

Tools and Magic Wands

Rochelle Steiner

Every work must be a meditation.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (CA. 1993–95)¹

Despite Sarah Charlesworth's profound and undeniable influence on contemporary photography and image culture, during her lifetime her work was presented in only one early survey, at The Clocktower in New York in 1984, and one traveling mid-career survey, organized by SITE Santa Fe, in 1997–99.² These shows—plus the posthumous exhibition at the New Museum in New York in 2015, presented again at the Los Angeles County Museum Art in 2017—provided opportunities to see her art from various series and time periods in relation to each other and to evaluate the ways she worked over her forty-year career.³

More frequently, Charlesworth's work has been seen within the framework of tightly divided series—which at times the artist subdivided and redivided—conceived for concise and separate gallery exhibitions. As she described: “My work takes the form of ‘series,’ each of which extends usually over a two to three year period. Works of a given series are similar in subject and treatment and comprise a relatively extensive exploration of a set of related ideas and images.”⁴ Each series and, in turn, show was focused around a theme, consisting of a well-considered selection and arrangement of works designed to fit together conceptually and formally. She did not create single or one-off pieces,⁵ but rather individually unique works that, when taken together, result in a cohesive statement about an idea she was exploring at the time. Because the well-defined divisions between bodies of work have been reinforced by critics, curators, and art historians,⁶ there have been few opportunities to consider the fluidity with which she approached ideas and imagery over many decades and the resulting interconnections among works from different time periods.

Charlesworth is known to have been rigorous in her thinking and meticulous in her methodology. However, the organization of her work into tight series belies the often lengthy evolution of her ideas and the frequency with which she returned to key themes and imagery that act as overarching through lines within her practice. Examination of her career as a whole—augmented by unprecedented access to her archive, including her notebooks, sketchbooks, unpublished writings, exhibition checklists in progress, details of the development of collaborative projects, diaries, studio logs, and test prints—reveals her thought processes over time and their expression within and across her career.

Consistent threads include her profound fascination with photography—as a subject of study, as a visual theme in her art, and as an evolving medium, particularly as it was changing radically at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first. Charlesworth explored photography formally, conceptually, and historically while fine-tuning her relationship to the medium as it unfolded during the course of her practice. Also revealed is her visual vocabulary of interconnected subject matter, themes, and compositional choices that stretches through series and across more than four decades of work. This includes cultural and political iconography (the news and world events, fashion, media culture, and historical constructs), imagery from the natural world (the moon, lightning, animals), and formal considerations (color, lighting, composition).

Art is not defined by the medium it employs, but rather by the questions that it asks, the propositions that it makes regarding its own nature as well as the nature of its world.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (1983)⁷

Born in 1947 in East Orange, New Jersey, Charlesworth lived most of her life in the Tri-State area. According to family mythology, she knew she wanted to be an artist at age four, when she visited the circus for the first time. Captivated by the wild atmosphere—a departure from her “conservative Anglican upbringing”⁸—she was inspired to make a drawing that same year, in 1951, which, as she later noted in a “joke bio,” won an award of “Special Recognition” from her mother.⁹ This whimsical résumé also lists a 1954 first prize for “Most Imaginative Halloween Costume (fairy with battery powered wand)” and her design of the fifth-grade section of her school yearbook, on the theme “A trip to The Moon.”

When she wrote this around the end of 1975, as she was beginning to establish herself as an artist and critical thinker, many threads of her ongoing interests were already in play: her enthusiasm for fairy wands and, by extension, magic of various forms; a fascination with the moon and outer space; an awareness of being both an artist and a photographer; and an interest in writing and publishing. Her early feminist perspective is evident in this bio in the way she makes a point of the gender bias when in 1962 she “served as chairman (sic)” of an art committee at her junior high school. She would later recount having a book called *The Artist in His Studio*, filled with photographs by Alexander Liberman, and realizing

OPPOSITE “Eclipse / Lightning / Milky Way” contact sheet of images rephotographed by Sarah Charlesworth, ca. 1979–81

that there hadn't been any women artists to provide her with a role model—though she would end up taking on that role for so many others who followed her.¹⁰

Charlesworth's ideas about art and photography were the result of her lifelong education and keen interest in seeing the world around her, particularly as it was represented through images. Beginning in high school, which she attended in Oklahoma, Charlesworth gravitated to art classes, where she mostly painted and drew. She was exposed to conceptual art as a student at Bradford Junior College in Massachusetts (1965–67), where she studied with Douglas Huebler. Trained as a painter, he was making minimal sculpture during his years at Bradford, before going on to develop a conceptually based practice around 1968 that involved documenting everyday activities through drawings, maps, and photographs. After graduating from Bradford with an associate's degree, Charlesworth attended Barnard College in Manhattan from 1967 to 1969, where she was an art history major, writing papers on Kandinsky, Dadaism, Italian Renaissance art, Northern Renaissance art, and the architecture of Marcel Breuer's Whitney Museum of American Art (now the Met Breuer).

While at Bradford and Barnard, respectively, she made two short films—*Apples* (ca. 1967) and *Hands* (ca. 1968–69)—and for her senior thesis in art history at Barnard, instead of writing the customary paper, she presented a visual essay in the form of a group of black-and-white photographs she had taken of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, dry mounted onto boards and installed in the department's hallway. This entrée into photography in part sparked her interest in the medium, and after graduating she began to see it as a potential career path and means of financial support, though at the end of the 1960s she was still searching for what it meant to be an "artist."¹¹ After achieving her bachelor's degree, she traveled to Europe—once with her sister Agnes (Nancy) in the summer of 1969, and then again in summer/fall 1970 and spring 1971 with boyfriend Ray Sundlin, a graduate student at New York University. During these trips Charlesworth shot numerous photographs of buildings and architectural sites, including Antoni Gaudí architecture in Spain. Between and after these trips, she sought various jobs, ranging from babysitting to selling to slide libraries her architectural pictures from Europe and others she shot in New York, including those taken of the Guggenheim for her thesis. Her photographic pursuits also included documenting New York's street life, which she attempted to sell as stock images to photo agencies, and she was hired for photo shoots for Barnard's yearbook as well as for Bergdorf Goodman.¹²

Charlesworth's early forays into creating stock imagery—along with freelance darkroom work for Jim Foote, between 1969 and 1970¹³—may have led to conclusions that Charlesworth, at a formative point, worked for an advertising or photography agency and was a burgeoning commercial photographer before becoming a fine artist.¹⁴ This notion also may have been fostered by her creation of Sunshine Communications, Inc., a New York State—registered business,¹⁵ with stationery and business cards to match, through which she billed some freelance jobs between 1970 and 1973. It seems Charlesworth may have created this company to appear legitimate as a young photographer

embarking on a freelance career; it is also possible, however, that she was attempting to keep this activity separate from what would become her artistic practice, particularly in that era when distinctions between commercial and fine art photography were more deeply drawn than they are today. In any event, it is clear from her appointment books and tax records that her paid activity from freelance endeavors was limited, more a collection of temporary jobs than an early career as a commercial photographer.¹⁶

By 1969 Charlesworth was going to see contemporary art exhibitions in New York, including the groundbreaking *January 5–31, 1969* exhibition at the McLendon Building, curated by Seth Siegelau. It included conceptual work by Huebler, who encouraged her to attend (see page 74, fig. 2), as well as by Robert Barry, Joseph Kosuth, and Lawrence Weiner.¹⁷ In March 1969 she met Siegelau, Lucy Lippard, and Joseph Kosuth, and became romantically involved with Kosuth shortly thereafter.¹⁸ So began her crash course into the evolving ideas of conceptual art, including the radical dematerialization of the art object, whereby artistic endeavors expanded beyond the traditions of painting and sculpture to include text, photographs, documents, sites, and other nontraditional forms. In addition to extending the possibilities for artistic practice, conceptual artists of the late 1960s and 1970s were examining the underpinnings of representation and signification through image- and language-based systems.

Through her relationship with Kosuth, around 1973 Charlesworth was introduced to Art & Language, a British collective that challenged the conventions of modern art and criticism. The associated members published the journal *Art-Language*, for which Kosuth had become the US editor in 1970; this engagement influenced Charlesworth, whose ideas during the early to mid-1970s were steeped in theoretical and conceptual debates about the relationship between art and politics, as well as theory and practice. A subset of artists involved with the New York branch of Art & Language, including Charlesworth, broke off to create a new journal: *The Fox*, which published three issues in 1975 and 1976, before disbanding in 1976 (see page 76, fig. 3a–c).¹⁹ Charlesworth wrote a number of texts for these journals and participated in lively debates about art and politics as one of the editors of *The Fox*.

Throughout the early 1970s, Charlesworth continued her education in a number of ways. She organized and devoted time to groups that read theoretical texts, including key Marxist and feminist tracts, and analyzed films.²⁰ While discussion groups such as these were common in this period, Charlesworth approached hers with a particular appetite and rigor; she participated in several simultaneously, and some lasted for many years. Over time these groups focused beyond art issues to include social concerns, including the women's movement and the politics of the world at large.²¹ She also enrolled in courses at the New School for Social Research in New York on a variety of topics: in 1974–75 she took classes in subjects that included anthropology and economics; later in 1978, seemingly in preparation for a trip to Italy with Kosuth, in elementary Italian.²² She also took a master photography workshop (ca. 1971–72) led by Austrian-born avant-garde photographer Lisette Model, who was living in New York.²³ Model's

work was rooted in the traditions of street photography; once settled in New York, she became successful not only as an artist whose work was shown at the Museum of Modern Art, but also as a commercial photographer for *Harper's Bazaar* and, for thirty years, as a teacher, whose students included Diane Arbus.

At this time, Charlesworth created what she would later consider to be her first mature artwork: *The First Human Being* (1972; page 29), zooming in on a segment of Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre's iconic *Boulevard du Temple* (1838).²⁴ Daguerre's image is thought to be the first photograph depicting human beings, and Charlesworth's rendition zeroes in on two figures within the picture—one of whom is having his shoes shined—extracting, enlarging, and decontextualizing this small section of the picture and reproducing it as a silkscreen with dot patterning. The resulting image is a grainy black-and-white abstraction with a red border that demonstrates her interest not only in the history of photography as source material but also in the transformation of images through scale shifts and other types of manipulation that would come to typify her work. About this work, she recalled:

[T]he threshold that this particular piece represents was one in which my attention, my vision, shifted from the primarily visual to the conceptual and philosophical significance of sight.

At the time of this work, I was ... searching for the meaning of photographs while taking variously dynamic or ironic pictures of whatever. I had been stimulated by the early conceptual work of my friend and teacher Doug Huebler and by Joseph Kosuth. My first photo of the first human being to be photographed interrupted my frustration with picture-taking and crystallized an orientation to which I still abide, the thrill of the conceptual and the ideational significance that attends and extends from the life of images within culture.²⁵

Charlesworth would consistently study photography and images from wide-reaching perspectives: historical to commercial to conceptual, formal to technical, theoretical to practical. She fashioned herself as a student absorbing copious knowledge, and later as a teacher as well; she avidly collected, read, and annotated books encompassing art history and photo theory, alchemy and magic, space and the universe, Asia and the Pacific Islands, Egypt and Africa, Greek and Roman history, human anatomy, Renaissance and medieval history and art history, animals, contemporary art, and fiction. She kept notes in numerous notebooks, sketchbooks, and journals, classifying materials into color-coordinated, notated, and sorted file folders that reveal her thought patterns, both macro and micro, consistent and meandering.

I am an artist for whom photography has been integral to the reconceptualization of Art.... I view photography as the dominant language of contemporary culture. I turned to photography precisely because of its ubiquity, because photography informs every aspect of how we see and know the world around us.... It is incumbent on every generation to create and recreate the meaning of Art. To me photography is central to the questions of my time.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (2011)²⁶

Charlesworth considered and deployed three different approaches to photography over her career: a version of conceptual photography in the 1970s; strategies of quotation, appropriation, and rephotography associated with the Pictures Generation in the 1980s; and studio-based photography with various sourced props and setups beginning in the 1990s. At each turn, her growth as an artist paralleled the evolution of photography as a contemporary medium, including her considerations of the relationships between fine art and commercial art photography, critical theory and color practices. It is evident from her reading notes, lecture papers, and writings that she grappled with the role of photography as a vehicle of communication and artistic expression, as part of popular culture and within the framework of modern and contemporary art.

When she began making art in earnest in the mid-1970s, she examined the imagery she found readily before her—initially news information in the form of social and political messages as it circulated via press images. This approach is apparent in her first series, the monumental *Modern History* (1977–79; pages 30–53), which addresses the photographs appearing in newspapers from various cities, considering the meanings they conveyed in different formats and contexts.²⁷ As early as summer 1977 Charlesworth began conceptualizing this major project, utilizing the *International Herald Tribune* as her point of departure. She wrote:

IS THERE AN INDEX TO INTERNATIONAL
HERALD TRIBUNE?
WALL ST. JOURNAL?
HERALD TRIBUNE – SEND ADDRESS OF N.Y. OFFICE.
DO THEY HAVE INDEX – IS HERAL TRI.
ON MICROFILM? – HOW FAR BACK
ARE BACK ISSUES OBTAINABLE? [...]

“AUG 77” (OR JUNE OR JULY 77)
ALL FRONT PAGES OF
HERALD TRIBUNE WITH TEXT
DROPPED LEAVING ONLY PHOTOS
AND MASTHEAD.²⁸

Originally subtitled *Second Reading*,²⁹ this series gave Charlesworth the opportunity to “read” and consider the meaning of the news and press images. In her notebook from ca. 1978–79 she pondered:

How do we perceive
events which pattern
our image(s) of
“History”?
What is “history”?
What types of “events”?
What is “NEWS”?
What is Mythology?
How do these effect [sic]
our understanding
Of society –
Directly and indirectly?

Is Art to make something
or does it make
“Ways of seeing”
Ways of ordering, perceiving
phenomenal environment
The anarchy of mass
culture – what is
rational [sic] of capitalism?
\$ – Can we understand
culture as an
Industry.
If so who brings it
who sells it?

Mythology – As story
narration – which
is produced within a
culture & functions

to organize phenomena
metaphorically – into
comprehensible – human
dimensions...³⁰

Within this passage are glimpses into what the artist may have been reading, notably, Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies* (English translation, 1972) and John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* (1972). These two influential texts on the way images function and can be interpreted critically within a cultural context were likely familiar to her and would have influenced her approach to analyzing media imagery.

The works that initiated *Modern History* are *Herald Tribune, September 1977* (1977; pages 30–33) and *Herald Tribune, November 1977* (1977); here she eliminated all text but the mastheads and dates from twenty-six days worth of the *International Herald Tribune* during those two months, respectively, in order to focus attention on the photographs that appeared.³¹ What remained after her redaction were black-and-white images, mostly of men in positions of power, floating on white backgrounds, scaled and positioned as they had been in the original pages of the paper. The resulting artworks demonstrated the way in which newspaper pictures are vehicles through which meaning is formed and circulated visually and framed contextually.

A year earlier, she had experimented with newspaper content as subject matter by following stories related to a single theme—political unrest in Chile—as they appeared on twenty-five front pages of the *New York Times* between September 6, 1970 (just after Salvador Allende’s election as president) to September 22, 1976 (just after diplomat Orlando Letelier’s assassination). *Historical Materialism, Chile Series—for O.L.* (1976; fig. 1) precedes *Modern History*, yet reveals the roots of the thematic and conceptual approach she would take in that series. The former retains both text and images, although the newspaper pages are reduced to smaller than actual size; Charlesworth’s further intervention was to focus attention on the stories about events in Chile by making the relevant text bold while all surrounding text appears faint

by comparison. A second version, with all text of equal weight and mounted on inch-thick wooden slabs, was included in the 1977 group exhibition *Solidarity with Chilean Democracy: A Memorial to Orlando Letelier* at Cayman Gallery in New York.³²

The process for creating works in *Modern History* was laborious and involved multiple steps—researching, collecting papers, masking text, pasting up content, and sending the collaged assemblies to commercial labs to create photostats (the form these works took). When just starting *Herald Tribune, September 1977*, she was invited by Galerie MTL in Brussels to mount her first solo exhibition, opening in October 1977. On this occasion, she dispensed with her otherwise photographic-based practice and presented the actual newspapers as readymades.³³

The result was a room-scale installation entitled *Fourteen Days* (1977; page 132), displaying the front pages of fourteen different newspapers available in Brussels, including the *International Herald Tribune*, hung on clips around the gallery. Every day during the run of the exhibition, the current imprint from each publication was added on top of the previous day’s stack, and viewers were invited to flip between them to witness how stories had progressed—or disappeared—as well as to compare news coverage from different points of view. As such, *Fourteen Days* is the only instance where Charlesworth’s work was produced and shown with actual newspapers and contemporaneously with the day’s news events.

By the time Charlesworth came to create *April 20, 1978, April 21, 1978*, and *Osservatore Romano, March 17–May 10, 1978* (all 1978)—the monumental multipanel pieces within the *Modern History* series that she referred to as the “Moro Trilogy”³⁴—she had chosen another specific world event to trace: the kidnapping and ultimate assassination of former Italian prime minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. While the events affiliated with the Moro assassination would have been worldwide news at the time, Charlesworth likely was particularly aware of and interested in this storyline as she had been spending time in Italy with Kosuth between 1973 and 1977. For *Modern History* she devised a conceptual strategy identifying “inclusive” and “exclusive” parameters and other “controls” for each work to indicate what aspects of the original papers she had kept, redacted, and used as the unifying feature of each work.³⁵

For *April 20, 1978* (pages 34–37) she collected twenty-five international newspapers published on that date from as many countries as possible that displayed “any photograph representing the search for Moro’s body in Lago Duchessa,” comparing the depiction of the story, as told visually, through a range of papers. For *April 21, 1978* (pages 38–41) she followed the development of the Moro story as it unfolded the next day, focusing on forty-five international newspapers that depicted the former prime minister holding a copy of *La Repubblica* from April 19, 1978, a strategy used by the kidnapers to demonstrate that he was alive. For this work, “the appearance of this photograph, or any part thereof” functioned as her control. In *Osservatore Romano, March 17–May 10, 1978* (pages 42–45) she used the strategy deployed in the earlier *Herald Tribune* pieces; here she collected all copies of a single paper, the official Vatican newspaper, published between March 17 (when Moro was kidnapped) and May 10 (when his



fig. 1

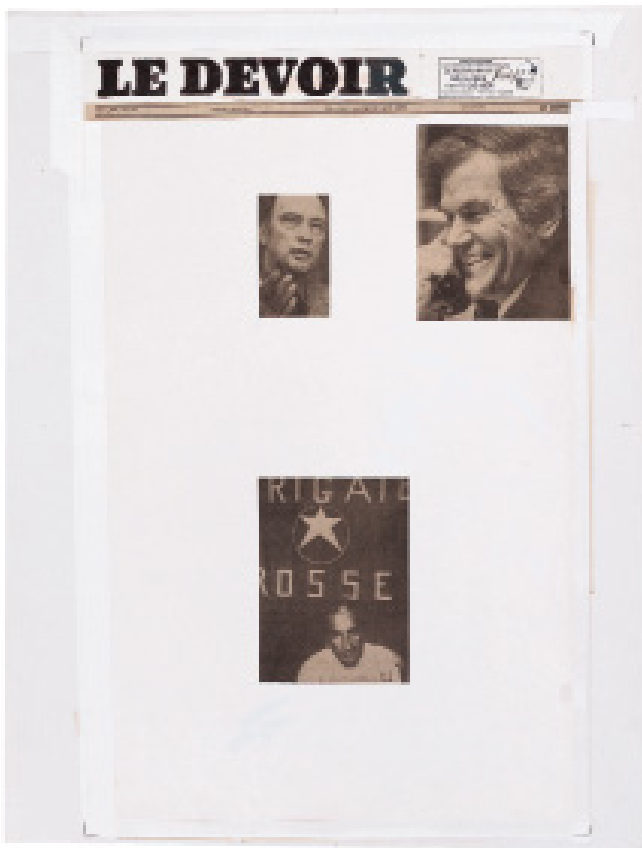


fig. 2

body was recovered), presenting only the front pages to reveal how the Vatican had (or had not) prioritized this story of international political consequence, again as seen through the selection and placement of images.

The Moro Trilogy reveals Charlesworth's main strategies for the *Modern History* series overall: comparing images in multiple publications on a single day or in a single paper over multiple days. In both approaches, she used her technique of removing the words (other than the masthead), while retaining the original placement and sizing of the images on the page; her intention was to reveal the "power of an image distinct from that of its context ... [and] to engage in the struggle to discover that which is absent, obscured from vision, through an encounter with that which is manifest, given ... [and] that which asserts itself through images ... the history, the force, which exerts itself through their particular and systematic usage, in the immediate yet expanded world we see as our context."³⁶ By stripping back nearly everything else, she exposed not only the power of the photos themselves but also the editorial decisions that led to implicit hierarchies on the pages—what appears on the front page versus the interior, above versus below the fold, as a large versus small picture, and so forth.

Throughout *Modern History* Charlesworth worked painstakingly to carry out the redaction—mostly on front covers, but in some cases interior sheets as well. While seemingly simple, the creation of *Modern History*, particularly in the predigital era of the 1970s, required a variety of analog processes similar to those used by commercial paste-up artists for print advertisements. This involved cutting masks out of mat board, the same size as the newspaper pages, which, when laid on top of the pages, allowed only selected content—the images—to show through and hid everything else from view. Mastheads remained to identify the sources, and resulting works are one-to-one scale with the actual newspapers.³⁷ In some cases, Charlesworth cleaned up the printing on the sheets to ensure clear reproductions—edges were smoothed out, lines and borders were augmented with Letraset, type was darkened with pen where the original newsprint was faint—but she was careful to reassemble an exact replica for reproduction purposes (fig. 2).

In other cases, however, her interventions were more extensive. While it is generally thought that she left all photographs visible and redacted only text, materials in the archive show that sometimes she inserted her own editorial decisions by masking over those images that did not correspond to the particular storylines or conceptual frameworks of interest to her. These paste-ups were then sent to a photo lab to be reproduced using a photostatic process typical at that time in advertising and other commercial printing. Charlesworth's adoption of the photostat may have been influenced by Kosuth, who had used the technique in his photo- and text-based works.³⁸ Within the evolution of conceptual art, such cameraless photography and use of commercial processes played critical roles in the increasingly dematerialized and documentary nature of art in the late 1960s and 1970s.

During the 1970s she began to make plans for additional *Modern History* pieces, including *Verbs* (1978/released 2003), which was accompanied much later by *Nouns* (2003). In these single front pages

FIGURE 1 *Historical Materialism, Chile Series—for O.L.*, 1976 (detail). 25 framed photographic prints, 8 ½ × 10 ½ in. (21.6 × 26.7 cm) each. Courtesy the Estate of Sarah Charlesworth and Maccarone New York/Los Angeles **FIGURE 2** Paste-up with artist's markings, 1978, for *Le devoir* panel of *April 21*, 1978, 1978

of the *New York Times*, which date from March 7, 1978, and October 11, 2003, all words other than verbs or nouns, respectively—and the mastheads—were redacted, an extremely intricate maneuver that would have been impossible to execute before the adoption of Photoshop into her studio practice in about 2002. These two works also demonstrate her interest in language and systems, which can be seen in the listing of parts of speech in notes she made around 1977–78.³⁹ Early in her career, she also had begun to test out ideas for several pieces (never completed) focused on the topics of nuclear disaster, the stock exchange, and art reviews, as evidenced by both the papers she saved and her notebooks.⁴⁰

Over the course of her career Charlesworth obtained and saved many newspapers from around the world containing a wide range of subjects of interest, both visual and thematic. In addition to purchasing papers from newsstands, she turned to the New York Public Library and the United Nations, where issues from various countries would be sent.⁴¹ Date stamps on papers obtained from the UN indicate that they arrived there, likely by mail, after their publication dates, so Charlesworth would have collected them days and sometimes weeks later. Despite her interest in current events, she was concerned less with real-time chronicling than with examining how stories became “history” through a comprehensive cataloguing of visual messages, both overt and covert. Her fascination with the newspaper and the messages contained in its imagery was lifelong; she collected papers during different periods with different degrees of obsessiveness, increasingly after the Gulf War in 1990–91 and then after the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, reflecting her ongoing engagement with world events.

You cannot hang an event on the wall, only a picture.

—MARY MCCARTHY, NOVELIST AND CRITIC⁴²

In the 1970s Charlesworth had become well versed in then-radical forms of contemporary art through her association with Kosuth, Huebler, Art & Language, and other conceptual practices of a previous generation. As seen through her artist statements and grant applications, she considered herself at that time to be a conceptual artist,⁴³ with an interest in historic events as represented through media representation. And yet, despite these early influences, she was also keenly intent on making pictures. In this sense, her work was more formally and materially inclined than theirs, not only in terms of the sheer labor involved but also in terms of the physicality of the forms her artwork would take. Each *Modern History* work comprised between one and forty-five panels, and as such her objects had a substantial material presence. Where many conceptual artists looked to photography as an alternative to painting and sculpture, as part of the dematerialization of the object, and to newspapers as vehicles for documentation, Charlesworth saw them as repositories of visual meaning. By the late 1970s her art already had demonstrated her eye finely attuned to the nuances of image culture, but it also paralleled the increasing physicality of photographic work by artists emerging in the 1980s, both in the United States and abroad, such as Laurie Simmons, Thomas Struth, Jeff Wall, and James Welling;

this shifting emphasis would become even more prevalent as Charlesworth’s own career evolved.

While working on *Modern History*, Charlesworth already had begun to develop ideas for what would become *Stills* (1980; pages 54–57), originally seven large-scale mural prints depicting individuals suspended in midair who appear to be falling or leaping from tall buildings, although the series ultimately came to include fourteen works.⁴⁴ She noted ideas about “falling” and “suspense” from as early as 1978–79, and over the next couple of years listed the types of pictures she was seeking, including those related to fires, suicides, parachutes, levitations, film stills, and Wonder Woman; she also looked to sources as wide reaching as the movies and the American Physical Society.⁴⁵ At this time Charlesworth expanded her image sources to include pictures clipped from magazines, in addition to doing targeted picture research and ordering wire photos from the New York Public Library and news agencies; in many cases she collected multiple “copies” of the same picture in different formats and from different sources.⁴⁶ Although she had experimented with photographing footage of cliff divers off of her television screen, she ultimately settled on news photos of people leaping from buildings (in fires, in suicides) and actors performing stunts on movie sets.⁴⁷

Despite the geographic indicators in the titles, the *Stills* for the most part lack any visually identifiable location. They appear to be inspired by the urban environment of New York, where Charlesworth was living without interruption by the end of the 1970s, but the grainy and decontextualized backgrounds make it impossible to place the figures in real space or time.⁴⁸ Charlesworth enlarged each image significantly, from the size of a magazine page (or smaller) to human scale (6 ½ feet tall), breaking from the one-to-one-scale strategy of *Modern History*. As she had done in *Modern History*, in *Stills* Charlesworth labored behind the scenes to create “camera ready” work for rephotography, with an eye to achieving a look of authenticity in the image (fig. 3). The presence of a jagged-edge mask in the archive suggests that what appears to be casual “tears” along the edges in some *Stills*, seemingly the result of clipping an image out of a magazine, may have been simulated by placing the mask over the image when it was photographed. In this way, she reinforced the physicality of her sources as material objects—something easy to forget in today’s digital era.

An exception, in both its title and its source, is *Unidentified Man, Unidentified Location* (page 56). Here Charlesworth used an image of Andy Warhol’s *Suicide* (1962), from his *Death and Disasters* paintings, which themselves quoted from mass media images of car accidents, suicides, race riots, and other catastrophes.⁴⁹ She described later that the “Warhol image was kind of an in joke, layering of image world,” noting that the idea for the series did not come from Warhol’s disaster artworks. “I did not even make [the] connection when I began [the] body of work. I had many photos of this type to choose from. I used [the] Warhol image as another point of reference—another layering, another plane of removal via image.”⁵⁰

Charlesworth also seemed to be increasingly aware of her influence as an artist—and specifically as a photographer—to create new meaning by altering found images while imbuing them with the



fig. 3

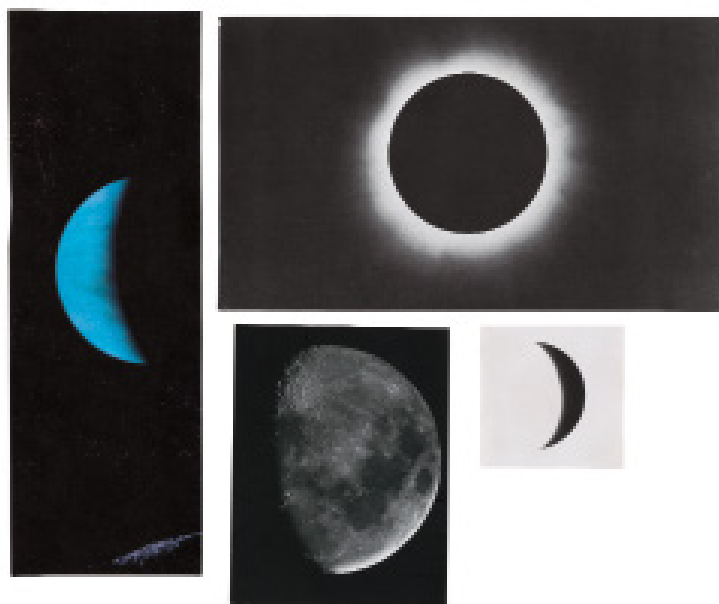


fig. 4

power of credibility. Just as we believe the people in *Stills* are jumping or falling off buildings, so too do we accept that the edges of the pictures are torn. Charlesworth understood the authority we attach to photographs—something she had reminded us of in *April 21, 1978* as well, where the illustration of Moro holding up a newspaper from two days prior was meant to stand as proof that he was alive. Charlesworth would later state, “It is really the attributes of photography’s representational credibility (veracity), combined with its suitability for reproduction ... which has provided a context for the development of photography within this century that we may say is so far reaching as to have entirely transformed the very meaning of visual culture.”⁵¹

We live in a world that is made up of images—magazine images, images from books, television, movies, whatever. This is as much [a] part of the landscape of our imagination as is the three-dimensional world, and sometimes even more.... And this is part of how our psyche, how our politics, and how our imagination is formed.... By drawing from images that anybody could have seen or types of images we see all the time, I hope to create a kind of familiarity, a recognizability. The work is not just a statement but a reordering, a re-seeing of something shared—a cultural experience.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (1988)⁵²

While working on *Stills* and starting to alter sourced imagery to dramatic effect, Charlesworth began to explore avenues that, when considered retrospectively, set the framework for the majority of her career to follow. *Empire Light* (1981), *The White Lady* group (1981), and the works associated with *In-Photography* (1981–82)⁵³ demonstrate her burgeoning formal, thematic, conceptual, and theoretical priorities. Here Charlesworth continued her working method as a picture researcher—collecting, sorting, analyzing, and appropriating printed images while demonstrating increasingly sophisticated techniques of composing complex pictorial arrangements to be rephotographed commercially as large-scale photographic prints. She expanded her source imagery from newspapers, wire images, and the occasional magazine to a range of printed pages from books and magazines focused on photography, art history, science, and world history, as well as photos related to NASA and Apollo landings, lightning, UFOs, meteorites, galaxies, and other aspects of space, which she classified and categorized in folders and other organizing methods (fig. 4).⁵⁴

Light, as seen through natural phenomena including the mysteries of the night sky, emerged at this time as a thematic focus and became one of her most long-standing interests. In a notebook from around 1980–81, Charlesworth wrote, “Light is my medium” and contemplated:

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE
 WHITE & BLACK ARE EQUAL
 Presence and Absence [sic] of Light
 All Light & No Light – Eclipse⁵⁵

FIGURE 3 Paste-up, ca. 1979, for *Unidentified Woman*, *Genesee Hotel*, 1980 FIGURE 4 Magazine clippings of images of the moon, ca. 1970s

In *Empire Light* (pages 60–61), twin works that predict her interest in pairing imagery, which would be seen in her duos and diptychs in later series,⁵⁶ a lightning bolt streaks through the night sky and seems to strike the Empire State Building. The source is an image from the New York Public Library Picture Collection, and Charlesworth is known to have photographed it repeatedly, as it appears in numerous contact sheets (see page 8, top right). This work also shows an affinity with Warhol's *Empire* (1964), a single shot of the Empire State Building filmed over approximately eight hours one July evening. But where Warhol reveals the passage of time through the shift from light to dark in the sky, Charlesworth focuses on the flash of light—a still moment—created by the effect of the storm. With the positive and negative impressions of *Empire Light*, Charlesworth alludes to black-and-white photography itself, specifically to the materiality of the filmic negative in which lights and darks are reversed. When published on the front and back covers of *Bomb* in the spring of 1981, this pair of images offered mirrored views, and the black-and-white, positive-and-negative effect was carried through to the typography of the magazine's logo (fig. 5).⁵⁷

In the three related works composing *The White Lady* (pages 62–63)—*Venus*, *The White Lady*, and *Light Break*—she altered found images of a crescent moon, a cave formation shaped like the female body,⁵⁸ and a lightning strike in the night sky through redaction, scale shifts, and other sleight-of-hand before creating paste-ups; these were, as was usual for her at that time, sent to a commercial lab to be rephotographed, but in this case they were produced as photographic prints rather than photostats.⁵⁹ The source for *Light Break* provides insight into Charlesworth's overarching metaphysical interests: the image, sourced from the New York Public Library Picture Collection, is titled “Electrical Energy in the Skies—Photograph of a Flash of Lightning” and captioned: “All forms of energy are forms of one and the same thing, and can be transformed into one another—light into heat, heat into motion, motion into light. This photograph shows electrical energy in the universe manifesting itself in the familiar form of lightning; some of it turns into sound, but thunder cannot be photographed.”⁶⁰ Although this caption can be seen only in the source image (fig. 6) and not in the final artwork, the notion of tracing something's underlying meaning, that which cannot be photographed or captured on film, conveys the spiritual side of the artist's pursuits. Acting as photographer, amateur astronomer, and explorer of other visual mysteries, including magic and the occult, which can be seen in subsequent series, Charlesworth aimed to capture and document what was known but not visible.

Thematically these works hark back to *The Arc of Total Eclipse, February 26, 1979* (1979; pages 50–53) from *Modern History*, an exception in that series from her typical focus on political issues and world affairs, revealing instead her interests in cosmological events—in this case the reporting in the press of a rare total solar eclipse. Charlesworth looks at this natural phenomenon as depicted in different local newspapers from the northwestern United States and central Canada where the eclipse could be seen. The moon and night sky, though surprising subject matter compared to the more



fig. 5

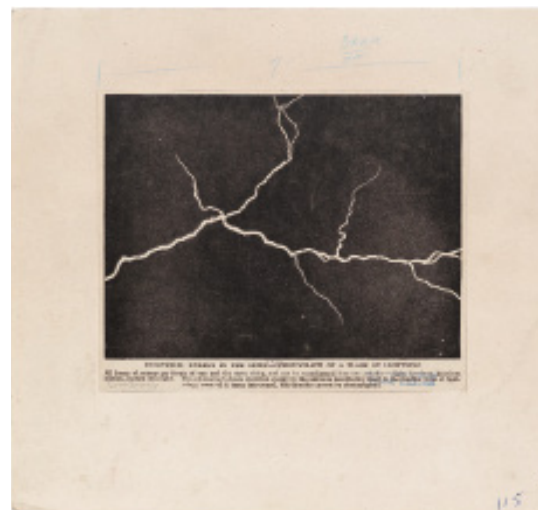


fig. 6



fig. 7

FIGURE 5 *Bomb*, no. 1 (Spring 1981), front and back covers designed by Sarah Charlesworth with *Empire Light* (mirrored and cropped), 1981 **FIGURE 6** Source image from New York Public Library Picture Collection for *Light Break*, 1981 **FIGURE 7** Clipping from *UFO Report*, ca. 1970s

hard-hitting storylines she was following in the 1970s, would remain consistent points of exploration until her death, from *Moon* (2002; page 165) in the *Neverland* series to *Moon Watch* (2012; pages 212–13) in the *Available Light* series, as well as in countless clippings of lightning strikes, the milky way, and UFOs in her repository of source images (fig. 7).

In the works that have come to be referred to as *In-Photography* (pages 64–69),⁶¹ for the first time Charlesworth visibly spliced, exploded, and/or changed the orientation of source images, reconfiguring them into compositions that were assembled like collages on monochromatic backgrounds to be rephotographed and printed as seamless artworks. In *Lightning* and *Explosion* (both 1981; pages 66 right, 67), for example, she physically deconstructed images and reconfigured them into new formal arrangements. She was taking a collage approach to her imagery, and works from this period such as *Café Aubette* (1982; page 64), *Rietveld Chair* (1981; page 68), and *Japanese House* (1982; page 65) were included in a number of abstract photography exhibitions.⁶² However, her process more closely resembled that of an art director: arranging and pasting up parts of printed materials into visual compositions; providing reproduction instructions such as sizing and exposure details to the labs she worked with; receiving back negatives; and selecting those to have printed as artworks. In anticipation of the possibilities offered by color photography, which at the time were financially unattainable for her as a young artist, she integrated color by applying adhesive gels to the surfaces of her prints and adding colored frames.⁶³

Embedded in these and other early works are Charlesworth's theoretical views on photography and on her role as a photographer. In the essay included in her 1982 artist book titled *In-Photography*, created with CEPA Gallery in Buffalo, she begins, "Photography testifies to the objectivity of the world," but goes on to challenge this so-called objectivity by asking, "Did the camera take that picture? Did the picture impress its image by convention upon the eye of the unsuspecting photographer? Or did a person create the infinite [*sic*] perfect just-so-ness of the world that arranges itself before its avid lens?" While questioning the neutrality of photographic images, as she had done previously in *Modern History* and *Stills*, at this stage she increasingly implicated the photographer as image maker. She concludes this short text: "Sometimes I open an image in order to make room for myself, to disrupt the closure of an intensified known."⁶⁴

One need not own an original in order to cherish the magic of an image.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (1982)⁶⁵

In addition to demonstrating the believability of images in *Stills* and expressing theories about representation in her *In-Photography* works and related text, Charlesworth pointed to the ubiquitous and reproducible nature of images themselves through her fondness for printed copies of all types. As she clipped and collected images, she photographed them for study and duplicated them through photocopying and other mechanical means of reproduction. With copies of the "same" image in hand, and in a departure from the

preciousness typically placed on the "original,"⁶⁶ she approached these printed sources with a certain freedom to actively crop, stretch, rescale, and remake pictures to suit her needs—so much so that attempts to determine the actual "source" for some of her pieces from among dozens of archival clippings involves elaborate detective work, sometimes to the point of futility. In this sense, questions of originality—critical to the transformation of visual culture of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a result of expanded means of mechanical reproduction, beginning with photography—underlie all aspects of Charlesworth's art.

This is likely why she was particularly fascinated by Nicéphore Niépce, one of the founders of photography,⁶⁷ and one of his early photographs or "heliographs." Charlesworth was drawn to his still life depicting a dining table in what may have been Niépce's garden in Gras, thought to have been taken in 1829. This image was known for having been reproduced after its original source was destroyed, and Charlesworth set out to rephotograph it. In 1981 she produced *Tabula Rasa* (pages 58–59), an edition of four unique white-on-white screenprints of Niépce's picture. Superimposed on each is the image of a lily, a quotation of the flowers in the center panel of the fifteenth-century Merode Altarpiece at the Cloisters in Upper Manhattan. Three of the prints are differentiated by individual surface marks: a silkscreened red dot, a red dot made from blood, and a red dot made from paint, respectively; the fourth is unmarked. As critic Craig Owens assessed in reviewing her exhibition of this work, "Charlesworth thus presents photographs that are neither originals nor copies, but originals that are also copies (of a lost original), and copies that are also originals (by virtue of their individualizing marks)."⁶⁸

Producing this work brought various technical challenges and demonstrated her commitment to achieving perfection: she worked through test after test with red-colored substances, charting and evaluating the results. And despite her precise differentiation, she ended up creating a work whose variations are themselves extremely difficult both to distinguish between and to reproduce. *Tabula Rasa* demonstrated Charlesworth's consistent concern with the history of art and photography as well as her strong grasp of key theoretical concepts associated with originality, copying, and representation.

She extended this line of thinking in her 1982 review of Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, shortly after it had been translated and published in English.⁶⁹ She acknowledges Barthes's vast "field of inquiry ... not only photography, film, music, and painting, but also, as early as 1953, such relatively uncharted domains as advertising, fashion, and design." She emphasizes, however, his "endeavor to disclose what he senses is the metaphysical key to photography—the specific attribute or quality through which the medium derives its unique power as a visual form."⁷⁰ In her review, she notes the "expansive" range of his photographic interests, from a still life by Niépce to a self-portrait by Robert Mapplethorpe, and his "loving respect" for his subject matter, paying close attention to Barthes's assessment of Niépce's image of a dinner table, "known to us only through copies," which she admits "is also one of my favorites."⁷¹ Years later, when she first became acquainted

with the Internet, Charlesworth again turned to Niépce as a historical marker: “The first time I ever went on the internet I went to the Societe Niecephore Niepce and looked at the first photo ever taken which was made from a window of Niepce’s studio in the Loire Valley, 1827. Today I watched a live feed of the room from which it was taken. Although the picture was updated every 30 seconds, not much changed while I was watching. Jan. 30.”⁷²

I find myself living increasingly in a world made of images, photos, television, movies,... images of love and war and violence, images of death, images of distant lands, the past, the future, galaxies beyond the sight of human eyes, and fantasia worlds of animals that live beneath the sea. I lived through war I never saw except through photographs and broadcast news reports. I saw the president of my country shot on T.V. and I saw his assassin shot live on T.V.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (1983)⁷³

Charlesworth had been appropriating and rephotographing images from the onset of her career, and by the beginning of the 1980s, her thoughts about the pervasiveness and impact of images circulating around her were becoming well formulated. Like her contemporaries who also came to be associated with the Pictures Generation—artists who likewise believed that photographs, in their ubiquity, had come to define visual culture of the time—she examined the world through its imagery, “quoting”⁷⁴ from the media pictures she found around her. Charlesworth was not among the small number of artists included in the 1977 *Pictures* exhibition curated by Douglas Crimp at Artists Space in New York (or in his catalogue essay or subsequent expanded text, published in 1977 and 1979, respectively);⁷⁵ however, her work showed strong affinities with that discourse and by the early 1980s had become integrated in the exhibitions and debates about appropriation, image culture, and commodification.⁷⁶

Crimp, writing about the work of Charlesworth’s contemporary Troy Brauntuch, one of the artists included in the *Pictures* exhibition, noted: “The picture is an *object of desire*, the desire for the signification that is known to be absent.... But, it must be emphasized, his is no private obsession. It is an obsession that is in the very nature of our relationship to pictures.”⁷⁷ There is no indication in Charlesworth’s notebooks that she read this particular text by Crimp, though she seemed to be generally aware of his writing;⁷⁸ regardless, these ideas found expression in her *Objects of Desire* works (1983–89; pages 84–121), which typically isolate an image on a bright monochromatic background. Here she expanded her attention to look increasingly to pictures from color magazines, both in advertising and editorials, particularly depictions of women, jewels, artifacts, body parts, dresses, animals, and masks, among other subjects. While producing the series—and subsequently in her career—she divided these works into subgroupings around different color palettes and themes, including desire, nature, and spirituality.⁷⁹

The first works associated with *Objects of Desire* are the four known as *Red Collages* (though not comprising an official series) (1983–84; pages 70–71).⁸⁰ Thematically, conceptually, and visually, these pieces set the stage for what was to follow in *Objects of Desire*. In *Rider*, for example, an image of a seductive woman (the

actress Natalie Wood in *Gypsy*) is embedded within the cutout of a rugged cowboy, a juxtaposition of extreme gender stereotypes (page 71). By superimposing one image or form on top of the other, Charlesworth created a visual “narrative” whereby one would be “read” through the other (fig. 8a–b). These works paralleled developments in photography by some of Charlesworth’s contemporaries and resonate with the dominant theoretical and critical concerns of postmodernism. Around this time, Richard Prince, for example, began creating his Cowboy pictures, in which he appropriated and rephotographed iconic Marlborough advertisements, with logos removed, drawing attention to gender stereotypes in popular media culture. Sherrie Levine similarly was using imagery from the media, framing images of women within the profiles of American presidents—our founding fathers—in a critique of patriarchy that came to be squarely associated with the Pictures Generation in both form and content. The use of cutouts and silhouettes would become a favored technique of Charlesworth’s, and compositions of appropriated imagery centered on a large solid field of color would typify her approach throughout the 1980s.

While the imagery in *Objects of Desire* looks seamless at full scale, the analog process to create it was far from effortless. Throughout the decade Charlesworth continued using her X-Acto blade to excise parts of images from their original contexts. In *Bride* (1983–84; page 87), for example, all signs of the actual person (head, hands, skin) were removed so all that remains is the dress, standing with outstretched arms. The same excising strategy was used in the left-hand panel of the diptych *Golddiggers* (1987; pages 112–13), where an evening gown stands upright on its own, without any human form inhabiting it. For the right panel, Charlesworth cut out from a magazine the image of someone panning for gold (fig. 9a–b).

Charlesworth continued to use pen to manually smooth out rough edges and other imperfections in her images, making them appear seamless through the lens of the camera at the lab shooting her work.⁸¹ With *Objects of Desire* she began to have her images produced as color film transparencies, which enabled her to create large-scale Cibachrome prints that were laminated and mounted in specially fabricated lacquer frames that give the photographs a sculptural dimensionality. These works are seductive and glossy, transforming photographed images into beautiful objects. They signaled Charlesworth’s engagement with contemporary discourses around the physical form and presence of photographs as well as her distancing from the earlier conceptual and dematerialized approaches that had defined her work.⁸²

In very broad terms, I worked with found images up until the first series that I shot in the studio in 1993.... In any given series there’s a kind of question which generates the working process and later I started working on images and shot them on my own in the studio, because I felt I was at a point in the work where I was much more interested in creating situations rather than exploring or examining existing descriptions.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (2007)⁸³



fig. 8A



fig. 8B



fig. 9A



fig. 9B

After more than five years of working on *Objects of Desire*—followed by the related *Academy of Secrets* series (1989; pages 122–23)⁸⁴ and the subsequent *Renaissance Paintings* and *Renaissance Drawings* (both 1991; pages 124–31), which featured images of old master paintings and drawings clipped and copied from art history books and then altered and collaged—Charlesworth sought new ways to explore the relationship between images and objects. In a notebook from the early 1990s, she sketched an hourglass and a metronome, under which she wrote “3D or photo,” suggesting that she was considering the differences between working with actual objects versus images of them as her source material.⁸⁵ Around 1988–89 she rented and began using a studio at 262 Mott Street,⁸⁶ where she experimented with cameras as she developed ideas for what became her next two major bodies of work, *Natural Magic* (1992–93; pages 142–49) and *Doubleworld* (1995; pages 150–55). They were to depict tableaux that evoked qualities of still-life and history paintings, and she began collecting the props needed for both.

Natural Magic was the first series to be shot in a studio, and it required renting an array of photographic equipment and learning new technical skills, including how to perform magic tricks and stunts. Magic of all sorts fascinated Charlesworth,⁸⁷ and the series title evokes aspects of the occult. *Proof of Telekinesis* (page 146) conveys the power of the mind or a kind of magic over objects—here demonstrated as the ability to bend silverware. Classic magic tricks and associated iconography also appear, including levitation (*Levitating Woman*; page 144) and decks of cards (*Control and Abandon*; page 142). But it is *Trial by Fire* (page 143 bottom), depicting the trick of setting one’s fingers aflame, that perhaps best exemplifies Charlesworth’s adaptation to performing studio-based work. In the image, which may be considered a self-portrait (Charlesworth was known for wearing white gloves in all seasons for many years), flames shoot out from her white-gloved hands, a trick she taught herself to perform using Hollywood stunt gel.

The theme of magic connected to her consideration of what the camera could “do” in terms of augmenting and altering perception and making things look “real”—whether that meant suspending objects in midair or making a woman appear to float. Extending what she had been able to achieve in terms of the veracity of images through cameraless reproduction, she now turned to photographing in the studio. She approached props in much the same way she had approached her printed sources—finding them through extensive research and targeted collection, arranging them in vignettes, adjusting and testing them over and over before shooting first Polaroids and then multiple Cibachromes to achieve the right result. Working now with actual “objects of desire,” Charlesworth used meticulous art direction and staging to create photographic images.

This shift in the 1990s from using imagery found in newspapers, magazines, and other popular media sources to shooting her own photographs in the studio did not come easily, and Charlesworth had to reeducate herself with regard to image making. Not formally trained as a photographer, she now studied and investigated the medium in more depth, which coincided with the start of her teaching role at the School of Visual Arts in New York in 1992 and their new

FIGURE 8A–B Source image from *Life* magazine for *Rider*, 1983–84, front and back FIGURE 9A–B Source image for *Golddiggers*, 1987, front and back

MFA program in photography.⁸⁸ This working method also brought questions both practical (such as where to find props and equipment) and technical (how to create particular visual effects). For example, in her notebook from the time she was developing the *Natural Magic* series, she pondered: “Can you project on silver? Must you use available light? Will stronger light source drown out projection?”⁸⁹ Around 1991 she noted that she was unsure whether to shoot pictures herself or hire someone to do it—perhaps a sign of technical insecurity as she was learning skills that were new to her.⁹⁰

In the early 1990s, Charlesworth engaged both rephotography of printed images and photography of objects, noting the integration of the two approaches: “Strategy / Pursue all possibilities / found image collage / original photos / silkscreen.”⁹¹ In fact, from her notes it is apparent that she was not completely comfortable giving up cameraless photography altogether, and as late as fall 1991 was still pasting up works as part of her process as she moved increasingly toward studio-based work:

Plan Aug. 28 (Wed.)

1. Proceed with silkscreen experiments & tests – Plan specific photo shoots / Use Sandi’s asst. or photographer
2. Plan shoot / 1. What to shoot, which day / 2. Equipment needed / rent, borrow / 3. Background & materials / 4. Notebook specifically (original) photo ideas
3. Execute paste ups for ideas of individual ciba works⁹²

While working on *Natural Magic*, Charlesworth was simultaneously conceiving *Doubleworld*, a series that looks at photography by way of such themes as optics, camera technology, and science.⁹³ References to the history of cameras, studio setups, and perception permeate her notebooks and artwork at this time. She appears to have been studying the history and theory of the medium, making notes about such publications as Gus Macdonald’s *Camera: Victorian Eyewitness—A History of Photography, 1826–1913* (1980) and Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer* (1990). Among the devices depicted in works from the series are a telescope (*Untitled [Voyeur]*; page 150 right), a stereoscope (*Doubleworld*; page 155), and an antique wooden camera (*Still Life with Camera*; page 151). The latter also features the spine of the classic late nineteenth-century book *The People’s Cyclopaedia of Universal Knowledge*.

A number of pieces from this series reference, loosely or in painstaking detail, existing art historical works, both paintings and photographs that she knew from printed reproductions. *Allegory of the Arts* (page 152) was based on an “anonymous photo from the 1850s”;⁹⁴ *Still Life with Flowers* (page 154) was inspired by the many images of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch still-life paintings she tore out of books and collected as postcards; and *The Five Senses* (page 153) was a meticulous re-creation of Lubin Baugin’s *Still Life with Chessboard (The Five Senses)* (1630). She scoured New York for each prop, selecting everything down to the right flowers, instrument, loaf of bread, coin purse, and so on (see page 217, figs. 1 and 2).

By the time Charlesworth embarked on *O+1* (2000; pages 156–61) at the end of the 1990s, she had converted to a studio-based practice, shedding paste-ups to work exclusively with three-

dimensional objects as props to be photographed (see page 184, fig. 7).⁹⁵ Although she continued to make notes and simple sketches in her notebooks, she no longer went through the elaborate process of collecting clippings and sourcing matching objects. And, instead of turning to art historical references as catalysts, she began to look to her own visual vocabulary for inspiration. In *O+1*—as well as the *Neverland* (2002; pages 162–71) and *Simple Text* (2005; pages 172–77) series that followed—Charlesworth reprised certain thematic and formal strands of *Objects of Desire*, including bowls, columns, lotus flowers, and Buddhas in a self-referential examination of her earlier work. Lamps, candles, altars, fruit, and other objects began to appear in her work, either as single items or as groups centered in the frame, focusing our attention on their nature as secular icons and spiritual offerings.

Just as she looked to her own work for sources of imagery, the studio as a site of art making, along with the tools and instruments within, also became prominent later in her career as she spent more time there setting up and shooting her own photographs. But this interest was apparent from the beginning: at the time she created *Doubleworld* she had already collected and considered various studio images, including one of a historical photography studio, captioned “Unidentified photographer (United States)—Two Women in an Artist’s Studio, ca. 1895, Cyanotype.” Likewise, test Polaroids thought to have been taken between *Natural Magic* and *Doubleworld* in about 1993–95 show Charlesworth’s interest in studio tools, with a paintbrush, scissors, a screwdriver, a pencil, a red grease pencil, a Sharpie, and a fountain pen arranged in a jar like a still life. Although neither of these images ended up as a completed artwork, the studio and the tools of her craft would serve as subject matter nearly twenty years later in the series *Work in Progress* (2009) and *Available Light* (2012).

In the last two bodies of work I’ve used the studio and the process of working as integral to the idea of the series as a whole. In this case, I was trying to confound the difference between a photograph as something that is set up, built, posed, a “constructed image” that has closure, and a photograph that is just observed, something that the camera frames, that happens to be there in an incidental way. I was interested in confusing those two approaches to photography, in juxtaposing them against each other because I think it is a false distinction.

—SARAH CHARLESWORTH (2012)⁹⁶

Charlesworth found great joy in her home and studio in Falls Village, Connecticut, which she acquired and rented, respectively, in 2004 and shortly thereafter. Here she was able to create her ideal spaces, and aspects of the studio architecture directly affected and figured in subsequent bodies of work. In particular, the large window facing the street provided an important element: light. Covered with semi-opaque paper that acted like a filter to change the quality of illumination and to provide a baffle to block the view outside, the window served as a backdrop for the props set before it.⁹⁷ Specifically, the window functioned as a large-scale light box in front of which Charlesworth composed and photographed objects in silhouette, a visual format she had been drawn to from

decades past.⁹⁸ *Work in Progress* (pages 196–203), which was shot there, comprises images of studio tools: a brush, a T-square, a level, a screen, an easel, rulers, frames, colored paper, and, of course, cameras. In each piece she focused her attention on a single object or group of like objects shot against a monochromatic or color-blocked background created with paper.

Charlesworth's fascination with cameras and photography at the time extended to her intrigue over the expanded presence of images in the digital era. In a 2012 interview she remarked:

“As a culture, our thought processes have become so limited by our vocabulary, by these words like ‘photographs’ that can refer to something as diverse as an image taken with a phone and circulated on the Internet, an Ansel Adams image downloaded as data from Corbis Pictures, and an actual vintage print with specific physical properties. The vocabulary we still employ to speak of these dimensions of visual culture is anachronistic and can barely approach the richness and diversity of contemporary practice.”⁹⁹ At this time she was exploring different kinds of image making, including on her iPhone, which she used to take snapshots of her environment—her house, studio, and garden, various tools and furniture, her own artwork, clouds, shadows, and light.¹⁰⁰

In one of her last sketchbooks, used during the time she was working on the series *Available Light* and up until her death, Charlesworth pondered various aspects of light, including in connection to the “window”:

Window

LIGHT
 LIGHT AS ALTAR
 LIGHT AS LIFE
 LIGHT AS GOD
 MAKE THE WINDOW THE ALTAR
 WORSHIP THE LIGHT
 LIGHT AS METAPHOR
 USE ALTAR-LIKE FORMS IN
 1, 2, and 3 DIMENSIONS
 LIGHT/TIME AS 4TH DIMENSION
 DAYLIGHT
 CANDLE LIGHT
 BUILD ALTARS¹⁰¹

For Charlesworth, light was not just a tool for creating her photographs; it was also an altar and a portal—a metaphysical space in which she and her objects existed. In *Available Light* (pages 204–13) she turned to many familiar objects (a candle, a crystal ball, a goblet, an hourglass) and optical devices (a telescope, a magnifying glass), and returned to tested strategies of doubling, pairing, and silhouetting to make a group of ethereal and light-filled photographs. Some are devoid of context, without ties to any specific setting, but others, such as *Magical Room* (page 206), are clearly set within the space of the studio and feature her desk and workspace, including some of her own photographic prints tacked on the wall.

Even as she was focusing her attention inward to her private work space, in this last series she also turned outward—to the landscape,

as reflected in *Crystal Ball* (page 207), and to outer space, as in the diptych *Moon Watch* (pages 212–13). A return to the familiar iconography associated with the cosmos also is evident in the diptych *Regarding Venus* (page 210), which features an image of the planet on the left panel. A similar image of Venus appears pinned to the wall in *Magical Room* and *Studio Wall* (page 209 left). In the right panel of *Regarding Venus*, Charlesworth circled back to proven formal and conceptual approaches of appropriating art historical reproductions. Interestingly, after more than twenty years of studio photography, she once again took an opportunity to mix photography and rephotography by incorporating a silhouetted image from a 1922 painting by Francis Picabia titled *La Feuille de vigne* (*The Fig-Leaf*). Working with a printed copy, Charlesworth cut out the figure in black paper and adhered it to the studio window in a multilayered collage that likely may have included the white paper filter she used to cover the window, a light blue paper that forms the background, the black silhouette, and a cutout paper fig leaf on top before she photographed the composition.¹⁰² Originally she was toying with combining the figure with the image of a floral landscape (fig. 10), but ultimately decided to concentrate on the figure alone.

Available Light would be Charlesworth's last body of work, though at the time of her death in 2013 she was envisioning and grouping images likely destined to become another series. They included nature (trees, leaves, birds) and formal patterns (stripes, plaids, modern designs) resembling some of her previous iconography.¹⁰³ Although she had fully adopted a studio practice many years prior, *Available Light* and the images she was working on subsequently show her coming full circle to strategies developed over many decades of creating cutouts, collaging, pasting, layering, and rephotographing wide-ranging images. At the end, everything was interconnected, with ideas and approaches flowing together to reveal a consistency that had been present all along.



fig. 10

FIGURE 10 Test shot (color transparency), ca. 2010–11, for *Regarding Venus*, 2012

Notes

The title of this essay derives from the name of a file of magazine clippings in Sarah Charlesworth's file cabinet.

1. Artist's notebook related to *Doubleworld*, ca. 1993–95. All archival materials cited are courtesy the Estate of Sarah Charlesworth and Maccarone New York/Los Angeles.
2. *Sarah Charlesworth: A Retrospective* was organized by SITE Santa Fe and traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC; Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art; and Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University. The catalogue, *Sarah Charlesworth: A Retrospective* (Santa Fe, NM: SITE Santa Fe, 1997), is the only monograph to appear during her lifetime.
3. For her first solo exhibition at Jay Gorney Modern Art, New York, in 1989, she presented two bodies of works: *Academy of Secrets* in the upstairs space, which was the featured work, and a subgroup of *Objects of Desire* downstairs; some of the *Objects of Desire* works had previously been shown at International with Monument, where she showed prior to joining Gorney's gallery. Decades later, Galerie Tanit, Munich, mounted *Selected Works, 1978–2009*.
4. Sarah Charlesworth, "Career Summary and Background, Part 1," typescript, ca. 1984–85.
5. There are a few exceptions: *The First Human Being* (1972); an untitled portrait of the Shah of Iran (1978); *Murder (En Abyrne)* (1980); *Tabula Rasa* (1981); and *Text* (1992–93). According to Amos Poe, whom she met in 1979 and to whom she was married from 1984 to 2010: "She had a fixation that pieces had to fit a theme for a show. In my opinion she rejected her best work because it didn't fit a 'show'.... I definitely think Sarah was right (?) about her art and why each SHOW had to have coherency. It was indicative of our dialogue, that I fought for unique pieces ('the hell with coherency') while she took the position, 'I'm not interested in one or two pieces of beauty'—I think it speaks of her courage and intellectual rigor." Amos Poe, e-mail to author, September 1, 2016.
6. For a series-by-series analysis of her work through 1995, see Susan Fisher Sterling, "In-Photography: The Art of Sarah Charlesworth," in *Sarah Charlesworth: A Retrospective*, 72–89.
7. Sarah Charlesworth, paper for the panel "Post-Modernism and Photography," Society for Photographic Education, March 1983, Philadelphia, p. 4. A version of this text is reproduced in *Sarah Charlesworth: Doubleworld*, ed. Margot Norton and Massimiliano Gioni (New York: New Museum, 2015), 96–99.
8. Lucy Poe in conversation with author, May 12, 2015; Charlesworth also discusses this in "Oral history interview with Sarah Edwards Charlesworth, 2011 November 2–9," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, transcript available online, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-sarah-edwards-charlesworth-15993#transcript>.
9. Sarah Charlesworth, "Career Summary and Background, Part 2: 'The Socialization of the Artist,'" typescript, ca. 1975. According to studio manager Matthew Lange, Charlesworth referred to this document as her "joke bio," though it is unknown what spurred her to produce it. The last noted accomplishment was listed as an entry for 1975; she also projected that she would be teaching at the School of Visual Arts in spring 1976, so it may have been written in relation to this upcoming class. This was also around the time of her involvement with *The Fox*, when she and the other editors were taking a highly critical stance about the role of artists in society, which may have been a catalyst for this piece of writing.
10. Lucy Poe in conversation with author, May 12, 2015; see also "Oral history interview with Sarah Edwards Charlesworth."
11. "Oral history interview with Sarah Edwards Charlesworth."
12. The archive contains various related documents, including invoices, check stubs, and notes in her appointment books, ca. 1969–73.
13. Her work for Jim Foote is documented in her appointment book from 1969. He is believed to be the son of Emerson Foote of the New York advertising agency Foote, Cone & Belding.
14. Kate Linker writes that Charlesworth "supported herself for seven years after graduation as a commercial photographer" (Linker, "Artifacts of Artifice," in *Sarah Charlesworth: Doubleworld*, 19). There is no evidence in the archive to support this, however. In fact, bank records and tax filings indicate the opposite.
15. Charlesworth saved the New York State tax certificate for Sunshine Communications, Inc. among her archival papers.
16. As late as 1985 Charlesworth was taking on freelance projects, which may have been motivated by financial constraints, as indicated in her records throughout the 1980s. She was hired that year to shoot the images that appear in the opening sequence of credits on *Saturday Night Live* for the show's fall 1985 season.
17. Charlesworth saved the announcement card for the exhibition with a handwritten note from Douglas Huebler; she noted in her appointment book that she attended on January 20 (not at the opening).
18. Charlesworth's appointment book from 1969 indicates their romantic involvement beginning and ongoing from March of that year, although she recalls in the Archives of American Art oral history interview that they met in 1973. Charlesworth and Kosuth started living together in 1974; based on documents found in the archive, the first time she used his address at 35 Bond Street was in correspondence dated January 1974.
19. For an in-depth discussion of Art & Language and *The Fox*, and Charlesworth's role in both, see Thomas Lawson's essay in this volume.
20. According to her appointment books, Charlesworth's involvement with Artists Meeting for Cultural Change (AAMC) began in 1975 and ended with her resignation in 1977 (see Thomas Lawson's essay, page 79). She participated in a reading group called "Marxist-Feminist 4" in 1976–77, for which she kept the memos about meeting dates and reading lists. At least one meeting, cohosted with Sharon Friedman from Temple University, was held at the loft she shared with Kosuth at 591 Broadway, and at that meeting they discussed Fredric Jameson's *Marxism and Form* (1971). Other texts she noted having read for her groups include Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel* (1914–15) and *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), and Dorothy
21. Filmmaker Jane Weinstock, who met Charlesworth in a reading group in 1978 or 1979 that lasted for a few years, remarked that Charlesworth was "possibly considered more Marxist than Feminist at the time" and her interests began to widen later; conversation with author, May 1, 2016, and e-mail to author, February 13, 2017.
22. Artist's loose notes, ca. 1974–76; artist's notebooks, ca. 1974–76; artist's appointment books, 1974, 1975, and 1978; and "Oral history interview with Sarah Edwards Charlesworth."
23. "I took a class with one of the most famous photo teachers in the country, who was Lisette Model. And she taught at the New School and she also taught a private master's workshop. And you had to apply for the class and show her your portfolio and be accepted to be in the class." "Oral history interview with Sarah Edwards Charlesworth."
24. Sarah Charlesworth, in *No. 1: First Works by 362 Artists*, ed. Francesca Richer and Matthew Rosenzweig (New York: D.A.P., 2005), 80.
25. Ibid.
26. Charlesworth, talk at Guggenheim Bilbao, January 27, 2011, in conjunction with the exhibition *Haunted*, curated by Jennifer Blessing, typescript, p. 1.
27. Kosuth, among other conceptual artists, including Huebler and On Kawara, had used newspapers in his work beginning in the late 1960s. In 1968 Kosuth stated: "My current work, which consists of categories from the thesaurus, deals with the multiple aspects of an idea of something. I changed the form of presentation from the mounted Photostat, to the purchasing of spaces in newspapers and periodicals (with one 'work' sometimes taking up as many as five or six spaces in that many publications—depending on how many divisions exist in the category)." Joseph Kosuth, untitled statement, in Germano Celant, *Art Povera* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 98.

28. Artist's loose notes labeled "Project Notes for 77-78/ Summer 77," ca. 1977.
29. The subtitle "Second Reading" was dropped at the time of the 1984 exhibition *April 21, 1978* at the California Museum of Photography, University of California, Riverside; see the catalogue published as *CMP Bulletin* 3, no. 5 (1984).
30. Artist's notebook related to *Modern History*, ca. 1978-79.
31. Because the Saturday and Sunday editions were published together, the twenty-six pages in both works constitute all the front pages for each month.
32. The decrease in scale of the front pages rendered much of the text in this work illegible; however, the prominence of the articles on Chile is heightened in at least part of the edition. The inscription "ed. 1/3" on the back of one set of the work indicates Charlesworth's intention to produce this work in an edition of three. There is no record of where this set, which is signed and dated 1976, was shown. Another set, produced on thick wood blocks and unframed, was included in the group exhibition at Cayman Gallery, New York, in spring 1977. In this set, each panel includes a story about Chile, but all of the text is uniform in weight. Both of these pieces were boxed and labeled later, by Charlesworth, "Proto-Modern History"; there is no documentation about a third set from the noted edition. While there are extensive notes about Charlesworth's technical process throughout the archive, there are no clues about how she reproduced the newsprint for this piece or fabricated these works.
33. Sarah Charlesworth to Gilbert [last name unknown] at Galerie MTL, Brussels, September 17, 1977, and to Gilbert [last name unknown] and Fernand [Spillemaeckers], September 22, 1977. The first document reveals that she was writing from Siena, where Kosuth's Italian home was located, and "working against the setting sun" (i.e., without electricity) and facing a "shortness of time for preparation." She asks for lists of newspapers available in Belgium to be drawn up and sent to her via Air Mail Express and instructs the gallery to keep
- a duplicate list in case it does not reach her.
- Although the ultimate reason for her decision to work with actual newspapers rather than reproductions is unknown, my conclusion is that this was a practical decision, stemming from her desire to find a way to make work on very short notice for what would be her first solo exhibition. The approach she used in this work remained an exception within her otherwise photographic practice involving the reproduction of (and later creation of) images.
34. Charlesworth, "Notes on the Moro Trilogy from *Modern History*," ca. 1984, typescript, p. 1; see also the catalogue for *April 21, 1978* (see note 29 above).
35. These "controls" were included as part of the captions in the catalogue for her exhibition of these works in Edinburgh; see *Modern History* (Edinburgh: New 57 Gallery, 1979), 2-3. For works illustrated in the current publication, the controls are provided in the captions on page 224.
36. Sarah Charlesworth, "Unwriting: Notes on *Modern History*," in *Modern History*, 1.
37. See Liz Linden, "Reframing *Pictures*: Reading the Art of Appropriation," *Art Journal* 75, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 40-57; Linden addresses how written texts present in certain works of art associated with the *Pictures* Generation were overlooked, including in Douglas Crimp's own writings about the *Pictures* exhibition. She notes the tendency to focus on the photographs to such an extent that the words (as embedded texts, in logos, etc.) were missed. By association, there has been a tendency to ignore the presence of mastheads and captions in Charlesworth's *Modern History* works and to indicate that "all" text was removed.
38. See note 27 above.
39. Artist's loose notes related to *Modern History*, ca. 1977-78.
40. Artist notebook related to *Modern History*, ca. 1979. She listed titles, dates, and names of newspapers for articles published between March and May 1977. Those collected newspapers focused on nuclear disasters around the time of the Three Mile Island accident in 1979; she marked the relevant articles by drawing outlines around them in red. In the same notebook she also listed articles related to FDA drug recalls, an idea she was researching for another unrealized work.
41. It is unknown whether Charlesworth, and perhaps Kosuth, purchased some of the newspapers related to the Moro Trilogy in Italy; her notebooks at the time confirm that she was in contact with Mr. Simian (possibly a librarian) at the UN Library. It seems that he saved, and possibly sent, papers to her. Some of the Moro Trilogy works may have been pasted up in Italy; others were created in New York. She had large-scale portfolios that she carried on the plane (as indicated by airline stickers on them).
42. Charlesworth copied this quotation in her sketchbook related to *Stills*, ca. 1979-80.
43. In her Creative Artists Program Service grant application, written in 1977, she indicated: "I am requesting funds to continue my work as a conceptual artist." And where asked to indicate her "art field," she checked "undecided" and typed in "(Conceptual Art)."
44. Charlesworth would create seven additional *Stills* that were presented in an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 2014-15 and are discussed in the publication *Sarah Charlesworth: Stills* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2014). This project was started while she was alive although completed posthumously.
45. The phrase "falling photos" appears in Charlesworth's notebook related to *Modern History* as early as ca. 1978-79. The terms "falling," "still life," and later "stills" appear in her sketchbook related to *Stills*, ca. 1979-80, and in notebooks as late as ca. 1988-89, well after the series title had been established as *Stills*. The first group of seven of these works were shown in 1980 at Tony Shafrazi Gallery, which was located in his apartment at 88 Lexington Avenue. Interestingly, the word "Suspense" appeared on a typed list of works in progress dated 1979, and the series title was formalized as *Stills* just prior to the opening in 1980.
46. Photos were obtained from AP (Associated Press) Wire Photo, NY Public Library Picture Collection, UPI (United Press International), AP Photo, UPI Cable Photo, AP Radio Photo, UPC, AP Laserphoto, American International Pictures, CP Wirephoto, Wide World Photos, Acme Newspictures, Inc., NASA (distributed by UPI or other agency), and others.
47. Charlesworth discusses her exploration of stunt photography versus pictures of suicides in "Dialogue: Sarah Charlesworth with Betsy Sussler," *Cover* (Spring/Summer 1980): 23; see also *Sarah Charlesworth: Stills*.
48. Charlesworth considered and ultimately agreed to include one of the *Stills*—*Unidentified Woman, Hotel Corona de Aragón, Madrid*—in an exhibition curated by Peter Eley at PS 1 in New York, ten years after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. According to Eley, after some initial concerns over typing the work to this specific context, she decided she liked the idea. E-mail to author, June 15, 2016; Eley cited e-mails between himself and Charlesworth from April 13 and April 25, 2011.
49. She tore an image of Warhol's *Suicide*, which seems to have been her actual source, from a copy she had of John Coplan's 1970 Warhol catalogue published by the New York Graphic Society. She discusses her inspiration for *Unidentified Man, Unidentified Location* specifically, and the *Stills* series generally, in a letter to Susan Stoops at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University on December 13, 1996. Besides Warhol's image, she had also clipped and saved (though had not used) an image of Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void*, photographed by Harry Shunk in 1960. For an analysis of *Stills*, see Leslie Dick, "Intentional Accidents: Reflections on Sarah Charlesworth's *Stills*," *Xtra* 18, no. 3 (Spring 2016): 4-31.
50. Charlesworth to Stoops, Rose Art Museum, December 13, 1996.
51. Charlesworth, "Post-Modernism and Photography," 3.
52. Judy Glantzman, "Interview: Sarah Charlesworth," *Journal of Contemporary Art* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 60.
53. Although *In-Photography* has come to refer to a group of early works, Charlesworth did not use it as a series title; rather, it was the title of her artist book produced by CEPA following her exhibition and the essay within. See Sarah Charlesworth, *In-Photography* (Buffalo, NY: CEPA Gallery, 1982). Former CEPA director

- Gary Nickard confirmed that this publication was part of a series of artist books (rather than an exhibition catalogue) produced by CEPA after the close of the exhibition; correspondence with author, August 9–10, 2016.
54. In a Guggenheim grant application from ca. 1980, Charlesworth proposes the work that would become *Tabula Rasa* (1981) as well as related works that involve lightning bolts and light as a medium, confirming that she was thinking about light and lightning as themes early on.
 55. Artist's notebook related to *Tabula Rasa* and *The White Lady*, ca. 1980–81.
 56. With the *Objects of Desire* series in the mid-1980s, Charlesworth began to create pairs of works, either physically attached (“diptychs”) or in detached pairs (which she referred to as “duos”). Interestingly, in the *Natural Magic* series of 1992–93 she photographed two masked figures, which were likely inspired by a similar form and composition in a painting entitled *Duo* (1928) by René Magritte in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She kept a folder of clippings called “ideas for Diptychs and Triptychs.”
 57. This was the inaugural issue of *Bomb*, for which Charlesworth was one of three art directors. The magazine may originally have been scheduled to launch in fall 1980; this date appears on an early mock-up of a cover design Charlesworth created, suggesting that she was already thinking about this lightning imagery at least prior to fall 1980.
 58. Charlesworth referred to *The White Lady* group as a “Triptych [sic]” in a notebook from ca. 1980–81, and later stated that *Snake Girl* was the first triptych; see Glantzman, “Interview: Sarah Charlesworth,” 64. To obtain the source image for *The White Lady*, she wrote to the La Jolla, California, Chamber of Commerce seeking photographs or tourist postcards of a cave known by this name, which is shaped like the outline of a woman's figure, not unlike some of her cutouts and silhouette forms; it is not known, however, if the image she actually used was obtained from the La Jolla Chamber of Commerce or elsewhere. The response, which is written on the bottom of Charlesworth's original request, is dated January 2, 1981.
 59. A printed presentation of *The White Lady* works appears in *Bomb*, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 26–27. The caption identifies this spread as an “installation” but it does not clarify where the works had been shown. The only known record of these works being shown is at Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp, in 1981, along with *Empire Light* and *Look Back Time* (1981), a work that came to be associated with *In-Photography*. It is likely that *The White Lady* and *Empire Light* were originally conceived as unique prints that were shown in Belgium, and would have been known to audiences in New York and elsewhere through reproduction in *Bomb* and *In-Photography*.
 60. Charlesworth's cat in the early 1980s was named Thunder.
 61. The *In-Photography* works were first shown in New York in a three-person exhibition (along with Dean Chamberlain and Peter Strongwater) at Tony Shafrazi Gallery in 1981–82. Subsequently various works associated with *In-Photography* were included in her 1982 solo exhibition at CEPA Gallery in Buffalo (see note 53 above) and at Olsen Gallery, New York, in 1982. *In-Photography* works were also included in various group shows in New York, including at Barbara Gladstone and Metro Pictures.
 62. *Abstract Appropriations* at the Grey Art Gallery in New York (1986) and *Abstraction in Contemporary Photography*, a traveling exhibition organized by the Emerson Gallery at Hamilton College (1989–90), are two examples of this focus on “abstract photography.”
 63. In the following works, Charlesworth used Pantone by Letraset adhesive gels (samples of which were found in the archive) to apply color to the surface of black-and-white photos: *Café Aubette* (1982), *Japanese House* (1982), *Rietveld Chair* (1981), and *Pueblo Vase* (1982), and the group of works entitled *Plaids* (1983). (The SITE Santa Fe retrospective catalogue also includes *Samurai* among those with gels, but examination of the work does not confirm this.)
 64. Charlesworth, *In-Photography*, 5.
 65. Sarah Charlesworth, “Books: ‘Camera Lucida’: Reflections on Photography,” *Artforum* 20, no. 8 (April 1982): 72–73.
 66. Charlesworth was well aware of these historical and theoretical ideas, which were in circulation at the time. In 1987 she stated, “Even when Walter Benjamin talked about ‘Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,’ he was talking about multiple copies versus unique objects. We are not even talking about multiple copies. We are talking about Global Electronic Computerized Satellite-dished transmission of images, reaching millions of people! Images themselves are traveling at the speed of light ... well, at least sound. This is an entirely new not only metaphysical frontier, but a political and social frontier as well.” David Clarkson, “Sarah Charlesworth: An Interview,” *Parachute*, December 1987, 14; reprinted in *Sarah Charlesworth: Doubleworld*, 104–9.
 67. The names Louis Daguerre, William Henry Fox Talbot, and Nicéphore Niépce, about whom she read as part of her self-education on the medium, appear in her notebooks and loose notes from the 1980s and 1990s.
 68. Craig Owens, “Sarah Charlesworth at 421 West Broadway,” *Art in America* 70, no. 5 (May 1982): 141.
 69. In an appointment book from ca. late 1978 through spring 1979, Charlesworth noted, “Roland Barthes, 11 Rue Serrandoni, 75006 Paris” on a page with other Paris addresses. It is possible they met around the time of her 1978 exhibition at Galerie Eric Fabre in Paris.
 70. Charlesworth, “Books: ‘Camera Lucida,’” 72.
 71. *Ibid.*, 73.
 72. This text appears in a photograph she took of her computer monitor, ca. 2004. It is one of a number of transparencies of images with embedded text on her computer screen that she shot but never printed.
 73. Charlesworth, “Post-Modernism and Photography,” 6.
 74. Charlesworth discusses her ideas about the difference between “quoting” and “appropriating”—and her dislike of the term “appropriation”—in the interview “Sara VanDerBeek and Sarah Charlesworth,” *North Drive Press*, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 4, 7–8.
 75. The artists in Crimp's exhibition were Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, and Philip Smith. Charlesworth, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, and others who have come to be squarely associated with Pictures were not included in that show. However, Crimp included Sherman in his revised essay “Pictures,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 75–88.
 76. Examples from *Stills* and *In-Photography* were included in a number of group shows in New York and elsewhere on the subject of Pictures and appropriation from the beginning of the 1980s, including: *Photo* at Metro Pictures, New York (1981); *A Fatal Attraction* at Renaissance Society, Chicago (1982), curated by Thomas Lawson; and *Resource Material: Appropriation in Current Photography* at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (1982). Charlesworth became friendly with Cindy Sherman and Laurie Simmons, whose work was similarly commenting on the nature of image culture, in 1982. I am grateful to Elisabeth Sussman for talking with me about the lineages within the New York art world in the 1980s and the reception of the work of many of the artists who came to be associated with Pictures Generation. For a recent reconsideration of the Pictures Generation, see Gary Indiana, “Back in the Frame,” *New York Times T Magazine*, February 19, 2017, 226–31.
 77. Crimp, “Pictures,” 83. Emphasis mine.
 78. Charlesworth, “Post-Modernism and Photography,” 1. She began her talk: “When I was first invited to participate on this panel, while I felt as qualified as anyone to discuss theoretical issues related to photography,... I had not however considered the concept of Post-Modernism as it relates specifically to photography or vice versa. (aside re: Crimp).”
 79. Charlesworth subdivided the *Objects of Desire* series into parts, which have been labeled at various times *Objects of Desire* 1, 2, 3, 3.5, 4, and 4.5. These subdivisions and the contents within seem to have shifted over the years in various publications including the artist's website. Susan Sterling discusses the differences between the subseries in “In-Photography: The Art of Sarah Charlesworth” (see note 6 above). The artist also addressed some of the distinctions in Clarkson, “Sarah Charlesworth: An Interview,” 13.
 80. Despite extensive research, the relationship between *Red Collages* and *Objects of Desire* is one of speculation, and with the help of archivist Gena Beam, I have concluded that the *Red Collages* demonstrate a distinctive shift from the work that was associated with *In-Photography* and were prototypes for *Objects of Desire*. Charlesworth included three *Red Collages* in her 1984 solo exhibition at The Clocktower, where they were dated 1983–84, which would coincide with the beginning of her *Objects of Desire* series; however, they are

- listed separately on the checklist, without a series title (simply “small Cibachrome prints”), and photographs from the exhibition reveal they were not installed with the *Objects of Desire* works, which at that point were dated 1983–84 based on works completed to date. This separation may have been due to their smaller size, or they may have been shown as a group because they all utilize a red background.
- There is additional confusion because of Charlesworth’s own labeling system, used until 1992. For example, envelopes in which she filed color transparencies related to *Objects of Desire* are marked as follows: “‘Test’ Construction Red on Red” (which contains the test for *Construction*) and “O of D I 20” x 15”” (which contains the film for the four *Red Collages*—*Rider*, *Fashion Collage*, *Construction*, and *Vase*). This would suggest that Charlesworth saw—or came to associate—the “red collages” as part of *Objects of Desire 1*—and even more so, that there was fluidity rather than rigidity in developing these works of art.
81. These maneuvers anticipate the technical sophistication of Photoshop, which was introduced to consumers in the early 1990s and adopted by Charlesworth around 2002, initially to produce the backgrounds of her *Neverland* series.
 82. I am grateful to Roselee Goldberg for pointing out the way Charlesworth “re-materialized” the art object after moving away from more conceptually based practices, focusing increasingly on beauty and seduction. Conversation with author, February 26, 2016.
 83. “Sara VanDerBeek and Sarah Charlesworth,” 6.
 84. The press release from her exhibition at International with Monument, April 18–May 10, 1987, indicates that the show was called *Objects of Desire IV: Academy of Secrets*, suggesting fluidity at the time between the ideas behind and the development of these two bodies of work, even though the works exhibited are all now associated with *Objects of Desire: Bowl and Column* (1986), *Great Wall* (1986), *Sphinx* (1986), *Buddha of Immeasurable Light* (1987), *Maps* (1987), *Natural History* (1987), *Fear of Nothing* (1987), and *Landscape* (1987). The works that make up *Academy of Secrets* as it has come to be known were not realized until 1989 and were exhibited at Jay Gorney Modern Art that year.
 85. Artist’s sketchbook related to *Natural Magic* and various topics, ca. 1990–92.
 86. According to studio records, the studio on Mott Street was followed by ones at 60 Broadway in Williamsburg (ca. 1996–2002) and at 19 Delevan Street in Red Hook (ca. 2001–8), before she purchased a house in Falls Village, Connecticut, at 92 Main Street in 2004. Though she had the intention to create a studio within the house, she found a space up the street at 100 Main Street that she seems to have started using around 2008 (while still using the space in Red Hook for various projects).
 87. Charlesworth described her fascination with magic in an interview with Betsy Sussler in *Bomb*, no. 30 (Winter 1989–1990): 30. According to Susan Weiley, “Charlesworth appropriated the title of her 1989 series ‘The Academy of Secrets’ from Giovanni della Porta, an Italian who invented the first photographic lens and a master of a secret society that believed that nature may have laws of its own independent of the laws of God.” Weiley, “Sarah Charlesworth’s Abracadabra,” *Artnews* 90 no. 3 (March 1991): 120.
 88. With great pride she taught graduate and undergraduate photography students throughout her life. The classroom was a forum for her to dissect and disseminate knowledge, but also to mentor. As she noted in 2011, “I loved teaching right from the beginning. I loved it more and more and more and more. The more I do it, the kind of more fluid and fluent I get at it.” “Oral history interview with Sarah Edwards Charlesworth.” Her teaching roles included: participating in a course taught by Kosuth at the School of Visual Arts in 1976–77 and then courses taught there in 1992–2011; an adjunct role at New York University (1983–85); part-time teaching at Rhode Island School of Design (1999–2008); and a professorship at Princeton beginning in spring 2012, which continued until her death. At Princeton she was appointed as lecturer with the rank of professor and worked closely with James Welling in the same role to transform the photography department, under the guidance of Joseph Scanlan, professor of art and director of the Program in Visual Arts at Princeton. My thanks to Joseph Scanlan and James Welling for their information regarding Charlesworth’s work at Princeton.
 89. Artist’s sketchbook related to *Natural Magic*, ca. 1991–92. The phrase “available light” would stay in her mind for twenty years, becoming the title of her last body of work.
 90. Artist’s notebook related to *Natural Magic*, ca. 1991.
 91. Artist’s notebook related to *Natural Magic*, ca. 1991–93.
 92. Artist’s notebook related to *Natural Magic*, ca. 1991.
 93. Even though *Natural Magic* and *Doubleworld* became discrete bodies of work, the simultaneous development of the two are intermingled in at least three notebooks from the period: artist’s notebook related to *Natural Magic*, ca. 1991; artist’s notebook related to *Natural Magic*, ca. 1990–92; and artist’s sketchbook related to *Natural Magic* and various topics, ca. 1990–92.
 94. Artist’s loose notes related to *Doubleworld* written for Margo Leavin, February 25, 1996.
 95. Charlesworth completed *Figure Drawings*, which relied on magazine clippings, in 2008, although she had started it much earlier, in 1988. Some images used within were clipped from a *Spy Magazine* cover she had saved, dated October 1987, and clippings appear in an envelope dated “Aug 89.” She also saved related black-and-white clippings (in undated files) from 1964 and 1971 issues of *The Connoisseur* that she likely found or sourced closer to 1988.
 96. “Sarah Charlesworth and Sara VanDerBeek: A Space in Between,” *Flash Art* 45, no. 285 (July–September 2012): 81.
 97. Laurie Simmons, e-mail to author, July 28, 2016.
 98. Charlesworth collected numerous silhouetted images in multicolored file folders that she labeled: “Silhouettes,” “Pink Feminine Things Silouetted [sic],” “Black Clothes Silouetted [sic],” and “Reverse Silouettes [sic],” all ca. 1980s.
 99. “Sarah Charlesworth and Sara VanDerBeek: A Space in Between,” 81.
 100. I am grateful to Lucy Poe for sharing the artist’s iPhone photostream with me.
 101. Artist’s sketchbook, ca. 2010–11. This sketchbook is assumed to relate to *Available Light*; in it she writes: “Make some more pieces to complement ‘Work in Progress.’”
 102. Charlesworth discusses *Regarding Venus* and the different elements it contains
- in “Sarah Charlesworth and Sarah VanDerBeek: A Space in Between,” 81: “I’ve incorporated an appropriated image of the planet Venus with a real photograph shot against the picture window in my studio. That image is a cut out fragment from a Picabia painting.” She may have been drawn to Picabia’s work because of his layering of transparent imagery, especially between 1927 and 1930. Matthew Lange provided technical details about the creation of the work.
103. The patterns seen in the late imagery demonstrate affinities to the approach she took in *Plaids* (1983), which were included in *The Clocktower* exhibition, and *Tartan Sets* (1986), a large portfolio of photolithographs published by Ilene Kurtz, as well as to the stripe patterning in works from *Available Light*.