

Anne Collier



Sylvia Plath, 2008. C-print. 127 x 153 cm



8 x 10 (Jim), 2007. C-print. 75 x 88 cm



8 x 10 (Lynda), 2007. C-print. 75 x 88 cm

With the historicization of the 'Pictures' generation in full swing, the photography of Anne Collier may at first glance look like a reprise of the cool aesthetics of appropriation associated with names like Richard Prince or Sherrie Levine. But beneath any surface similarities of technique, Collier's work articulates a singular sensibility in which distance and affectivity are conjoined to produce a unique experience. Take the two related prints, 8 x 10 (*Jim*) and 8 x 10 (*Lynda*) (both 2007), each of which show a similar photograph of the blue sea reaching out to a cloudless horizon; the photos rest on the top of piles of prints inside open archival boxes. What are we to make of these blank seascapes, to which names have been appended as if they were portraits?

Woman With A Camera



Woman With A Camera (Diptych), 2006. C-print. Each 136 × 114

The two photographs solicit our reading into them, while the vacuity of the scene and the very mutability of the ocean simultaneously resists our attempts to ascribe permanent meaning. That ambivalence is only heightened when we learn that these images depict the places where the artist scattered the ashes of her parents.

Sylvia Plath (2008) engages with a similarly unstable emotional intensity. Part of a larger body of work in which Collier photographs

the album covers of vintage vinyl against minimal backdrops of floor and wall, it depicts a stack of records, at the front of which is a 1977 release of Plath reading her poetry. The bare décor of grey concrete floor and white wall, along with the rocky beach pictured on the album, recall the format and setting of the 8 × 10 prints of the previous year, and indeed *Sylvia Plath* evokes a muted melancholy reminiscent of those earlier works.

In this case, however, that sentiment is accompanied by a kind of frustration bordering on the comic, since we are denied the satisfaction of hearing the recording and are kept at a resolute distance, forever peering at a scene whose full affective meaning will escape us.

Something of that same impression of the tragicomic is apparent in *My Goals for One Year* (2007), a photograph of a self-help book opened up to two pages



My Goals for One Year, 2007. C-print. 113 × 137 cm



January 1974/January 1981, 2006. C-print. 89 × 117 cm

encouraging the reader to plan a set of life aims in categories ranging from travel to spirituality. Again and again, Collier has turned to a particular pop-psychological milieu of the 1970s, the decade of her childhood, with its rather heartbreaking earnestness as well as its commodification of subjectivity. Her deadpan photographic documentation and serial presentation remind us that Conceptual art strategies evolved at the same moment as this pop psychology flourished, and she seems to mine some hidden vein that links the two.

For several years Collier has been rephotographing images of women, most frequently women who have appropriated the traditionally masculine role of looking. *January 1974/January 1981* (2006) shows two stacks of the periodical *ARTnews*; at the top of each is a cover featuring a woman artist, Berenice Abbott and Georgia O'Keeffe. This might appear initially to be a familiar feminist exercise, but the longer we look, the stranger the piece becomes. We notice the similarity of poses, each with hand on cheek, and the directness of their gazes; we consider the aged features of each, and wonder what private meaning is encoded there for Collier. To some extent we could read this as a masked self-portrait, which is no less true of her extensive ongoing series of rephotographed images entitled *Woman With A Camera* (begun 2006).