

## NOV 16 EXHIBITION REVIEW: UTA BARTH

### REVIEWS



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Uta Barth’s exhibition titled “Peripheral Vision” at The Getty Centre presents a statement of her central artistic concerns. By zooming in on the illuminated surfaces of various colors and textures, she emphasizes the complementary relationship of light and shadows. By manipulating our sense of depth and playing with camera angles, she makes us reassert our vantage point as viewers and rethink the camera’s relationship to its subjects. By highlighting the vivid contrast between black and white in a picture where intricate and bare branches are set against a foil-like sky, she asserts the richness of monochrome prints. Barth’s works play with light and colors to appeal to our senses, expanding our imagination.

We do not often associate sunlight with geometry or lines since it radiates and glows rather than projects like a spotlight. Barth plays with two seemingly opposing elements – shadows and light – to show that they are two sides of the same coin. Shadows give light shape and dimension, reminding us of its amorphous and ethereal quality. Two pictures, placed side-by-side, of light filtering through a white linen curtain and appearing as wavy beams on the bottom of the wall reveals the rhythm and musicality of undulating lines. In the picture on the left-hand side of the exhibition, a hand pinches the curtain and casts a wider shadow on the wall – the result of which is a narrower beam than the one on the right, though no less rhythmic.



Thinking about...*"In the Light and Shadow of Morandi"*, 2018 Uta Barth (born in West Germany, 1958, active in the United States) Pigment print Getty Museum © Uta Barth 2021.15



Sundial (07.6), 2007 Uta Barth (born in West Germany, 1958, active in the United States) Chromogenic prints © Uta Barth

In a similar fashion, Barth places a camera at a fixed point to distinguish the shadows of the same window frame captured at different times of the day. The shadow of the window frame on the left hangs low and occupies only half of the frame. The shadow on the right, however, rises above the couch in the foreground and is an expansion of what is seen on the left – it is spread across the wall. The way the shadow moves from the bottom to the center of the frame signals the rising of the sun and the passage of time. The smooth and sinuous or rigid and edgy lines are created by the co-mingling of light and shadow.



Ground #41, 1994 Uta Barth (born in West Germany, 1958, active in the United States) Chromogenic print © Uta Barth



Untitled #5, 1979–82; printed 2010 Uta Barth (born in West Germany, 1958, active in the United States) Pigment print Courtesy of the artist; 1301PE, Los Angeles; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles © Uta Barth EX.2022.1.65

In addition to playing with the visual effects of daylight streaming into the various corners of her abode, Barth forces the viewer to look at pictures that are deliberately out-of-focus to wrest our attention away from the minutiae to the silhouettes of objects. A blurry picture of a bookshelf, for example, denies the viewer the books' titles, authors and publishers. We can only make out from their spines that they are of a myriad of colors – the books lean on each other and are tilting on one shelf whilst standing upright and tall on another. We contemplate the relationship of the books to each other by the way they are organized visually, rather than attempting to understand them intellectually by categorizing them by their genres, subject matters, and time or place of publication. The notion of merely looking at a book's shape, size, and color and never opening or reading it seems counter-intuitive. The substance of a book is forever lost and inaccessible. However, this seems to be Barth's preoccupation – to look at a familiar object through a different lens so that we can understand our relationship to the everyday in novel ways.

Barth's work is minimalistic and innovative; far from tawdry and ostentatious. By adding to or subtracting from an image, she changes our vision and brings new insights into the mundane, quiet moments of our days.



white blind (bright red) (02.13), 2002 Uta Barth (born West Germany, 1958, active in The United States) Chromogenic prints © Uta Barth

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