

Review Beautiful, conceptually ticklish photograms by Farrah Karapetian

By **LEAH OLLMAN**

FEBRUARY 13, 2015, 5:41 PM

Farrah Karapetian's luscious, provocative work at Von Lintel marries two traditions in photography — that of the staged picture and of the image made without a camera.

Both have been around since the medium's earliest years, and both remain vital, thanks, in part, to a wave of contemporary practitioners who have broken down photography into its most basic components and reconfigured it anew according to their own particular sensibilities, freely adding, subtracting, tweaking and torquing along the way.

Now is an invigorating moment for the medium, and Karapetian's work shows us why.

Her images speak in questions, equally addressing eye and mind. Photograms in saturated emerald, aqua and gold on matte or metallic paper, they elicit an immediate how? and what? They are as physically beautiful as they are conceptually ticklish.

Karapetian's overt subject is the musical instrument in performance, but her attention is most acutely fixed on photography's multiplicitous relationship to the real. Her images are at once impressions and traces, inventions and records.

The most arresting depict a drum kit (sometimes being played, sometimes not), the armatures coming across as white silhouettes, the cymbals as gauzy disks. The actual set used in making the pictures is here too, a fabrication that Karapetian refers to as a “sculptural negative.” The cymbals are cast in clear, ruby and grape glass, the drums mere metal frameworks with neither sides nor skins. Light projected up through the pieces onto the wall delivers rich shadows and refractions, the cymbals generating dappled and veined orbs suggesting astronomical bodies or jellyfish.

Projected onto photosensitive paper, those same forms yield bright, schematic outlines and soft translucencies.

The earliest photograms, made by placing objects directly onto light-sensitive paper, were largely used to document botanical and other specimens. Their power and value derived from the direct physical

correspondence between subject and image. More personal, interpretive takes on the process were pioneered by Christian Schad, Man Ray and others between the world wars, and artists like Floris Neusüss and Adam Fuss have more recently adopted and expanded it further.

Karapetian, who is based in L.A. and has been making photograms for more than a decade, engages with both the evidentiary and evocative strands of the tradition.

She also plays seriously with self-reflexivity: These images are performances of performances, visual stagings, enactments. However contrived, they bear the photographic pedigree of veracity, vexed as it is.

And — they are gorgeous. There are some compositionally static pieces, in which craft alone prevails, but even in the least interesting images there are passages of exquisite mystery. In those weird, liquid ripples and diaphanous blurs, time and space seem to reveal something of their true, elusive nature.

What?

How?

Von Lintel Gallery, 2685 S. La Cienega Blvd., L.A. (310) 559-5700, through Feb. 28. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.vonlintel.com

Copyright © 2015, Los Angeles Times

FROM AROUND THE WEB

Sponsored Links by Taboola

This Dinner Hack Has Millennials Ditching Delivery

Real Simple for Plated

13 Celebrity Wedding Dress Fails: What Were They Thinking?!

Minq

10 Things No One Ever Told You That Happened on the Pulp Fiction Set

Rant Movies

What Does Your Last Name Say About You

Ancestry

10 Films You May Never See

Movieseum

Guess Who's About To Go Bankrupt in America

The Crux for Stansberry Research

16 Celebrity Couples Who Live Modestly

MadameNoire

Common Behaviors Adults with ADD and ADHD Exhibit

Health Central
