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Daniel Gordon
Orange Sunrise with Flowers, Fruit, and Vessels
Abstract Still-lives Concerned with Design, Color and Form
Nazarian / Curcio
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by Jody Zellen



Daniel Gordon is one of a number of contemporary artists who work within the parameters of “*Constructed Photography*.” In addition to Gordon, some artists/photographers who work this way are Matt Lipps, Chris Engman and Thomas Demand. Constructed photographs are images created in the studio and shot from a particular vantage point. They use carefully created objects set on table tops, or made to scale so they cohere within the image to form a believable, though hand-crafted scene. Gordon has created unsettling Cubist-like portraits as well as still-lives that are assembled from different pieces of cut paper as tableaus and then photographed. In the exhibition titled *Orange Sunrise with Flowers, Fruit, and Vessels*, he presents both large-scale, colorful still lives as well as paper sculptures in the form of ceramic vases. The vases are a recent addition to his oeuvre and elucidate the complex process he goes through to construct his photographic works.

Presented in a line on white pedestals, Gordon’s vases and vessels recall museum displays of traditional and classical pottery, however, his renditions are invented and entirely modern. These sculptures are made from carefully assembling cut-out shapes from inkjet enlargements to become three-dimensional collages. *Checkered Vessel in Green* (all works 2024) stands twenty-inches high and can be seen from all sides. It alternates rows of what originally would have been different colors of green ceramics divided by black lines of grout. *Pitcher with Shapes* is a white pitcher decorated with an array of geometric shapes all cut from enlargements and reassembled.

The sculptures on display are similar to objects reproduced in Gordon’s photographs. *Still Life With Figs and Oranges* is a large image (74 inches high). Here, Gordon creates a table top display consisting of numerous vases and fruits organized on a table and shelf. Though the image is flat, the setting has dimensionality. On a purple shelf trimmed in bright green are both figs and oranges, as well as two vases filled with plants that cast a shadow on the back wall of the scene. In the foreground is a rounded table on which sits random figs, figs in a bowl, a smaller vase without flowers and two oranges. What is fascinating about the image is that it is entirely constructed out of paper, and each object is made by assembling photographic fragments. In this image, Gordon is attuned to color opposites as the orange vase casts a blue-purple shadow that has a red-orange outline giving the entire composition a Matisse-like aura.

Oranges with a Blue Crown of Thorns is a smaller composition that also plays with the relationships between flat background colors and assembled objects. Four different sized and shaped oranges, a vase with blue flowers, a smaller empty vase as well as a pitcher rest on a red shelf trimmed in cyan. Below the shelf is an orange plane — either the wall behind or the shelf's edge— and behind the still-life are colorful silhouettes that follow the contours of the vase and pitcher against an orange background framed with cyan. *Aloe With Onions and Zucchini* is also a collection of vases and vegetables, this time on top of a bright yellow table trimmed with green. Here, Gordon arranges onions and a zucchini in relation to two vases, one empty, the other containing an aloe plant. Again, these objects cast shadows onto the background, this time presented as a white void outlined in black.

Once one has a clear understanding of Gordon's labor-intensive process and the mental activity of de- and re-constructing are completed, the works can then be appreciated for their formal beauty, inventive color and curious scale-shifts. In the end, Gordon's still lifes are not about perception, nor the illusionistic properties of photography, but rather they are abstract still-lives that are concerned with design, color and form. He delights in the activity of transforming a photograph of an object into a sculpture and then back into a flat image as he explores the relationship between the real and its reproduction.

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