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Zoe Crosher @ 65GRAND

May 20, 2009, 8:29 pm

Filed under: [Artist Run Spaces](#), [Chicago](#), [Openings](#), [Reviews](#)

I should admit straight out that my impression of Zoe Crosher's [Selections from the Analog Collection](#) opening at [65GRAND](#) last May 1st was undoubtedly effected by the fact that I could not feel my legs. I'd become disconnected somewhere between the winding, uneven stairclimb up to the gallery and the two full days of no-where-else-to-go standing and wandering like an art fair zombie/pilgrim at the Merchandise Mart, so with floating hips and two smoking sockets I prepared for what I hoped would be the last art I would see that day.

I thought it was a fascinating show.



As the title suggests, Crosher is here working from her massive [Michelle Du Bois](#) project, a corpus of photographs and journals obtained from Du Bois herself that has the tragic, enslaving qualities of being both so vast as to confound curation and so compelling as to demand it. In its natural state, the project contains the scattered narrative of Du Bois' travels abroad as shown through her own obsessive photographic documentation. While that alone would be enough to support a show like this, in *Selections* we see Crosher binding down the wild *Found Magazine* quality of the word in order to tell a different story — one that exists as much on the backs of the photographs as on their faces.

Selections from the Analog Collection is not about the life story of Michelle Du Bois, nor is it about the life story of analog photography, though it is about both. The overlap is what concerns Crosher, and given the incredible presence of Du Bois and the relative silence of Kodak paper, turning focus to the intersection isn't easy. The approach Crosher takes is algebraic and, given its complexity, surprisingly successful.



Zoe Crosher, A Kodak Paper, no.1, 2009

By photographing the backs of aging analog photographs from her Du Bois collection (some with handwritten notes or tears or simply the Kodak logo), Crosher negates the purposed narrative to focus more on the sad tale of technological obsolescence. Alone, these photo paper images are too straightforward and not very memorable stuff — however their inclusion works like a rudder for the show, steering a reading of the more descriptive Du Bois images away from the plain entertainment of found photo voyeurism and into a much more satisfying consideration of a kind of personal obsolescence. To that end, they're perfect foils.

The age of the forward-facing photographs and the age of Du Bois in those photographs allow us to make some guesses as to where Du Bois is today. The idea that the person we're looking at is probably still alive, but in all likelihood finished with whatever fascinating and self-absorbed quest left us this collection, is slightly problematic. With her known and named and still around somewhere, the nostalgia in the old pictures reinforced by the neck-revealing, turned-away poses in the photographs, feels as premature and slightly awkward as mourning the decline (but not yet death) of analog photography.

Like analog photography she is both obsolete and still around, disappearing but not disappeared, and so (for now) jamming any pure archaeological reading of her photographs.



Zoe Crosher, B&W Back of Neck, from the Auto-Flipped Series, 2008

The point then, and what I walked (or lurched) away with, and really the remarkable achievement given just how strongly these images lend themselves to the aforementioned narrative voyeurism, is a portrait of that narrow slice of a story between the end and The End or, in Crosher's own words: the "just-past." While such an idea *would* be present in the photographs presented regularly and a-side only, such a small conceptual target needed the analog/Kodak foil to tease it out through intersection. It makes for a successful and oddly quiet use of the Du Bois project, and a memorable show too.

Finally, while I enjoy Crosher's ability to push this body of work into new conceptual realms, keep an eye out for Crosher's thick artist book on display for all your straightforward delicious freak voyeurism needs. Du Bois does not disappoint.

Here's an 7 point 3

Zoe Crosher's *Selections from the Analog Collection* runs May 1st through June 13th, 2009 at [65GRAND](#), 1378 W Grand Ave.

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