

RIP Sarah Charlesworth, Conceptual Photographer and Pictures Generation Alum



On Wednesday morning Chelsea's **Susan Inglett Gallery** announced that **Sarah Charlesworth**, one of the conceptual photographers in the so-called Pictures Generation, has died. Charlesworth is represented by Inglett in New York — and by Los Angeles's **Margo Leavin Gallery**, Aspen's **Baldwin Gallery**, and Munich's **Galerie Tanit**; she was born in New Jersey in 1947, earned her BA from **Barnard**, studied photography briefly at the **New School**, and had her studio on Great Jones Street.

Her works typically juxtapose elegantly shot photographs of objects against monochrome backdrops, the combinations of seemingly unrelated images and artifacts conjuring shifting and sometimes opposite meanings for each viewer.

"The arrangement of images is loaded in many different ways which allow for the condition of multiple interpretations," Charlesworth told **BOMB Magazine** in a [1990 interview](#). "The viewer completes the act of interpretation. And I think that's very, very important. And it's something that I could be criticized for. It allows even contradictory interpretations. It doesn't resolve things. There is no closure in these."

Though her work consists of series and pairs of photographs, and she taught photography at the **Rhode Island School of Design**, **New York University**, and the **School of Visual Arts**, she didn't consider herself a photographer. "I don't think of myself as a photographer," she told **BOMB**. "I've engaged questions regarding photography's role in culture for 12 years now, but it is an engagement with a problem rather than a medium."

Between 1997 and 1999 a major retrospective of her work organized by **SITE**, **Santa Fe** traveled to institutions across the U.S. including the **Museum of Contemporary Art** in San Diego, the **National Museum of Women in the Arts** in Washington, D.C., and the **Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art**.

"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," **Roberta Smith** wrote in her [review](#) of Charlesworth's exhibition at Susan Inglett last year. "This, her 13th solo show in a New York gallery, demonstrates her commitment with an impressive, almost narrative sequence of images."

— Benjamin Sutton