

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY

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CHERYL PAGUREK

■ ARTIST STATEMENTS

For many years Cheryl Pagurek's work has aimed to disrupt our usual expectations of photography and its role in our day-to-day lives. Home and family life have been central themes, situated within a broader framework of social, historical and commercial contexts. She has often combined the physicality of sculpture with the pictorial illusionism of photography, intermixed the public realm and the private domestic realm, layered representation and formal concerns, and interwoven present day and historical imagery. The work aims to bring together diverse, often contradictory concepts and to assemble them into a dynamic whole. In the last few years she has done this by physically shaping photographs, removing cut-out shapes from photographs, pairing photographs in double-sided works, digitally combining and constructing photographic images, and most recently by digitally manipulating video. Altering coherent images in these ways seems especially unsettling because of our intense relationships with photographs and our usual expectations of photography: We create representations of our lives that conform to cultural conventions, and we fetishise photographs in an effort to hold on to past moments. Pagurek's photo-works are elusive in that they offer glimpses of time and place, but because of missing visual information, they frustrate our desire for a complete, captured moment. Relationships of presence/absence, already intrinsic to photography in the framing of the subject (what is included and what is left out) and in photography's indexical nature (the subject matter was previously - but is no longer - present in front of the camera) are highlighted in these photo-based works.

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■ A DAY IN THE LIFE

In **A Day in the Life** (2000) sculptures were made out of photographic prints of public events documented by the news media. The photographs were printed on paper, cloth and canvas, which Pagurek then cut, glued and sewed together into sculptures of domestic objects. Simultaneous realities overlap: the intense, private bubble of domestic life, with concurrent events in the public sphere. The artist contextualized these sculptures further by placing and photographing them in domestic environments, resulting in the eight photographs in the series.

■ CUT-OUTS

In **Cut-Outs** (2001) landscape photos, family snapshots and news images were cut into the shapes of commercial packaging patterns, disrupting the familiar rectangular format we expect of a photograph and mediating our perceptions of the images. The pattern shapes carry broader references to marketing, consumerism, and mass production of multiples, while they also refer to everyday actions in both the public and private spheres. The **Cut-Outs** hover between

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two and three dimensions. They are creased along fold lines, evidence of having been folded into the three-dimensional box or container intended by the pattern. There are fifteen works in this series.

■ IMPOSITIONS

The fifteen large photographs in **Impositions** (2002) have had central shapes physically cut out and removed from them. The cut-out shapes are patterns culled from the public, commercial sphere, and then imposed on the photographs. The remaining periphery of each image is framed between two pieces of Plexiglas, allowing a view through the hole to the wall behind. Our frustration at the impossibility of retrieving the missing visual information serves as a metaphor of longing and loss. These works highlight a sense of absence because of their lost centres, while the references and flat visual plane that the negative shapes add to the work bring a new presence. The shadows cast onto the wall by the shaped photographs contribute to the spatial ambiguity of the negative shapes, suggesting a presence where, in fact, there is an empty space.

■ TWO ALBUMS

The Double Takes exhibit at Patrick Mikhail Gallery in 2005 showcased **Two Albums**. A photo-installation from 2005, **Two Albums** features sixteen digitally altered photographs exhibited as large, colour LightJet prints. The images are paired and presented in two ways, offering viewers different modes of engaging with the work. In four works, the paired photographs are mounted back to back in a frame and suspended from the gallery ceiling so that viewers can walk around to see both sides. The photographs in the other four pairs are framed individually and hang on the wall. In each pair of

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photographs, one is an aged black and white image from an earlier era, found in an old family album, and the other is a more contemporary colour snapshot taken in a family context. A section of image from each photograph is digitally exchanged with a section of image in the same shape from the other photograph. In this way, each photograph is both missing visual information and is also disrupted by contrasting visual information from another image. Despite the differences in era and specific circumstances in each of the two photographs, they are paired because of their similar representation of human experience. Belonging to the same photographic archetype – the baby photo, the family snapshot or the class photo, for example – the paired photographs examine our universally shared desire, across time and geography, to use photography and its externally accepted conventions to shape our personal histories.

The paired images are also available individually.

■ LIGHT

The **Light** series (2005) explores our multiple and simultaneous perceptions of time by digitally interweaving photographs of light and shadow patterns observed around a house through the day, with old black and white photographs from an earlier generation. These works contrast our daily, even hourly awareness of time elapsing, with a sense of the passing of eras. Two suspended moments, separated by many decades, are brought together. Dramatic highlights and deep shadows combine to create evocative and painterly imagery. Different sections of the layered images are brought into view or hidden by varying degrees of transparency and opacity. The missing or partially obscured visual imagery lends an elusive quality to the work. The first piece in the series consists of LightJet prints on photographic paper, while the next three are exhibited as duratrans transparencies in light

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boxes. The images in the light boxes are also available as LightJet prints on photographic paper.

■ FRIDAY MORNING

Friday Morning, a new work in digitally manipulated video from 2006, developed directly out of the **Light** series from 2005. That series explored our multiple and simultaneous perceptions of time by digitally interweaving photographs of light and shadow patterns observed around a house through the day, with old black and white photographs from an earlier generation. A natural progression for these investigations was to introduce the elements of durational time, motion, and the additional sensory experience of sound, by moving into the realm of video. When creating the still photos of the light and shadow patterns for the **Light** series, Pagurek was continually intrigued by the abstracted quality of the subtly flickering movements of shadow patterns created by light passing through foliage ruffled by the wind. She then began to shoot digital video footage of moving patterns of light and shadow as they appeared on house floors and walls as well as outdoors on pavement and roadways. This type of pattern of moving light and shadow was the basis for the new work in video.

Friday Morning, a five-minute looping video, evokes multiple layers of time and place through video imagery and sound. Three different sites and time periods intersect, creating multiple, simultaneous narratives. Moving patterns of light and shadow on an Ottawa street one summer are layered with black and white historical footage from 1903 of a fish market in the Lower East Side of New York City, with varying parts of each video sometimes hidden and sometimes brought into view. In addition to the fluid and constantly changing flow of imagery, affected by the movement inherent in each original video source, the medium also allows for experimentation with multiple

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audio components. Sounds of late summer - the steady hum of insects, the drone of a lawnmower, the rustling of a breeze and the call of birds - are intermixed with the cacophony of sounds and voices from a bustling market in present-day Frankfurt. A complex soundscape is created by the differing intensities of each track, with one audio track sometimes foregrounded over the other. The circularity of the video loop offers the potential to more fully perceive and integrate narrative fragments from each of the three different sources with successive, repeated viewings over time.

Video stills from **Friday Morning** are available as prints on photographic paper.

With the help of a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts Pagurek is currently working on a new video that further explores, with more complexity, similar concerns to **Friday Morning**. This new work layers highly coloured light and shadow patterns from inside and outside a house throughout different times of day, with black and white archival footage. The artist expects it to be completed in Spring 2007.

■ REFLECTION

Reflection, a series of eight prints from 2006, continues to layer simultaneous narratives of different times and places like the **Light** series that preceded it. Attracted to the “world within a world” quality of reflections in pooled water, Pagurek photographed reflected houses, trees and streets, appearing upside-down as they emerge from the flat plane of snow or pavement surrounding the puddle. Like the patterns of shadows in previous works that are abstracted from the physical objects that cast them, the upside-down reflections of the neighborhood similarly transform a familiar reality, this time with a sense of dislocation. To echo this feeling of disorientation, and to

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further accentuate the passage of time captured through the changing seasons in the images, she has digitally inserted into each image a snapshot from several decades ago, itself placed upside-down. This last gesture nudges the work further into abstraction as colours and textures function apart from the reality they represent. The photographs of puddles are focused on the depths of the reflections, while the shallow depth of field blurs the peripheral foreground, blending it into the soft grain of the old snapshots. The old photographs are not seen in their entirety but are glimpsed through the contemporary street images with varying degrees of opacity. Several sets of dualities intermingle in the work: The play between surface and depth in the images evokes a contemplative sense of looking into a different time and space, the present and past coexisting. The images oscillate between representation and painterly abstraction, while the intimate, private context of the family snapshot merges with the more public realm of landscape and street photography. Further, there is a dynamic tension between the photograph's traditional role as documentation of the 'real' and the constructed nature of these images.