

Artforum, September 19, 2014

ARTFORUM

David Benjamin Sherry

SALON 94 | BOWERY

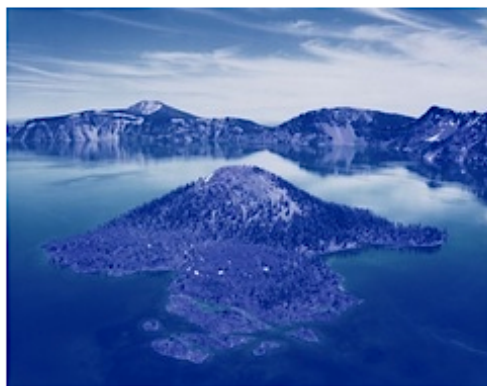
243 Bowery

September 7–October 25

This salon-style hanging of David Benjamin Sherry's work is made up of a profusion of paradoxes—campy landscapes manipulated in the darkroom, punk-inspired portraiture, and an enormous sculpture of a Kelvin thermometer—that require an investment in slowness, a willingness to consider how potent social commentary can emerge from the meandering crevices of a mountain. It is as if Jimmy DeSana and David Lynch met on the road and decided to mine the gung-ho American idealism of Edward Weston and Frederick Sommer for its previously unconsidered potential.

Sherry's insertion of queer themes into the trajectory of modernist photography gives us space to stop and consider the erotic body of the image itself. Crisply rendered and awash in flamboyant colors, Sherry's landscapes, shown concurrently at Danziger Gallery, are in a perpetual process of unity and visual decomposition akin to that of the human body. In *Deep Blue Sea Rising, Oregon*, 2014, for example, Sherry's vision of the American landscape breaks down into the tactile skin of the sea, only to be brought back together by swaths of pigment. It is a similar operation to Amy Sillman's rendering of her friends as quasi-abstract figures, as in her painting *N & O, v3*, 2006.

It is no mistake, then, that presiding over the exhibition is a self-portrait of Sherry in drag, an image that sets in motion a new understanding of photography as an embodied medium, even in the impersonal haze of the digital age. Through a distinct intimacy with the land, the body, and the darkroom, Sherry's photographs strive to be as supple and complex as skin itself, and in so doing, they call into question the passé one-dimensionality of formalist photography and Romanticism.



David Benjamin Sherry, *Deep Blue Sea Rising, Oregon*, 2014, gelatin silver print, color, 30 × 40".

— *William J. Simmons*