

ARTFORUM

Erin Shirreff

SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.
530 West 22nd Street
April 17–May 22

Erin Shirreff's art beats between objects and images. Her latest show, "Arm's Length," consists of four bodies of work: large-scale cyanotypes, lush pigment-print diptychs, plinth-bound arrangements of plaster geometries, and layered compositions of steel. Its structure is syntactic, defined through a vocabulary of forms that recur across materials and media. Here tapered to a line, there fixed as a photograph, Shirreff's shapes resist self-containment, meeting in shifting constellations that fail to congeal.

Drop (no. 14) (all works 2015) began as a catalog of curves—the stock stuff of art-school figure drawing—that Shirreff sketched in her studio. Resized to the ready-made parameters of sheets of hot- and cold-rolled steel, the curves coexist as template and cutout, the bend of a semicircle hedging the rectangle from which it was clipped. Isolable and absent jointing, each leans against the gallery wall in mime of the pictorial logic of figure against ground. Cobbled with a sort of calculated casualness, the array seems primed for reconfiguration. A nearby cyanotype, *Four strings*, literalizes *Drop's* insistence on a frontal (and, hence, imagistic) encounter with form. Created through the exposure of sculptural elements to light-sensitive fabric, the image indexes an object that no longer exists. Stretched to a scale typical of postwar abstract painting, its effect is at once factual and vague, the blunt aniconism of its forms contravening the lyricism of its rheumy scale of blues.

Such slippages between photographic, pictorial, and sculptural space organize the installation. Images sidle into objects; objects are percussed into images. In each case, Shirreff's work appears other to us, close enough to touch yet poised at asymptotic remove: the not-quite nearness of an arm's length.

— Courtney Fiske



Erin Shirreff, *Ruler and hole*, 2015, cyanotype photogram, 96 x 96".