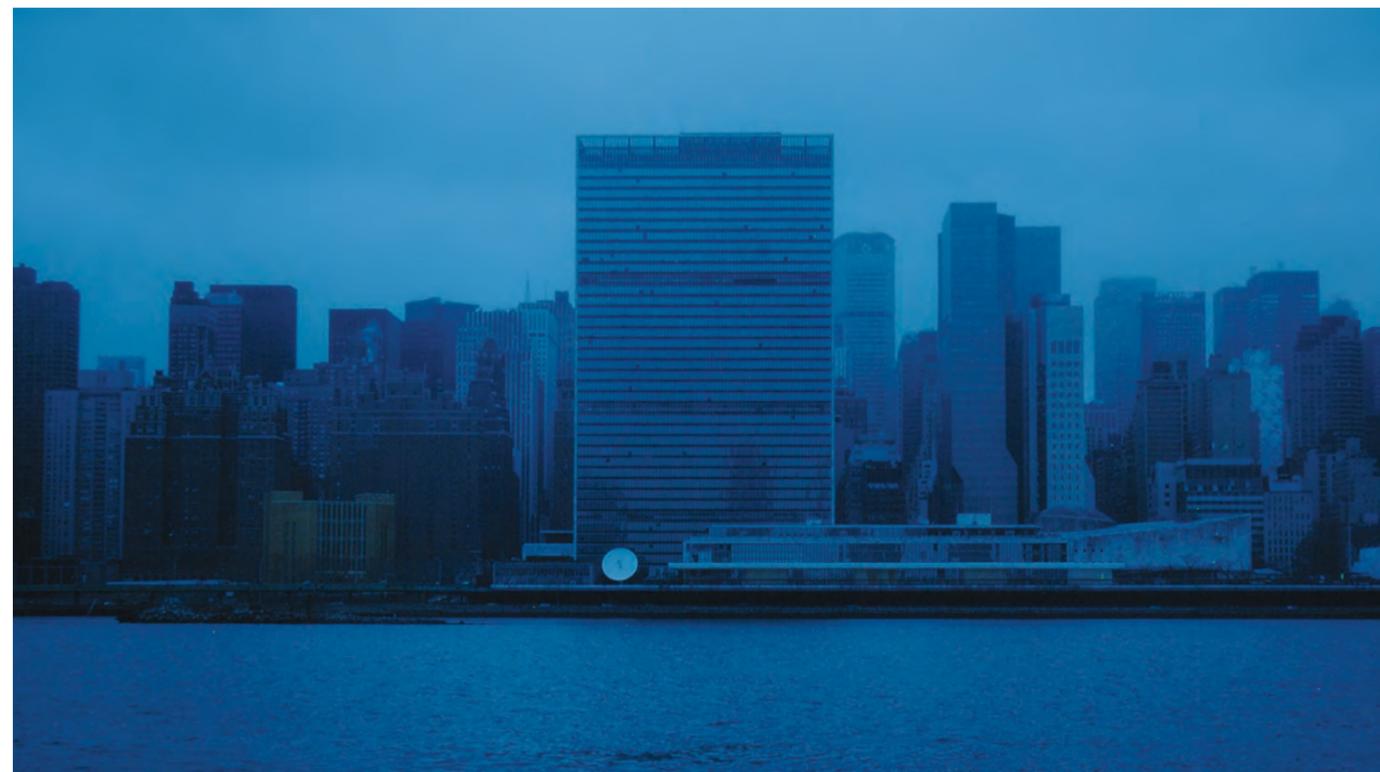
Courtesy Lisa Cooley Gallery, New York

Erin Shirreff's solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Gallery will be the first presentation dedicated exclusively to the artist's film and video work. It may seem a somewhat unexpected focus given Shirreff's definition of herself as a sculptor. And yet her investigation into the language and perception of materiality has less to do with the presentation of physical objects than specifically to that of our experience of forms — how sharing the same space with a 'thing' varies from looking at its representation.

Shirreff is known for reproducing sculpture as images or making sculpture that distills the essence of a photograph, playing these two elements against one another as a means to prompt and test the viewer's response. In *Knives* (2008) for example, she modeled a variety of knife-like forms from Plasticine, subsequently presenting them as a series of black and white photographs; her most recent sculptures made from ash and cement resemble photographs, their surfaces giving way to reveal themselves as planes an inch thick as we move around them.

Such preoccupation with the properties and potency of sculpture in relation to photographic reproduction grew out of Shirreff's consideration of the work of Tony Smith; *New Piece* from 1966 made from black painted steel, in particular held a fascination, so much so that she made a pilgrimage to see it in person. Her actual experience of the work however revealed an unexpected level of engagement, making her question the limitations of sculpture as well as her own abilities as a viewer. She comments, 'It left me wondering whether the encounter, sharing the same material space as the object, was somehow more difficult, perhaps more intimidating, complicated, or somehow overwhelming, and that I didn't equal it. What was clear was that I wasn't able to let myself be as absorbed into the physical encounter as I was by the experience of the image. That remove offered by the reproduction opened up this contemplative space.'

Each of the four works presented at the Contemporary Art Gallery focus on an image of a building, sculpture or landscape and seek to similarly evoke such a quality. Typically these silent videos are made from subtle combinations of stills or, in the case of *Sculpture Park* (Tony Smith), by the camera panning across a static object. The original images are further transformed by simple means such as the tracking of daylight across their surfaces, by modifications through colour alterations or other such analogue effects. Changes can also play with the illusion of three dimensions as the pieces unfold. *Lake* uses an image of Lake Okanagan in B. C. where Shirreff grew up and her family still lives, the picture taken from an early 1980s tourism magazine. For this work Shirreff re-photographed the original image many times sequencing these as a series of stills, deploying subtle shifts in colour and light to alter the original hand-painted quality.



Erin Shirreff was born in Kelowna, British Columbia, 1975 and currently lives and works in New York. Her work has also been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions such as *Standing Shadows*, Galería Marta Cervera, Madrid (2012); *Science on the back end*, Hauser & Wirth, New York (2012); *Le silence*, *Une fiction*, Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (2012); *Today*, Lisa Cooley, New York (2012); *The Locker Plant*, Chinati Foundation, Marfa (2011); *A Promise is a Cloud*, Public Art Fund, MetroTech Center, Brooklyn (2011); *The Anxiety of Photography*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado (2011); *Still, Flat, and Far*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2010); *David Musgrave and Erin Shirreff*, Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (2010); *Between Here and There: Passages in Contemporary Photography*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2010); *Greater New York*, MoMA PS1, Queens (2010); *S-N-W-O*, Drei Raum für Gegenwartskunst, Cologne, Germany (2010); *The Fifth Genre: Considering the Contemporary Still Life*, Galerie Lelong, New York (2010); *I am not so different*, Art Palace Gallery, Austin, Texas (2009); *Dark Fair*, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany (2009); *Creswell Crags*, Lisa Cooley, New York (2008). Her work is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Yale University Art Gallery, and the Guggenheim. She is represented by Lisa Cooley, New York.

These nuanced adjustments appear in all of Shirreff's videos. Some modifications highlight the qualities of the original photograph, revealing dust on its surface or illuminating the glossy quality of the paper, reinforcing its status as object. In drawing attention to the material properties of the initial image used, Shirreff builds a tension between the subject and the formal values of its representation. Whether it is a photograph of a Medardo Rosso sculpture from 1896 or the United Nations Building in New York, the thing or scene being represented is no longer the point of focus. Shirreff challenges our understanding of the nature of images themselves, their intrinsic qualities and our encounter with them.

The exhibition is presented in collaboration with Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa and Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, collectively marking the first comprehensive exhibition of Shirreff's work in Canada. Each venue presents unique exhibitions, drawing out varied strands in her rich body of work, and have come together to produce her first monograph. The full colour publication features essays by Sandra Dyck and Jan Allen and an interview with the artist by Jenifer Pappararo priced \$30, special exhibition price \$25.