

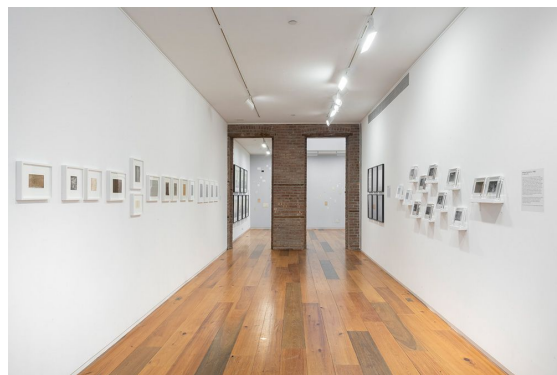
JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture

Sara Kay Gallery's "Expired" Celebrates The Materiality of Photography

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New York City's Sara Kay Gallery is currently hosting a group show of photographs by five prestigious artists titled *Expired*. The exhibited works, curated by Maya Benton, coalesce around the concept of memory in an ever interconnected and image-saturated world, transforming the role of photography as digitized media continues their ascendance and accessibility. The show is made up of multiple series from Antony Cairns, John Cyr, Jason Lazarus, Susan Mikula, and Alison Rossiter. Read more below.

"The digital turn in photography has transformed imaging and production techniques, raising questions about our records of the past and the fate of memory in a globalized and image-saturated world. The five artists in *Expired*, Antony Cairns, John Cyr, Jason Lazarus, Susan Mikula, and Alison Rossiter, work with expired photographic materials in a variety of media including outdated printing paper and Polaroid film, images arrested on obsolete digital screens, the photo-processing tools of deceased photographers, antique cameras, and personal snapshots. They embrace the accidents, imperfections, and chemical changes that continue after the production of materials has ceased, the aesthetic outcomes have become unpredictable, or the original story is no longer the one being told.

In an age of instantaneous images, these artists share a dedication to elevating the materiality and historicity of photography. All of the work in *Expired* was made in the last twelve years, yet some of the photographic tools and materials used to create these images extend as far back as the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Expired celebrates modernist deployments of obsolete materials and traditions in a wide range of experimental and contemporary images. While much of the work is inextricably linked to the challenges of obsolescence — evoking nostalgia, forgetting, loss, and trauma — the work in *Expired* is ultimately optimistic and poignant. Flaws, tears, creases, stains, accidents, oxidation, film that can only produce hazy sienna shades (or doesn't work at all), old Kindle screens destined for landfill, and photographs of jilting lovers whose faces are scratched out of the frame: everything is fodder for transformation and rebirth."—*Maya Benton, Curator*


Antony Cairns (b. 1980)
E.I. (2010-2016)

Antony Cairns's *E.I.* series reflects his rigorous and creative engagement with new technological approaches to photographic printing. Deploying early generation e-reader screens and digital ink, Cairns's abstracted, ominous dystopian scenes — shot in nighttime Paris, London, Tokyo, Osaka, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas — are arrested on petrified Kindle screens. While plugged into a computer, the selected image is uploaded to a salvaged e-reader, left untouched, and then disconnected. The screen is taken apart from the device, leaving a lasting image. Taking the city and urban development as its ostensible subject, Cairns explores the potential of technological developments utilizing outdated technologies, arresting eerie, abstracted images of uninhabited cities and underground architecture that feel both futuristic and evocative of the past.

Technology has now surpassed the early generations of e-readers. By re-appropriating and reanimating recycled materials that have become redundant, Cairns explores the potential of outdated technologies to present original, contemporary approaches to photography.

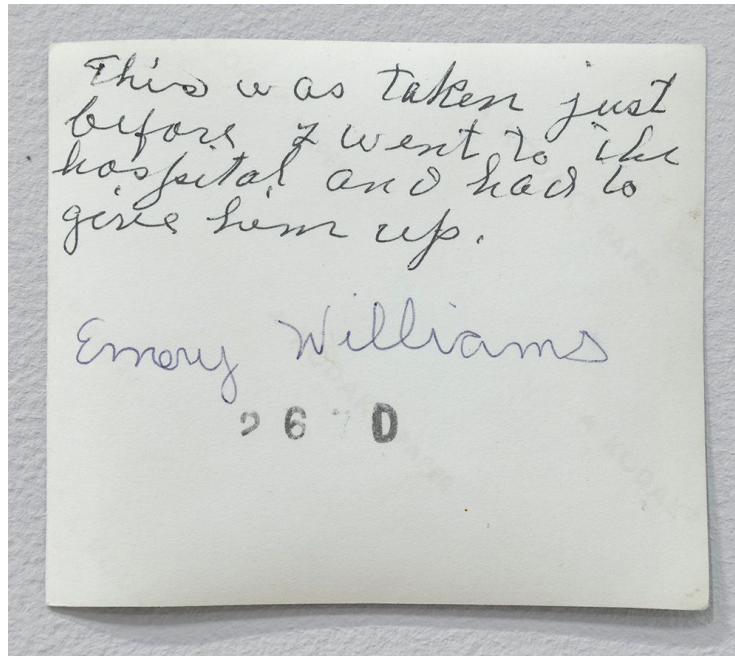
This is the first time that Cairns's work is being exhibited in New York City.



John Cyr (b. 1981)

Developer Trays (2010-2014)

John Cyr's Developer Tray series explores the accumulated history and subtle, minimal beauty of a quotidian, once-ubiquitous tool in a photographer's darkroom: the developer tray. After years of consistent printing, the appearance of each photographer's tray becomes a direct reflection of its treatment and the preferences, quirks, and habits of its owner: frequency of use, maintenance, the type of developer used, the level of print agitation, accumulated tong marks, silver deposits, and chemical stains reflect the user's printing habits and predilections. Cyr's spare, rectangular trays — each of which belonged to a legendary American photographer or was used by an anonymous photographer but found its way into a major American museum collection — preserve the unique habits and markings of its owner. One example represents the convergence of three giants: when Neil Selkirk started printing Diane Arbus's work after she died, he did so using a tray that he borrowed from Richard Avedon and used until a few years ago.


Jason Lazarus (b. 1975)
Recordings #4 (Burying Stalin) (2006-2019)

Recordings #4 (Burying Stalin), a site-specific installation by Jason Lazarus, features the annotations inscribed on the verso of found photographs. "From the beginning of photography, handwritten inscriptions were originally intended for a small, often intimate audience," Lazarus observes, "replaced now by hashtags that immediately become public, performative, and archival acts." *Recordings* explores the shifting meaning of personal photographs, laying clues through the scribbled or carefully limned annotations on the versos of images that Lazarus describes as being orphaned, or at sea: a celebrated milestone that has passed, scrapbook residue, names recorded or crossed out, enigmatic doodles, professions of love, propaganda mementos, cryptic observations, an inside joke that will remain a mystery.

Recordings began in 2006 when Lazarus discovered a family photograph. The verso bore an inscription: Tornado 3 mi west of home. Sept 1970 Lacrosse [Kansas]. "This inscription felt epic," he later recalled, "it was a moment in history when my grandmother, Lavina — whose writing I held in my hand — intersected with a deeper, archetypal, literary, Midwestern unease. The text alone felt more powerful than most of the photographic experiences I've had." Since then, Lazarus has been building the archive from which *Recordings #4* is drawn. His installations are often developed from what he considers a "seed image, a first prompt that starts the rhizomatic pathways." The title comes from a photograph that he encountered on eBay. Sold by a Russian reseller who described the previous owner as "the heir of an old Moscow doctor," the Cyrillic inscription on the verso reads, Burying Stalin. It was taken on March 9, 1953, at the State funeral of Stalin.

Lazarus embraces the poetry and content of negative spaces — both the verso text sans image (and what we subjectively imagine), and the negative spaces in the presentation on the wall — an acknowledgment of the personal complexity that comprises each viewer's experience.

Installations of Lazarus's *Recordings* project have been commissioned and acquired by SFMoMA and the Art Institute of Chicago; this is the first time that this work is being shown in New York.


Susan Mikula (b. 1958)
on the Cruising Cloud—/The interdicted Land (2017) Picture Book (2013-2015)

Susan Mikula embraces the unpredictability of expired Polaroid film and antique Polaroid cameras. Her family had a Polaroid 100 Land Camera in the early 1960s, and she was a teenager in the mid-1970s when Edwin Lands invention was in its commercial heyday. "Polaroid has been part of my early photography consciousness since childhood, that early color peel apart film that needed to be coated to stabilize," Mikula recalls. Decades later, working with a mix of old and new technologies, she constructs her work within rigorous, self-imposed limits and a meticulous process: available light, modified vintage cameras, and a stockpile of film that is no longer made and often refuses to yield an image or, when it does, contains what most photographers would lament as imperfections, but which she welcomes. *Expired* presents two distinct bodies of work by Mikula: *on the Cruising Cloud—/The interdicted Land (2017)*, made with antique Polaroid cameras, and *Picture Book (2013-2015)*, made with expired, fugitive Polaroid film.

In 2017, Mikula was commissioned by the U.S. Department of State to photograph the border town of Laredo, Texas, amidst polarizing national debates about immigration and border security in the American South. The resulting body of work, *on the Cruising Cloud—/The interdicted Land* (now in the permanent collection of the US Embassy, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico), is being exhibited in the United States for the first time. Mikula describes her photographs of this iconic border town as "rooted in that deep and complex history of shared cultures, shifting dominance and the present tense moment in relations along the international border." Against this backdrop, the work — made with an antique camera that embodies the vision of America as it was in the 1970s and 80s — conveys a sense of foreboding and unease.

In *Picture Book*, Mikulas antique camera and degraded film produce images that recall hazy childhood memories in vivid, saturated color. Mikula plays with scale and embraces the shifts and degradations of the film; the effect gives her photographs a familiar, lyrical, haunting, and intimate sensibility.



Alison Rossiter (b. 1953)

Latent Prints (2007-2017) Film Photograms (2010)

Alison Rossiter's pioneering experimentations with expired photographic papers and camera-less prints bridge her decades as a photography conservator with a concentrated, innovative, and restrained aesthetic sensibility as a contemporary artist. The titles of Rossiter's work reference the manufacturer, product name, and expiration date to indicate its original time frame, and the date that she processed the paper, signaling times passing. Her work evokes historical events or personal memories that the paper had been created to capture. *Expired* includes the first sheet of expired photographic paper that Rossiter tested, in 2007, from a box of Eastman Kodak Kodabromide E3 that expired on May 1, 1946.

Rossiter's *Latent prints (2007-2017)* in *Expired* are made with obsolete papers from the 1900s to the 1950s that have endured damage, degradation and transformation from a variety of circumstances including light leaks, humidity and mold from moisture, oxidation and reduction (silver tarnish) from exposure to air, physical impact, insects nibbling the gelatin emulsion down to the paper base, and overall aging.

Four of Rossiter's *Film Photograms* — which are being exhibited in New York for the first time — are included in this exhibition alongside the expired papers for which she is internationally acclaimed.