

SAN FRANCISCO

# Tammy Rae Carland

SILVERMAN GALLERY

On view in Tammy Rae Carland's recent exhibition were twelve color photographs of aging objects—a coffee mug, knitted pot holders, faded Valentine's Day candy boxes, and the like. These things appear to be digitally excised from their original context, to be arranged on a white background like pinned butterflies. They have the crisp, uninflected look of objects imaged on a scanner. Some of the works depict single objects, while the key ones portray numerous items that together suggest narratives. The tone is cool, which counters the forlornness of these items, yet the pictures, when surrounding the viewer, also impart the strange simultaneous comfort and anxiety afforded by things.

This view of objects as psychologically charged is affirmed by the show's title, "An Archive of Feelings," which conjures a mixture of order and unruliness and is, the press release reveals, a reference to a book by queer and feminist theorist Ann Cvetkovich. The theoretical foundation, which suggests an objective intellectual distance, however, seems at odds with the almost sentimental quality of the project itself, which appears, given the show's largest work, *My Inheritance* (all works 2008), to have been partially inspired by the death of the artist's mother. This print depicts twenty-one feeling-triggering objects that Carland scavenged from her mother's house after she passed away: a bingo card, a floral apron, a tattered vintage map of San Francisco, almost-completed crossword puzzles, a ring displaying family birthstones, and a little book embossed in gold with *DIARY 1979*. The selection conveys that strangely impersonal aura of an estate sale, where one person's treasures pass to antique dealers or Dumpsters, and trigger emotions along the way.

This isn't exactly new territory, but it is rich with possibility, and Carland's project achieves a vital balance of warmth and critical distance, mundane intimacy and white-cube formalism. In earlier works, not on view here, she explored notions of domestic life and its residue on objects—her series "Lesbian Beds," 2002, depicts rumpled sheets and pillows, seen from above, without occupants. In the "Archive" works, Carland approaches relationships and community through objects that are more distanced from the interconnections they imply. *One Love Leads to Another* is, like other works in the series, an arrangement of things excised from life, but ones that convey more personal sensibilities and interactions than do pot holders and coffee mugs. The work depicts a loose grid of cassettes and their handwritten, collaged covers. The tapes—from mixes (*Soundtrack to the Revolution, A Bunch O' Punk Rock*) to recordings like *Yoko On Art*, which may or may not hold a lecture given by the Japanese artist—are essentially time capsules in a technologically outmoded format. Like old letters, such tapes are only sporadically revisited, at which times they reveal what memories, what sound tracks, maintain emotional and pop-cultural relevance.



Tammy Rae Carland,  
*Imperfect Lovers*,  
2008, digital C-print,  
24 x 36".

Carland also exhibited three short videos (none more than three minutes long) that combine home movies, found footage (both staged and documentary), and new shots of domestic interiors. In many respects, they're video versions of mix tapes, sequencing as they do numerous images and sounds in a single, time-based package. Melding past and present, Carland's approach here is far more naturalistic and sincere than that in the more packaged photographs—this selection seems less "art" than personal journal or homemade video collage. Such works counteract the clinical environment of the gallery, and if they aren't the most successful elements of the exhibition, their warmth posits an archive structured with elastic ambiguity, an effect that reflects back favorably onto the project as a whole.

—Glen Helfand