

Lindroth: The Power of Presentation

(With A Strong Nod to Art's History)

Linda Lindroth takes ordinary cardboard boxes, packaging used for everyday objects and opens them up, flattens them out, and photographs them. The new two-dimensional form each takes becomes the image we, as viewers, will end up connecting with. The actual boxes, or packaging are no longer a physical part of the work, but exist now as plausible referent, possible association given the degree to which each photograph is able to translate its source. (This may be through the title given to the piece, or, a remnant of still-readable writing or recognizable color). What might help distinguish one box from another, provide a certain narrative to it would be its worn-outness, its texture, its fade, its smell, its palpable surface. These tangible elements are now challenged by the medium which has usurped it – Photography.

Lindroth has devoted her life to the taking of pictures; to the photographing of life around her. Her early-in-life attraction to photography as a means to both record the truth and somehow allow for the lie of illusion to coexist is the fascinating thing she holds onto in theory, dedication to the medium itself, and, here, with her photographed boxes. We experience a transformation of the object through the photographic process itself. You mean to say that that wonderful detailed arrangement of form and color and line evident is simply an old box of Pall Malls?

Were the boxes to be displayed in the fashion prior to being “taken away by the camera's focus”, prior to being worked with by the artist here, how would we see them? A real life flattened-out cardboard box placed on a gallery wall would do what to the object? Would the aesthetic itself prove fascinating enough to hold our attention? Or, would the worn state, (whether flattened out or still in 3-dimensional form) offer more the narrative that the particular object had “experienced.” Like a worn-out deck of cards versus a brand-new set– the “experience lived” is something we can note, read as physically apparent in the material object itself.

To gaze at the impeccably-printed and glazed unfolded boxes of Lindroth's is to move from the ordinary to the extraordinary in visual reading. These are no longer boxes that once contained a pair of shoes or a bottle of perfume, [or, boxes furthered in use to store baseball cards or newspaper clippings], but are

now formally-strong visual fields of color and composition. All of a sudden the formalist issues of Fine Art and Photography are activated; the art-historical evolution, scholarship in practiced discipline, criterion of aesthetic are all now a major part of the visual before us. The context for a box once holding a pair of slippers or a pack of cigarettes ---- is now a *photograph of a* box once holding.....and, this changes things completely.

The image now, enlarged, (due to the magic of the process), slickly-printed – (not a worn sliver of paper, not a dust speck on the surface image) gives us that lie Lindroth knows to coexist with truth of source; that power of the photographic process to create something beyond the real in its detail, scale, and translation in print; something that the real world it once captured cannot possibly deliver –in the same way. Details most likely unseen, unnoticed, brought into view by the artist are now the subject we are able to celebrate. We'd never have guessed such formal beauty to lie within the interior/on the exterior of a cardboard box.

The photograph is now connecting itself with not only the history of photography, but the study of formalist properties, psychological responses to the larger field of Aesthetics – things that the actual box would not be inclined to translate in the way Lindroth's art is able to do. The photograph of the box both honors its source, (and the artist ensures this for us) and yet distances itself from it; (both truth and lie) the power of color and composition securing its connection with the history of photographic image, and sanctifying it further in its glazed and archival printing. These photographs of worn-out packaging will not age any further given their treatment. They are removed from the lived-experience of the box that generated it. They are now a part of the larger-sphere subject of the discipline of Photography.

When we think about why we take pictures of things to begin with, we think about trying to save something from its passing, capture it before it goes away. We take a photograph of something at the time of its being, to commit to taking a piece of that time and in its chronological removal, be able to directly refer back 'to that time'.

Regular ordinary photographs fade, wear, tear, dissolve over time. Art Photography, on the other hand, cannot. There are archival touchstones and standards to meet. The thing cannot change, or it loses its value. Also, it changes in visual reading. The colors that made the photograph so astounding in its original showing need to remain apparent. Where the real life object seems to grow in meaning with the

addition of time; [a torn faded photo of one's dad and mom, the yellowed worn clipping of a newsprint article], the archival photograph stands to oppose such change in its translation.

With this, we ponder the consequence of Lindroth's art and what she might be trying to show us here in metaphor. Does the real package, *can* the real package ever read as its illusive counterpart in visual strength? Is the source necessarily the subject of the photograph, or, has it been usurped by not only the discipline of Photography, but, also, due to the titles she gives them, the history of Western Painting? The formal qualities foremost in the photo, if lost, [as with the box's], will do what to the photo's reading? Will the photograph grow in meaning as does the object it had once captured? Or, maybe more significantly, can the photograph ever truly relate the palpable lived-experience of the actual box it seeks [in its taking] to reveal?

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