

MODERN PAINTERS

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MURAKAMI

GOES HOLLYWOOD

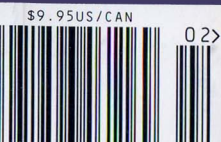
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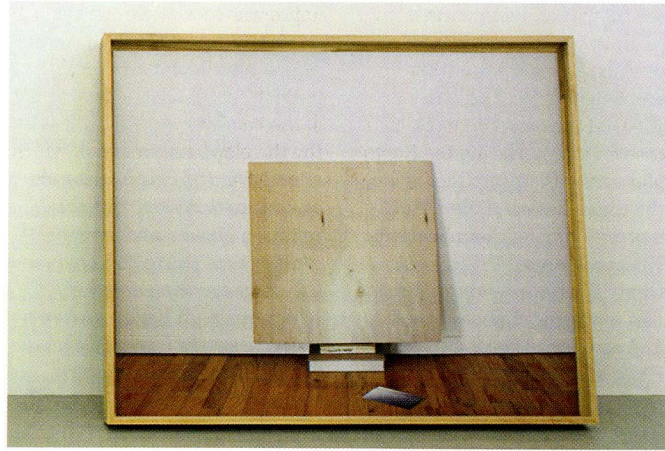
Leslie Hewitt

D'Amelio Terras // October 29–December 23

MAKING SENSE OF and extracting meaning from Hewitt's conceptually-driven photographic practice can be quite a challenge. For instance, the series of seven photographs that constitute "Blue Skies, Warm Sunlight," Hewitt's latest solo exhibition, delivers little, if any, overt visual evidence of what the cheery title forecasts. While tiny images of cloudy blue firmament and bleached-out snapshots of sun-drenched suburbia appear in some of these photographic still lifes, their shared focal point—as with her previous series "Make It Plain," 2006, and "Midday," 2009—is a raw plywood square that dominates most of the compositions, an obstinate obstacle to both vision and meaning.

In these signature series, Hewitt repeatedly photographs objects, books, and photographs—often of political, social, or personal significance—in varying, seemingly unstudied configurations within her studio. The carefully conceived and crafted results are rigorously self-reflexive statements about the ontological conditions of the photographic process; this exhibition's title might possibly indicate the specific conditions of light under which it was created. Produced in editions of three, the photographs are presented inside hefty but simple wooden frames that lean against the wall, thus asserting each picture's unique objecthood despite the medium's reputation for infinite reproducibility. And though a single photographic act seals a particular configuration in space and time, the series, as a whole, indexes the passage of time, emphasizing the contingency of each spatial arrangement and thwarting our attempts to draw specific meaning from it. These works induce a response that is contemplative but aporetic.

A paperback copy of 1969's *The Politics of Protest*—more commonly known as the Skolnick report, a government study on the relationship



of protest and violence prepared in the aftermath of the civil unrest of the 1960s—often props up the plywood square within the image. A reference to the Arab Spring, the book's inclusion hits much closer to home in light of a reinvigorated culture of nonviolent protest precipitated by the Occupy Wall Street movement and the often violent strategies that local governments are deploying to quell it. Like the blank square, the book is a blind spot, paradoxically drawing our attention only to deflect it onto the changing elements and conditions around it. This openness to interpretation might be both the strength and the weakness of Hewitt's work. —Murtaza Vali

FROM TOP:
Paul Sharits
Untitled (Frozen Film Frame), ca. 1971–76. 16 mm film strips and plexiglass, 41½ x 55¼ in.

Leslie Hewitt
Untitled (Days End), 2011. C-print in custom birch wood frame, 52½ x 66¼ in.