

The New York Times

Sara Cwynar

'Flat Death'

*Foxy Production
623 West 27th Street, Chelsea
Through May 3*

The artifice of photography is elastic and alluring, and has allowed many younger artists to build on the achievements of the early-1980s Pictures Generation. Among them is Sara Cwynar — a graphic designer by day, and photo-artist by night — whose witty, visually rich images make an excellent impression here.

Ms. Cwynar's medium-size works range from simple distortion of found images (achieved by jiggling them as they entered the scanner) to dizzying mixtures of appropriation, photography, rephotography, collage and studio setups. In the making of an image, she works on the horizontal and then on the vertical, slices up and then reassembles her images and also shifts from black and white to color film. It seems that Ms. Cwynar (pronounced SWIN-ar) wants a photograph to be anything but coherently two-dimensional. (Possibly to avoid the "Flat Death" of her show's title?)

In "Toucan in Nature (Post It Notes)," the bird sits among weirdly stiff, geometric leaves. They are actually covered with hundreds of green Post-it arrows, stuck to the image, which was then rephotographed. Things are further confused by the pieces of masking tape that hold the sheets of the image, which has been cut into a grid, in place.

"Islamic Dome (Plastic Cups)," a shadowy black-and-white image, is even trickier regarding space and process. Its vaguely architectural arrangement of plastic cups and objects is seen against a backdrop of a black garbage bag, but the whole image is visibly seamed, and the seams are joined with little bits of colored tape.

Some of Ms. Cwynar's images are too simply self-referential, but this show indicates that when it comes to confounding the eye and mind, she has a lot to work with.

ROBERTA SMITH