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Marieta Chirulescu

KUNSTHALLE BASEL

Steinenberg 7

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View of “Marieta Chirulescu,” 2010. From left: *Untitled (Studio Loop)*, 2010; *Untitled*, 2010; *Untitled (Black, White, Red)*, 2010; *Untitled (Forma 2/Form 2)*, 2010; *Untitled*, 2010.

When one speaks of “painting practices” nowadays, it’s often the stuff of photography — analog and digital printing, the ever-investigated photocopy, even Photoshop — that is meant. Still, the Berlin-based Romanian artist Marieta Chirulescu stands out: Her subtle, suggestive works on canvas and paper, though invested in profane photographic processes and proposals, immediately invoke the pointedly sublime abstract painting of the mid-twentieth century.

The gray fields in her ink jet–printed canvases and Laserchrome prints on view in this exhibition conjure both Color Field paintings and 1960s-era monochromes, though Chirulescu’s forms often come from copying the blank underside of a scanner’s lid. Likewise, vertical black stripes streaking down the centers of canvases or delimiting their perimeters bring to mind ghosts of Barnett Newman past, though Chirulescu’s lines result from the black frames of photographic negatives writ — and reproduced — large. One sherbet-colored canvas, a black aperture superimposed on its tangerine field, even suggests Richard Diebenkorn’s 1967-85 “Ocean Park” series.

Such windows — both domestic and digital — are everywhere, along with framing devices and their attending metaphors: doors, books, mirrors. This spectral, domestic architecture might allude to the project’s provenance: a trove of black-and-white photographs, discovered by Chirulescu, that depict her father’s early professional life in the Communist country. The archive often yields the material basis for her work. Indeed, though Chirulescu’s interest in technological procedures and the formal flaws that result brings to mind the work of photocopy-obsessed peers like Wade Guyton, her pieces stand apart. With their disarmingly analog beauty and the very material world they evoke, her works appear to be less about technology per se than its residual effects on (and capacity to describe) memory, personhood, statehood, and, yes, canvas.

— Quinn Latimer

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