

RYAN LEE

RYAN LEE GALLERY LLC
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Sandy Skoglund

Food Still Lifes

July 12 – August 11, 2017

Reception: Tuesday, July 18, 5:30–7:30PM

RYAN LEE is pleased to present *Food Still Lifes*, an exhibition of the 1978 photographic series of the same name by Sandy Skoglund. Each of the *Food Still Lifes* considers the staging and arranging not only of traditional still life compositions but of 70s consumer culture. Though celebrated as early examples of the high-anxiety psychedelic pop tableaux for which Skoglund is best known, the complete series of ten photographs has been exhibited only twice previously.

Each image in the series depicts a meticulous arrangement of processed food – canned meat or vegetables, marble cake, and cookies – against vividly patterned contact papers. These brightly colored surroundings mimic the patterns of the food itself and fill the frame of the image, creating a dizzying perspectival distortion. In *Peas on a Plate*, a diamond of green peas sits atop a polka-dotted red plate at the center of the image. The spherical shape of the peas is repeated in the polka dots and the background – a grid of alternating red, black, and yellow squares each with 16 evenly spaced white circles. The resulting scene is a vibrating layering of color and shape that is both whimsical and disconcerting. *Luncheonmeat on a Counter* presents a sliced slab of meat laid directly onto marbled contact paper. Simultaneously alluring and repelling, the variegated swirls of the golden contact paper are reflected in the red and pink color variations of the meat. Three images in the series take this perceptual disruption even further. *Orange on Box*, *Yellow Box*, and *Two Boxes* present angled boxes that are covered by the same repetitively patterned design as the backdrops themselves. As the viewer continues to look, the photographs appear to buzz, recede, and emerge.

Skoglund was drawn to this subject matter by the universality of food consumption (“After all, everyone eats,” she has said) and by her fascination with the commercial food industry’s manipulation of its products and the role photography plays in this. She was struck by the irony that, as the processed food industry continued to expand, human intervention was increasingly required to produce the illusion that these synthetic products were fresh and natural. In a 2008 interview Skoglund explained, “In the medium of commercial photography, the truth of the food is sacrificed for the appearance to the camera, resulting in shiny oily coatings to make something look juicy, and drops of dimethicone to imitate the sweat on a cold glass of freshly poured beer.” This awareness imbues Skoglund’s work with its characteristic combination of familiarity and discomfort, humor and depth, ease and anxiety.

Sandy Skoglund (b. 1946 Weymouth, MA) received her BA from Smith College in 1968 and her MFA from University of Iowa in 1972. Skoglund has exhibited at Art Gallery of Ontario; Aspen Art Museum; Minneapolis Institute of Art; The Morgan Library, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Bordeaux; and Whitney Museum, New York, among others. Her work is held in the permanent collections of Brooklyn Museum of Art; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; High Museum, Atlanta; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Mjellby Museum, Halmstad; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; and Yale University Gallery, New Haven, among others. Skoglund’s work has been recently published in *Photography: The Definitive Visual History* by Tom Ang (DK

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Publishing, 2014) and *The Photography Book* (Phaidon, 2014). Selected images from *Food Still Lives* are included in the Aperture publication *Feast for the Eyes: The Story of Food in Photography* (Aperture, 2017) as well as an accompanying traveling exhibition of the same name, curated by Susan Bright and Denise Wolff.

¹ Interview between Sandy Skoglund and Luca Panaro, August 2, 2008, in conjunction with an exhibition at the Betta Frigieri Arte Contemporanea, Modena, Italy. Sept. 19, 2008- Nov. 1, 2008.

Concurrently on view is Clifford Ross: *Wood Waves* (July 12 - August 11). For press inquiries, please contact Bridget Casey at bridget@ryanleegallery.com or 212-397-0742.