



Obsolete

Feralmade show highlights a dying photographic medium

MATT MORRIS // JUN 25, 2008

It's sad news that Polaroid has discontinued production of most of its instant photo hardware and film. Feralmade Gallery's current exhibition seems conceived to iterate that sadness.

Obsolete is a remarkable sendoff featuring the work of Joseph Koehl, Melissa Fields and Ryan Thomas. The included artworks are all made with Polaroid's instant photography processes and emphasize the ephemeral, slight and somewhat deviant qualities inherent to the medium.

Of the three, Koehl's work seems most occupied with stretching the experimental possibilities of Polaroids, transforming the prints through enlargements, transfers and other alternative processes.

Melissa Fields' installation of Polaroid prints is strung along two silvery clothes lines and is accompanied by a typewritten title on a dark crimson card. "The Day You Left" is an elegiac narrative in which glittery, blurry morning shots give way to seductive action that ends in dusky blackness. Bare shoulders and cumulus piles of blonde hair skim in and out of the shots, evoking the same sensual, blithe conceptualism found in the photo-documentary projects of French artist Sophie Calle, whose *Exquisite Pain* — a dossier of photos and notes — resulted from a traumatic phone-call break-up with a lover in Paris. Like Calle, Fields organizes a day's evidence into a narrative that remains undisclosed, aside from the tonal transition from day to night into departure.

The right wall is occupied by a bar of Polaroids stacked two high by Ryan Thomas. His shots of uninhabited scenes are strikingly subtle and sensationally beautiful. Roaming both indoors and out, the images isolate details of spaces to provocative effect. The

yellow of speed bumps or the red of a lawn ornament yelp with visually poetic volume. The vignette like shading in most of Thomas' prints reinforces the vacancy in Fields' work. This nostalgic ache is sensibly appropriate in an exhibition marking the evident end of an age in photography.

OBSOLETE continues at Feralmade through June 30.

<https://www.citybeat.com/arts-culture/visual-arts/article/13019000/obsolete-review>