



"CAPTAIN NELSON, 29 PALMS, CA," 2007

**Stefanie Schneider**

C-PRINT MOUNTED ON WOOD, 14" x 19"

PHOTO: COURTESY SCOTT WHITE CONTEMPORARY ART

A tacked-on directory shows how only calls to ideologically sound (read, poor) countries will make their destinations. Over all, commentary is not quite as heavy-handed as the protest/political art we have come to expect as such in the United States. Instead, artists pay much attention subtle narration to make a point, and do so with remarkable technical skill. Even though all are art-school trained, Fernandez points out, almost no one makes art for money, they just want to have fun. That perhaps is what makes their work so relevant, from LA to Berlin, and Orange County.

—DANIELLA WALSH

## LA JOLLA, CA

**Stefanie Schneider:**

**"Stranger than Paradise"**

**at Scott White Contemporary Art**

Stefanie Schneider's solo exhibition of photographs "Stranger than Paradise" will be for some a tough sell. While the pictures are everything they claim to be—dreamy, mysterious, alluring, familiar—there is something about mining the already odd and time-warped Southern California desert with the old nostalgic codes of the Polaroid that may come off as, well, expected. And yet the work is by no means shallow. For the determined viewer there is a pay off. It comes first and foremost through the elegance of Schneider's photographic surface. The German-born, LA and Berlin-based artist's pictures are surprisingly painterly, not in that thick, expressive mode of oils, but like watercolors, lightly stained and very fluid. The gesture of using expired Polaroid film to create washed out surfaces of already sun-drenched landscapes feels just as much a nod to the times of old amateur photography as it does a tribute to 29 Palms.

The great open automobile, the venerable glory of cigarettes, the often anachronistic, faux-Sixties air of empty desert gas stations and neon motel signs, all of these come together in Schneider's pictures to form a kind of pseudo-historical, psycho-geographical document not only of the landscape, but also of instant photography itself. Of the days when there was some delicacy to the snapshot. Today, of course, there's less and less. To recall the 2008 discontinuation of Polaroid Corporation's much loved, but now seldom used, film (first introduced in 1948) adds poignancy to Schneider's pictures, most of which were shot between 1999 and 2007. A number of the works show visible defects on the photographic surface—opaque pools of brown chemicals that never managed to fulfill their destiny of reproducing the light they absorbed. In the smaller *Captain Nelson, 29 Palms, CA* (2007), for example, these solid splotches stand in wonderfully stark contrast with the faded translucence of the pictured desert, and seem to be in conversation with the formal elements (here a parachute) that they otherwise disturb. The film is defective and discontinued, yet it produces bright, breathing pictures.

Enigmatic reconstructions of dream-like road trips through mythic desert topographies in the old Polaroid idiom might feel too predictable. But at the same time, an undeniable, at times confrontational, poetics of technique keeps Schneider's pictures alive and, indeed, full of light.

—DREW SNYDER

"TROPHIES" (DETAIL), 2011

**Dana Hart-Stone**

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 60" x 48"

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BRIAN GROSS FINE ART

## SAN FRANCISCO

**Dana Hart-Stone: "Exposition"**  
**at Brian Gross Fine Art**

The idea of capturing everyday reality in immortal artifacts is so ancient as to be incomprehensible these days, when art is concerned with intellectual abstractions more than physical realities. Readers of *The Iliad* may recall Homer's loving description of Achilles' shield, a metal microcosm of cities, meadows, rivers, animals, and people, and a poignant symbol of what warriors surrender to gain a glorious, imperishable name. Dana Hart-Stone's acrylic-on-canvas digital prints in "Exposition" may not aim at such heroic pathos, but, with their filmstrip-like bands of old, anonymous photographic imagery repeated to resemble tapestries bearing geometric or kaleidoscopic Rorschach motifs, they do suggest the preservation and transformation of the past. They're monuments to the "collective mindset of American culture" and "homages" to the "everyday people" who settled the West, particularly Hart-Stone's native Montana, leaving behind shadows of silver halide crystals (along with capital and capital improvements). A previous show, in 2009, featuring laborious, immaculate arrays of Polaroid transfers on canvas, bore the apt title "History Paintings." "Exposition," which employs digital technology, continues the artist's image archaeology. Its title suggests both a large, celebratory public display and, paradoxically, an omniscient narrative that is absent.

But we create our own interpretations from these fragments. Other artists have played with serial photographs, of course: Joseph Cornell used them to connote the passage of time (as well as his love of movies and penny arcades); Andy Warhol used them to comment on the evaporation of meaning in a mass-consumption society. What Hart-Stone does, paradoxically, is restore a sense of handicraft in these digitally printed works,

