

'Through the Plain Camera'

**Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery,
Haverford College
Haverford, Pennsylvania**

In this thoughtful and visually rich show, curators Sarah Kaufman and Rebecca Robertson (photo editor of *ARTnews*) brought together the work of five photographers who capture the world as they find it. The exhibition, subtitled "Small and Shapely Pleasures in Contemporary Photography," was filled with moments of dreamlike intensity.

Jessica Backhaus uses luscious color to transform worn everyday objects into sensual compositions. In *Blue Sink* (2002), a bar of turquoise soap glows against baby-blue porcelain near a silver spigot marred by rust stains. Elizabeth Fleming, whose images recall the films of David Lynch, imbues seemingly innocuous subjects with ominous energy. In *Dust Bunny* and *Broken* (both 2008), skewed points of view and the shadowed planes of wall, floor, or ceiling hint at off-kilter narratives. Vita Litvak has a similar feel for the uncanny. Protean light infuses a block of ice mysteriously abandoned on a stone wall next to a green pond in *We Will Also Melt Someday* (2009). A sulfurous flare of light ignites the trunk of a palm tree in *The Palm at the Edge of the Mind* (2009).

Pleasing geometries could be found in Christian Patterson's *Stage Floor* (2008). Small white, magenta, red, green, and yellow tape markings, suggestive of a



Vita Litvak, *We Will Also Melt Someday*, 2009, lightjet print, 10" x 10". Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College.

cryptic symbol system, punctuate a field of dark gray. Other photos by the artist, like the abstract *Splash for Dash* (2009), record painterly allover color fields.

In Shen Wei's *Xinjiang Pears* (2010), pictures of ripe fruit on a box of pears contrast humorously with the protectively sheathed fruits visible through a cellophane window. *Jiong* (2008), one of a handful of portraits in "Through the Plain Camera," portrays an unsmiling woman daintily holding a cigarette. Observant viewers may have noticed the cigarette's precariously long ash. —Robin Rice