



**ARTIST**

Lenard Smith

**TITLE**

INT10-14

**DIMENSIONS**

6 in H x 7.5 in W

**MEDIUM**

Inkjet Prints

**IMAGE NOTES**

sheet 10 x 8"

**CATALOGUE NUMBER**

2010.113

**CURRENT LOCATION**

1114-1D

---

**LENARD SMITH**

**GENDER**

Male

**CITIZENSHIP**

United States

**CULTURAL HERITAGE**

African-American

**LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP**

Artist-in-Residence, 2010

**LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS**

Contact Sheet 162

**BIOGRAPHY**

Lenard Smith is spending his time at Light Work to both create new work and catch up with some existing projects. Since day one of his residency, Smith has been shooting with the 4 x 5 camera to create a whole new series based on his impressions of and

experiences here in Syracuse, a body of images that he calls the *AIR Work*. These images are half found, half constructed moments in space and time that exalt the scratches of individuality found within institutional architecture. In this way, the images resemble Smiths' *Park Nursing Home* series that examines how residents transform the cold comfort of the nursing home into a real hearth by adding personal touches, especially artifacts from their past lives, to their rooms. Besides editing, scanning, and making large-format prints of *AIR Work*, Smith has been casting a host of models to appear in a series of images based on schematic drawings he came across in several books from the 1950's. These images, which each involve anywhere from 3 to 9 models, aim to create a surreal atmosphere somewhere between sexuality and healing. Finally, Smith has been reexamining images of African Americans, intended to be recontextualized by way of appropriation, a series which he thought was completed years ago but which has recently started calling to him again.

Smith lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He holds an MFA in Advanced Photographic Studies from Bard College/International Center of Photography in New York City. Smith has done commission for the Studio Museum, Harlem, NY as well as for BURRO Gallery, London. His work has been exhibited at venues including Blender Gallery in Sydney; Australia, Humble Arts Foundation, Christie's Rockefeller Plaza, Talman + Monoe Gallery, and International Center of Photography, New York City; as well as Ravenscroft Gallery and BURRO Gallery in London, among others.

[www.lenardsmith.com](http://www.lenardsmith.com)

## ESSAYS

The Light Work residency fosters total creative freedom. When artists arrive for their month-long residencies, one of the first things they learn is that the time is completely whatever they want to make it. Our May 2010 resident Lenard Smith took this freedom fully to heart by revisiting several projects, including editing a book selection and sequence for his series *Fewer Particulars*, work that contains a feeling of solitude and an attention to detail that perhaps provided the seeds for forthcoming work in Syracuse. In addition to his work on *Fewer Particulars*, Smith also used his residency time to create a whole new body of work, which he eventually titled, appropriately, *AIR*. Beginning on day one of his residency, Smith worked with a 4 x 5 camera to make a series of images based on his visual impressions of his temporary surroundings in the city. These images are half found, half constructed moments in space and time that exalt the best discoveries to be made as we go about everyday life—the tiny tableaux, so perfect in their simplicity, that wait for eyes to slow down just long enough to really see. Working primarily around the Syracuse University campus after school was out for the semester, Smith explored buildings left quiet and largely deserted by the students who usually populate these grounds. What he found in undisturbed hallways and walkways were the little details of life that largely go unnoticed in the usual hustle and bustle. His choice of camera may have helped him to attain this level of visual awareness. There is something about working with a large format camera that lends itself to deliberate and studied observation—making each image entails an elaborate ritual in which precise attention to the camera itself is key. More likely, Smith was devoted to refreshing his visual vocabulary by the act of honing in on some of its fundamental building blocks. With the stealth and assurance that comes from having time, Smith used his camera to create simple yet sophisticated still lifes. The images in *AIR* have a pleasing, clean, and straightforward formal quality, giving otherwise found scenes a confounding sense of intention and deliberate construction. Smith thus successfully establishes an intriguing and subtle tension between the ordinary and the sublime that heightens the joy and humor of his images. In this way, Smith draws on the precedent of photographers such as Bernd and Hilda Becher, who also mine the found institutional landscape for grace and revelation. In *AIR* Smith invites us to the delight of minutiae. The multiple and echoing lines of two stacked chairs, for example, become a momentary sculptural event as the orange red of one chair casts a delicate shadow against the wall it faces, silently caressing its immediate space with color. The artist also makes visible the quiet grandeur of an old filing cabinet in a corner, solid and stationary yet also strangely activated by the vibrant purple paint that surrounds it. In another image, the shadow produced by the right combination of time of day and position of the sun and camera transforms a crevice in a hedge into something decidedly more sensual. All of these treasures and many more await discovery, silently beckoning from eye level, until Smith's camera finds and amplifies their unlikely richness. Many of the images in *AIR* depict scratches of individuality found within the institutional architecture featured in the images. Other, unnamed and unrecognized artists have chalked mysterious numbers on walls and left rolls of drawing paper and rubber bands in arrangements that come alive in their formalism. In this way, the images in *AIR* resemble Smiths' *Park Nursing Home* series that examines how residents transform the cold comfort of the nursing home into a real hearth by adding personal touches, especially artifacts from their past lives, to their rooms. Both bodies of work are pervaded with the notion that such gestures, although beautiful, are fleeting impressions cast on surfaces, rooms, and corners that soon will bear the remnants of new interactions and interventions by other anonymous movers. The series title *AIR* most obviously refers to the Artist-in-Residence Program at Light Work with all its attendant creative possibilities that Smith was engaging when he made the work. In this case, perhaps the title also refers to another essential and metaphorical element—time—that sustains and enriches the artist. Mary Goodwin Lenard Smith participated in the Light Work Artist-in-Residence Program in May 2010. For more information about Smith and his work, please visit his website at [www.lenardsmith.com](http://www.lenardsmith.com).