

1999 History Re-Purposed Constructed Photographic Images

Can we ever know the truth of the past? Is there such a thing as scientific objectivity?

In “History Re-Purposed”, Keith Cottingham creates a fictional existence set in a period blended of the past, present, and imaginary. Albumen prints – portraits, architectural details, and animal and botanical still lifes – simulate a collection of nineteenth century ethnographic studies; yet, anachronisms and other inconsistencies are subtly revealed. These are documents of no place, of no time, and of no body.

Architectural and anatomical models and drawings created by the artist, combined with photographs of hair, skin, eyes, and other features taken from numerous individuals, and documentary source material of various subjects, become images that erase established boundaries and project an illusion of truth.

Cottingham calls into question historical authenticity and creates the illusion of a material world – a constructed realism – in order to explore issues of perception and identity. Archiving and memory can betray us. This collage of reality –rather than a collage of images– reveals how often we interpret the past without realizing how much we revise and rationalize it.

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Portraits (Female Adult #1), 1998
Carbon print
Image size, 9 9/16 x 7 9/16 inches
Edition 8



Portraits (Female Adult #2), 1998
Carbon print
Image size, 9 9/16 x 7 9/16 inches
Edition 8



Exploration (Constellation), 1999
Carbon print
Image size, 9 9/16 x 13 1/4 inches
Edition 8



Exploration (Junk), 1999
Carbon print
Image size, 7 1/2 x 12 7/16 inches
Edition 8



Landscapes (Animal Sculpture), 1999

Carbon print
Image size, 8 1/8 x 12 inches
Edition 8



Botanicals (Leaves #1), 1999

Carbon print
Image size, 7 x 8 3/4 inches
Edition 8



Landscapes (Island), 1999

Carbon print
Image size, 7 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches
Edition 8



Landscapes (Island), 1999

Carbon print
Image size, 7 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches
Edition 8



Portraits (Female Youth #1), 1999

Carbon Print
Image Size, 11 X 7 7/8 inches
Edition 8



Portraits (Female Youth #2), 1999

Carbon Print
Image Size, 11 X 7 7/8 inches
Edition 8