

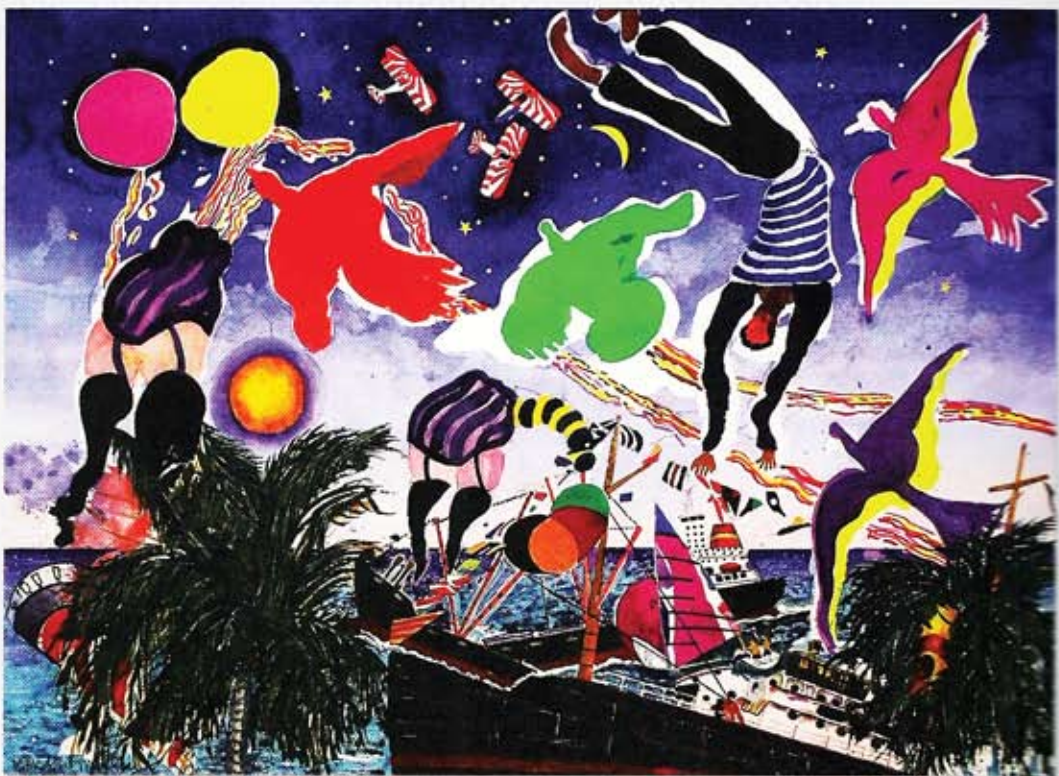
## BARBARA KASTEN

Jessica Silverman Gallery,  
San Francisco

In a passage from his 1658 treatise 'The Garden of Cyrus', Sir Thomas Browne wrote of a room wherein 'pictures from objects', projected upon the walls of a dim enclosure, were 'answerable to paper'. Browne, a hermetically inclined English polymath, was describing a camera obscura. A mechanism involving the channelling and transposition of light in the creation of a reflected image, a camera obscura operates much in the same way as a human eye does – a fact not lost upon Browne. Reading his treatise, one could be forgiven in thinking the detailing of 'pyramidal rays', tenebrific rooms and the mirrored transposition of light upon entities of 'crystalline humour' was a description of Barbara Kasten's recent show at Jessica Silverman Gallery, 'Behind the Curtain'.

Papering over the windows, Kasten transformed the interior of the exhibition space into a darkened chamber. On one side of the gallery, illumination from an effulgent neon sculpture was accompanied by a projected video of abstracted architectural edifices flickering upon the opposite wall – both components of the installation, *Glass Curtain* (2012). Drawn from a career now spanning more than four decades, the abstract photographic still lifes for which Kasten has become known were interspersed throughout the show, along with her earlier large-format Polaroids, such as *Construct VI-B* and *Construct XI-A* (both 1981).

Kasten's images are notable for their sculptural arrangement of tinted geometric mirrors and employment of dislocated perspective. Recently, however, the artist has forgone densely configured architectural compositions in favour of more minimal scenes. In *Studio Construct 127* (2011), for instance, the delicate placement of clear Perspex panes offers limpid meditation upon the subtleties of optical perception.



If Kasten's early work could be seen as preoccupied with the qualities of reflection, her later images eschew opacity in favour of transparency. Yet throughout her career, Kasten's exacting still lifes have pushed at the relationship between the qualities of light and the character of its reception – and light is paramount here.

Beginning in 1972, the decade Kasten spent living in Los Angeles found her drawn in particular to artists affiliated with the Light and Space movement. In the vibrant panes of colour and Minimalist materiality of *Construct PC/XI* or *Construct XV-A* (both 1982), Kasten's manipulation of optics in the manifestation of chromatic aberration underlies the creative influences of James Turrell and James Welling. Elsewhere, as with *Construct LB/6* (1982), Kasten's sculptural play between the structural and spectral brings to mind the early installations of Laddie John Dill.

During the time of Browne and Isaac Newton, the study of optics represented not only the potential for new scientific knowledge, but also a means to achieve a deeper sense of the celestial: light made evident, was evidence of the divine. Kasten's 'Behind the Curtain' reflects a career that is nothing short of empirical.

JOSEPH AKEL

1  
Barbara Kasten  
*Construct PC/XI*, 1982,  
Polacolor print, 61 x 51 cm

2  
Malcolm Morley  
*Kites Over Miami*, 2006,  
watercolour on paper, 79 x 98 cm

3  
Matthew Buckingham  
*Celeritas*, 2009,  
screened letters on blackboard,  
dimensions variable

## MALCOLM MORLEY

Parrish Art Museum,  
Water Mill

'Malcolm Morley: Painting, Paper, Process' at the Parrish Art Museum is only a fragment of the artist's sprawling oeuvre, presenting Morley's use of paper in 49 works since 1986. His first major retrospective came in 1984. Organized by Nicholas Serota at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, it travelled around Europe and the US to much acclaim. Comprising works from 1965 to 1982, the show was a testament to Morley's dominance in the nascent Neo-Expressionist movement. Previously, he was often exhibited in connection with the reawakening of realist painting during the late 1960s and '70s. His 1965 painting of a postcard depiction of the S.S. *United States* in New York harbour (*S.S. United States with New York Skyline*) prefigured later work by urban photorealists like Richard Estes and Ralph Goings. Though celebrated as a pioneer throughout his early career, he has more recently opted for deadpan reproductions that tempt associations with philistinism. The past decade has witnessed Morley's visually seductive reproductions drawn from popular culture, folding his photorealist practice into what one might accurately term 'art fair art': bright, legible, super-realist renderings of athletes, racing and iconic photographs. Motorcycle racers, football players and photographed scenes of ships are celebrations of banality reproduced as mere paint, mere surface.

Morley has a stated inability to fix on one style, claiming a continual impulse to reinvent. His production having ranged from AbEx idioms to the most formally precise photo-realism, a consistency remains only his systematic mining of his own subconscious. Like a Freudian iconography of his own life, Morley's subject matter – including ships, nautical scenes and World War I fighter planes – is deeply connected to his psychoanalysis. Paradoxically, few artists offer more overt

