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Sarah Charlesworth: 'Available Light'

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Of the so-called Pictures artists who emerged in the late 1970s, few have turned out to be as dedicated as Sarah Charlesworth to photography's traditional methods or to the notion of beauty in the purely contemplative, almost neo-Classical sense. This, her 13th solo show in a New York gallery, demonstrates her commitment with an impressive, almost narrative sequence of images.

In some works elegant glass or metal objects and their reflections or refractions combine with pale, sometimes crisply segmented backdrops, forming spare still lifes that are also quasi-abstract meditations on optics.

Other works isolate objects or images of objects (the confusion seems to be deliberate) against backgrounds of solid color, recalling earlier Charlesworths. Her motifs — a pewter candlestick and lighted candle; an Indian bronze of Shiva dancing; an unusual, eminently modern-looking, bustlike hourglass; and a silhouette of a figure that turns out to be lifted from a Picabia painting — suggest the passage of objects through time and space, and their lives both as commodities and as artistic inspirations.

Spare, luminous photographs of Ms. Charlesworth's studio round out the show by bringing us into her exquisitely controlled workspace; they also remind us how close neo-Classicism can come to Romanticism, especially the idea of the studio as both a laboratory and a place of cosseted reverie.

The show may function best as a single environment and also a summation of Ms. Charlesworth's long involvement with photography, the secret lives of objects and images, the omnipresence of light and the various ways of seeing that they all facilitate.