

# Suara Welitoff

## BARBARA KRAKOW GALLERY



Since the visual devices in Suara Welitoff's photographs and video--subtle shades of gray and muddled focal points--are often employed to signal nostalgia, the artist's recent exhibition "Sometimes Time Trembles" can all too hastily be reduced to an "elegy" for time passed. And while the dreaminess of Welitoff's images may inspire a meditation on the elusiveness of duration, we should be wary of pigeonholing them as operating in the register of melancholy. Instead, imbricating incompatible data systems that code, capture, and transmit tenuous sensory experience, her images reveal points of friction between qualitative notions of subjective interiority and quantitative techniques for their "storage" in binary code.

Case in point: Each of Welitoff's photographs is progressively distanced from its "original" format. *Untitled* (all works 2013), for example, is a digital print of a digital scan of a Polaroid of a woman taken in the early 1990s by the artist with a 4 x 5 press camera. In it, a chemical residue that stained the original print bleeds into the pictured woman's patterned dress, confounding the difference between firsthand memories and those transformed by their inscription onto media. To create another work, also *Untitled*, the artist downloaded a digital image of space from NASA's website, printed it in black-and-white, and scanned and reprinted the photo at a large scale. The image

includes traces of information accrued through the multiphase printing process, such as digital distortion and pixelation, and points to the inadequacy of images in representing something as physically expansive as outer space. In both instances, Welitoff aggravates the inaccuracies and transmutations that occur when optical data is relayed between information technologies and questions how these transfers impact our sensory relationship to the world at large.

Indeed, if we consider the video *Interview*, one of the exhibition's standout works, it becomes clear that Welitoff is not simply investigating the friction between communications technologies and human capacities. Film aficionados may recognize Italian actress Anna Magnani being interviewed sometime around 1963 in a rural setting. But here the actress's fiery persona has been diffused in the transfer from film to digital video and muted via the editing-out of footage in which she speaks, leaving her to communicate only through decontextualized bodily and facial gestures that appear to be decelerated. Welitoff's interference with the cache mechanisms of sound and motion--the way that auditory and temporal flows are stored in digital media--emphasizes the minute vagaries of Magnani's "performance," which effectively become the content of the work instead of the nominal interview. With Magnani's interdialogic behaviors magnified, each movement creates a visible breach in the implicit relationship between sensory experience and streams of digital data becomes equally encumbered.

This disjunction is also apparent in *Untitled (Spiral)*, for which Welitoff extracted a single scene from Francois Truffaut's classic film *The Wild Child* (1970) in which a boy draws an erratic spiral on a blackboard. Interrupting the child's hand motion by means of noncontinuous editing techniques, the artist makes this coiled shape spasmodically increase and decrease in amplitude, appear and disappear at various points of execution. Repudiating the possibility of a privileged instant, Welitoff's video enacts a temporality that is not fully actualized or present even unto itself. In the artist's parlance, such vexed time--which is neither the privilege of mechanical invention nor that of the observer--may be described as a constant "trembling" that short-circuits the rapport between signs and referents and obstructs the creation of a totalized reality.

-Nuit Banai

Image: Suara Welitoff, *Untitled*, 2013, inkjet print, 40" x 30"

### Suara Welitoff: Sometimes Time Trembles

at Barbara Krakow Gallery through March 15th  
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