

BARTLEBY REVIEW

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During the Day Emile Rubino

Stephen Waddell

'During the Day'

*Monte Clark Gallery
#105-525 Great Northern Way
Through October 15*

While a great number of artists, photographers and curators of all sorts keep trying to somehow define and redefine photography in our age of "constant flux", Stephen Waddell's exhibition at Monte Clark Gallery comes as a refreshing endeavor in this otherwise pompous ontological atmosphere. Waddell's interest in depiction reminds us that some things fundamentally remain stable, and that it is still valid to "just" go out with a camera *During the Day* to "simply" record and portray our everyday.

When entering the gallery space, we are presented with a 34" x 43" pigment print entitled *Jelena* (2014), which depicts a young woman sitting in a coffee shop, absorbed in her own activity behind a laptop computer. While the printing technology used to produce this picture—as well as the picture itself—suggest our digital age, the composition contrasts these factors by



bringing us back to traditional scenes found throughout the history of art. Indeed, this photograph conceivably calls to mind Edgar Degas's infamous *Absinthe Drinker* (1875) or perhaps Gustave Caillebotte's *At the Cafe* (1880); both are painters that had strong relationships to the photographic medium.

Regarding this particular photograph, it is also worthy to point out that it had indirectly appeared in *Dream Location*, an exhibition that Waddell curated at Presentation House Gallery less than a year ago. In this previous exhibition, he displayed photographic documentation of his studio's pin board entitled *Study for Dream Location* (2014), where he invited us to look at the assemblage of pictures that potentially played an important role in the curating of the exhibition. There was *Jelena*, tacked on the wall amongst other pictures. Today, this photograph has made its way from the artist's pin board to the wall of a gallery.



However, its provisional aspect remains intact and even reinforced through this contextual transition, leading us to reconsider the immediacy of the photographic process in which the idea of the study usually tends to be excluded, given the subtractive nature of the medium.

This idea of "the study" is furthered in *Agrigento no. 1, 2 and 3* (2014) displayed together on the main wall of the gallery. The triptych, if it can be qualified as such, is composed of three photographs taken within short intervals. As a woman wearing a pink scarf around her head walks away from a temple and towards the lens of the photographer, one notices subtle shifts in framing from one picture to the next. The first two photographs are printed 34" x 43", whereas the third one has been printed slightly larger, 46.5" x 59". Through this play on size, Waddell seems to surreptitiously refer to the act of editing—the act through which a photographer is customarily led to choose one picture over another.

Furthermore, by showing multiple photographs of the same subject matter, the artist breaks the myth of "The One" photograph approach practiced by, for instance, William Eggleston, who claimed to only take one single frame of a subject and move on. Here, Waddell shows us research, a study on a particular figure. He tries to make us see the barely perceptible shift of position that occurs from one picture to the other, as he hints at what is at stake in the work of a photographer who literally has to frame the world as it is.

Emile Rubino