

Selwyn, Marc. Review. *LA Weekly*, 8 - 14 May 1987, p. 44.

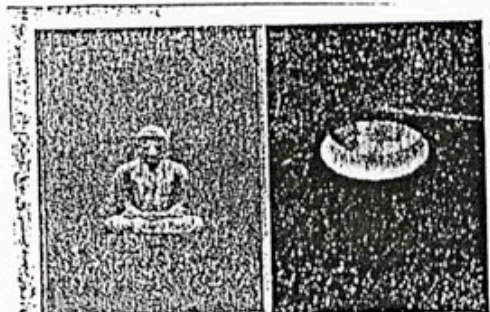
SARAH CHARLESWORTH. Cibachrome prints at Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., W. Hlywd.; (213) 273-0603. Through May 23.

Sarah Charlesworth's current show reveals her as a master of the contemporary still life. Charlesworth places photographic images of natural phenomena, cultural icons and travel-poster exotica against a backdrop of pure, high-gloss color. The result is a series of isolated objects that float before us intensifying perception while challenging our conscious and unconscious minds to react to their presence.

Charlesworth selects her appropriations for their mystical and spiritual connotations. Through free-association, aided by an almost magical manipulation of the image, Charlesworth defines our culture through its icons and signs. By amplifying and re-examining the psychological reactions they generate, we see these images for what they are—part of our cultural collective unconscious. Charlesworth's technique sets up a tension that becomes central to her visual and conceptual impact. By surrounding her images in lacquer frames painted to match the color of her backgrounds, Charlesworth emphasizes the photograph's role as art object. At the same time, however, these floating images are fleeting and ephemeral, their most potent role emblematic and spiritual.

Charlesworth's colors also function on different levels. Vibrant backgrounds heighten the images' visual impact, cropping it and isolating it in a field of saturated, photographic color. These colors fill a symbolic role as well. In *Buddha of Immeasurable Light*, for instance, an intense sky blue evokes a transcendental calm. Charlesworth's photographs are simple yet powerful, packed with meaning yet rarely overbearing. Unlike so many of today's appropriators, Charlesworth refuses to overload the viewer with a jumble of unfocused images. Instead, her work is graced with an elegance and simplicity that give it its strength.

—Marc Selwyn



Buddha of Immeasurable Light, by Sarah Charlesworth.

Douglas M. Parker