

Lee, Nathaniel, "Relics and Rectangles: B. Ingrid Olson's First New York Solo Show," *Modern Painters/Blouin Artinfo*, February 2015

BLOUIN ARTINFO INTERNATIONAL

Relics and Rectangles: B. Ingrid Olson's First New York Solo Show

BY NATHANIEL LEE, MODERN PAINTERS | FEBRUARY 10, 2015



B. Ingrid Olson's "Errata, lighting form" 2014 (left) and "sand the walls, rip the floors" 2014 (right).
(Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery.)

Young Chicago-based artist B. Ingrid Olson's first New York solo exhibition, which runs through February 22 at Simone Subal Gallery, begins with a clear path toward a small, black object hanging on a wall opposite the gallery's entrance. Two temporary walls perpendicular to the entrance create a narrow corridor, steering viewers' bodies — in concert with their eyes — to the rectangular panel. It's the first and last instance of uncomplicated direction viewers will find in this collection of photography and sculpture. The black shape in question, *If given, closed eyes* (all works 2014), with its four fluted concavities and the crosshair at its center, is easy to apprehend formally: obviously, the product of some vague industrial manufacture. Its purpose, its symbolic function (if any), its origin, even its materials, are mysteries. (Actually, according to a press release, it is a replica — one of three — cast in concrete from a wooden original, an orphaned scrap that the artist found in her studio.) But resolving the riddles may not be so important. With or without them, the piece seems ancient and unknown, like a relic from a forgotten civilization.

This dialectic staged between immediately legible particulars and cryptic procedures with a resulting surplus of affect plays out in Olson's photographic work as well. Her photographs have many surface qualities associated with the medium: blur, color and tonal gradients, objects revealed through relative degrees of focus and framing, yet they lack any sense of a coherent visual field. Consider *three rectangles by three rectangles, infinite sheet*. We see the artist in several poses, photographing herself in a series of mirrors. Olson likes to intermix different prints within a single piece, as she has done in three

SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY

rectangles, where she has printed one image onto the mat surrounding another, creating a two-tiered mise en abyme. Sight loses its directive along these circuitous pathways. Without a clear line of vision, we lose definitions and the things they define. Instead, we get a spectral remainder, the leftovers, and their moods.

A version on this article appears in the April 2015 issue of Modern Painters.