

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

514 West 25 Street New York, New York 10001

Tel. 212 941 0012 Fax. 212 929 3265

lennonweinberg@earthlink.net

Laura Larson, Apparition

September 8-October 8, 2005

Tuesday-Saturday 10-6

For additional information, please contact Amy Yee or visit lennonweinberg.com

Laura Larson (b. 1965) presents works from three related series of photographs in her second exhibition at Lennon, Weinberg. She is working with images and ideas associated with the traditions of late 19th and early 20th century spirit photography in ways that further her ongoing investigation of places and their occupants. Her previous body of work recorded the residue of occupancy left behind by departed hotel guests, clues to lives and identities that cannot be deciphered. In these new works, Larson offers a different sort of enigma.



The color photographs of the series *Apparition* depict deep forests in which phantoms hover. The *Ectoplasm* photographs are black and white, printed small, in which Larson has restaged historic pictures of spirit mediums extruding mysterious substances from their bodies. The *Asylum* photographs of apparently paranormal phenomena were made in the women's dormitories of the Athens Mental Health Center, an abandoned and decrepit asylum central to the town's reputation as the most haunted place in Ohio.

Whether frauds or true believers, spirit mediums such as Eva C and Mrs. Henderson used their bodies as vehicles of revelation and truth, and photographs as their proof. At the time, the medium of photography and advances in science were revealing things previously unseen to a naïve yet skeptical public. To this day, innumerable photographs of unexplained phenomena are studied and catalogued as incontrovertible evidence of the existence of spirits, even as it is taken for granted that photographs can be constructed out of whole cloth. As Laura Larson describes:

The assumption of objectivity that continues to haunt photography – the desire to trust our eyes – is a central concern of these projects. My photographs chart the complex relationship between belief, vision and technology. They are produced using a 4 x 5 view camera and cheap effects and materials, employing the methods of their historical counterparts. While digital technology gives the artist tools to seamlessly create documents such as these, it doesn't have the evidentiary weight that analog images command. With their low-tech staging, the images draw upon the performative aspects of analog technology. It's impossible to ignore the strain of artifice in spirit photography. The seams are all there: magazine cutouts doubling as apparitions, cheesecloth masquerading as ectoplasm. The tension between the real and the fake becomes irrelevant since the images unconditionally require a suspension of disbelief. It is the simultaneous willingness to believe and the willfulness of that belief that captivates me.