

Art in America

REVIEWS FEB. 17, 2015

Sam Samore

NEW YORK,
at Team

by Dan Allegretto

Sam Samore:
*Accumulation of
Shapes: Part One*
(#06), 2014, pigment
ink on paper, 29 by 49
inches; at Team.



Sam Samore's new show, "Accumulation of Shapes (Part One)," appealed to a certain kind of spectator—clingly and obsessive in relationships. Samore exhibits an intense desire for his subject but you can't tell if it's mutual.

The photographs are more cerebral and glowy than the fetishized, cartoonish aesthetic of film noir that Samore alludes to. His black-and-white portraits of French actress Juliette Dol, printed in pigment ink, are cropped and spliced. A thin black bar in each work divides two prints selected from the same short sequence of exposures. They look bleak from a distance but when you get close the delicacy of the tones and subtle lighting bring a warmth and a humanity to the subject. Instead of glamorizing Dol with noir, Samore delves deep. He's like a private investigator who misses the crucial frames needed to understand his person of interest. Or he's intentionally hiding them from you.

The power of these images relies on the viewer's own psychology. If you've ever been a little too into someone, standing before these images might send a ping to the back of your head, a reminder that sometimes you can be a creep. Samore seems to enjoy staring at someone he's fond of so intently that he wants to stop time and roam around her space for a little while. It might be easier to *really* look at her once a print is made and hung on a wall and Dol can't respond to his gaze. Maybe he could figure out something profound that he couldn't otherwise, with the earth spinning and life happening all around the two of them. Perhaps it's just her outer beauty he truly admires.

Obsession creates a rift or a split in the mind. Fantasy and reality never meet. Like the black bar dividing Samore's composite images, there is a harsh void that the maker and viewer want to fill but can't. What you're left with is the moment before and the moment after a brief event. It's a small fraction of time and you can easily guess what it would *look* like, but the drama caused by the intensity of the missing piece feels tragic, almost to the point where it should be mourned. Samore doesn't show you an unbridled connection. Instead, you see a visually disrupted encounter that proves being this attached to a person will founder in the obsessor's imagination.

The final image in the gallery, hung on the back wall, was the only one without a vertical bar. It's a close-up of Dol's face, so out of focus that she seems to be vanishing from real time and space. At a certain point, the obsessor always realizes it's wrong to yearn for someone unattainable, but can't detach completely. Naming the series "Accumulation of Shapes (Part One)" implies that the artist has collected love interests in the past and they have faded from distinct memory into abstract forms. The desire lingers, but now it's time to focus on a newer, brighter subject.