

Andrea Longacre-White: *Ceiling*  
Bellwether offsite, Cleveland

Originally published online on *Arthopper.org*, May 1, 2014

“Photography” is an increasingly ambiguous and ubiquitous activity. Lingering anxiety over analog versus digital formats, combined with the growing field of image capturing tools (scanners, webcams, screen grabs, and cell phones), make for an ever-evolving discourse on the medium’s ontology and craft. Andrea Longacre-White’s work enters this dialog with a minimal, DIY composure, a messy sleight of hand that revels in the open, lived-with potential of contemporary image making.

Longacre-White’s exhibition in Cleveland is part of Bellwether, an ongoing series of talks and events initiated by the Cleveland Museum of Art’s Contemporary Art Society. Popping up in different locations, Bellwether’s activities draw attention to places and practices that deepen and shift experiences of the post-industrial cityscape. Curator Lisa Kurzner, with the help of the St. Clair Superior Development Corporation, found a room in a vacant building on the corner of 55th and St. Clair (most recently used as the Goodrich-Gannett Neighborhood Center, and originally as a Carnegie Library). The setting is perfect: it amplifies the artwork’s used materiality as well as its liminal sensibility.

The exhibition includes a reiteration of *Ceiling* (2013), a tiled, top-to-bottom wall installation of 30 prints; a series of four untitled works based on iPad scans (all 2014); and white plaster sculptures of Apple products. Pervading all is a sort of subconscious imaginary of obsolescence; the works prefigure a future that will render their subject matter archaic.

For the iPad scans, a tablet is placed face down on a scanner, the warm light of which activates the touch screen, causing it to load a new image or webpage. Capturing unseen, transitional moments, the resulting scans become foundations for additional glitchy layering: output, torn, collaged, rescanned, output again (and so on...). The prints themselves are re-printed on, multiple times, and the ink takes on a textural, gloopy depth in parts. Though overshadowed by manipulation, indexicality nevertheless plays a role in these works—contact, time, ordering, and the element of chance those variables produce, is what gives them an inherently “photographic” aspect. It also comes through in surprising moments, such as the clearly illuminated fingerprints that dot the iPad screens (apparently, the artist never cleans them), as well as in the buckles and punctures on the prints themselves. Installed directly on the wall with large staples, the prints have numerous holes from previous hangings, a detail which stresses their mutability. These are objects that have been paused at various points in their becoming, and are now similarly at rest.

*Ceiling* takes as its subject a silver sheeting material used to line the ceilings of industrial warehouses and studios in LA. At her artist talk, Longacre-White described her interest in this material and piece as something that can appear as other than itself, a perplexity that pervades her work. Uniformity of display delays the noticing of difference: a few of the sheets are made of the silvery material themselves; one is a photograph of the material installed, and the rest are digital echoes (images of images). Variations in scale, and accumulated edges within the frames, subtly suggest the iterative process; and then, there are completely brilliant moments like the hovering mouse arrow in the highest row, which feels like a quivering, ill-fated JENGA block that sends the whole tower tumbling down. Even when you know that you are looking at an image of an image (as opposed to an image of a thing), it’s habit to read into said image a degree of referential integrity, until said integrity is punctured—in this case, by the slyest apparition of the artists’ hand. And then, you step back and the installation re-composes itself as an entirety, a whole. You start to understand it as a mass with this delightfully complicated pictorial architecture. A confounding image-thingness.

While the print-based works have an unfamiliar, urgent energy, the sculptural works are simpler and much quieter. Made with Apple products, and plaster casts of them, they extend the artist’s interest in copies and camouflage, nestling up to walls and gathering in a corner. Oddly enough, it’s as if these objects have *less* volume than the flat prints; they are dummies, almost ghost-like. This zero-dimensionality could be just the point; fossils of departed spirits, they command affection mixed with antipathy, lolling about as droll techno-vanities.

- Rose Bouthillier