



ARTIST

John Chervinsky

TITLE

Balloon, Rock on Table with Painting

DATE

2010

DIMENSIONS

30 in H x 24 in W

MEDIUM

Inkjet Prints

IMAGE NOTES

Paper size: 36" (h) x 26" (w) Archival Pigment Print

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2013.026

CURRENT LOCATION

NA 01

JOHN CHERVINSKY

BORN

1961

DIED

2015

GENDER

Male

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 2012

Fine Print Program, 2014

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 172

BIOGRAPHY

John Chervinsky was a self-taught photographer and an engineer working in the field of applied physics. Since it first opened at the Griffin Museum of Photography in 2005, his Experiment in Perspective series has been traveling the country including solo exhibits at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory Art Gallery, Batavia IL, Michael Mazzeo Gallery, NYC and Blue Sky Gallery, Portland OR. His work is held in numerous public and private collections including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Art, Portland OR; and Fidelity Investments Collection. Chervinsky spent eighteen years running a particle accelerator at Harvard University and has collaborated with museums, using accelerator technology in the analysis of art. He currently works for Harvard's Rowland Institute for Science, originally founded by Polaroid's Edwin H. Land.

ESSAYS

Photographs have long been associated with capturing a moment in time, but they rarely express the elasticity of experience. Hours and minutes stretch to eternity while you are waiting to reunite with a loved one, and a retrospective gaze shrinks years to a kaleidoscope of days. In many ways, photographers are contemplating how to trap a single moment like a fly in amber. Some photographic images are linked to the past like those prehistoric creatures, while others stay in flux between past and present. In his seminal text *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes observes that photographs do not necessarily reflect what is no longer but what has been. This perceptive difference is at the crux of a series of photographs by artist John Chervinsky. By cleverly inserting paintings into photographs, he presents a confluence of time, space, gravity, and light to suggest that although we cannot hold onto time, we can learn by looking deeply into the mysteries of its passing. A self-taught photographer, Chervinsky is an engineer by day who has worked for the last twenty-eight years in the field of applied physics. When he asks big questions about why we are here and the purpose of life, his answers are grounded in a long-term relationship with science and building things. Some of this pragmatism is evident in the steps of his creative process. He begins in the studio with the blank canvas of an empty white room where he assembles a still life on a work surface that is constructed from discarded doors. These portals hint at figurative ways in and out of the picture. When the set-up is complete, a central and significant sliver is photographed and sent electronically to a painting factory in China where an anonymous artist recreates that frozen photographic moment with paint and a palette knife. Weeks later this slice of time is re-inserted back into the now decomposing still-life, and Chervinsky opens and closes his shutter one final time. Like a vanitas painting, this second photographic act awakens the potential mortality present within every moment. A group of gladiolas, the funereal flower, stretches across an old wooden door. Years of wear and tear are evident in the chipped white paint along the door's edge. In the center of the photograph, a painting recalls the blood-red flowers attached to their verdant stems as they once existed. Around this inserted painting is a worn decorative frame, and beyond its cracked corners lie the remains of the original blossoms, withered petals on one side and faded stems on the other. Punctuating this simultaneity of beginnings and endings is a single petal in the foreground that is neither dried-out nor fresh. Its oval shape and in-between status presents a hopeful antidote to loss akin to the lipstick trace from a lover's kiss. A more subtle juxtaposition is presented in an image where ripened oranges are only slightly more deflated and sagging than their vibrantly painted counterparts. While one orange in the photograph gazes longingly at its younger painted self, a second one is caught aloft in exuberant motion. It reminds me of the unexpected tender feelings that come from leafing through old family photographs. Similarly, another picture playfully conveys time's relentless march forward by merging a painted and photographed clock face, forming multiple sets of rotating hands. Its black electrical cord dangles down the wall to an outlet that peers into the frame like a periscope gazing out into the future. Even an hourglass is in flux between an ending and beginning. A painted depiction of half an hourglass with sand just starting to collect is taped against another where the sands have already fallen through. Pinned nearby hangs an old-fashioned key and a fading snapshot. As I lean in for a closer look, I notice that the reflection in a silver doorknob is actually the photographer behind his camera. Recalling the words of T. S. Eliot: We shall not cease from exploration And the end of all our exploring Will be to arrive where we started And know the place for the first time. By eliciting the infinite nature of what has been Chervinsky urges us not to sweat the small stuff and make the most from our present. Edie Bresler Photographer Edie Bresler is on faculty at Simmons College Boston. A 2013 recipient of a Berkshire Taconic Artist Grant, she is currently artist in residence at the Boston Center for the Arts. Her writing appears regularly in *Photograph* magazine. — John Chervinsky lives in Somerville, MA, and completed his residency at Light Work in October 2012. www.chervinsky.org John Chervinsky (1961-2015) DECEMBER 23, 2015 "I am fascinated by the concept of time. I can measure it, account for it in an experiment in the lab, and live my life in it, but I still don't know what it is, exactly." — John Chervinsky We are saddened to share the news of the passing of photographer and friend John Chervinsky. John passed in the afternoon on Monday, December 21, 2015 at his home in Somerville, MA. John Chervinsky was a Light Work Artist-in-Residence in October 2012. During his month in Syracuse, he produced a handmade version of his book *An Experiment in Perspective*. John was a self-taught photographer and an engineer working in the field of applied physics, most recently at Harvard's Rowland Institute for Science, originally founded by Polaroid's Edwin H. Land. John's creativity and inventiveness came through in his photographic work, and we had the great pleasure of working closely with him, through which we discovered what a humble, generous, and truly brilliant person he was. During his career, John exhibited his photographs nationally at many venues, including solo exhibitions at The Griffin Museum of Photography, Blue Sky Gallery, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in conjunction with the Photographic Resource Center, Wallspace Gallery, Cordon Potts Gallery, and Photo-eye Project Gallery. His work is included in many collections, including Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Portland Museum of Art, Portland, OR; List Visual Art Center Collection at MIT, Cambridge, MA; and Light Work,

Syracuse, NY. The Griffin Museum of Photography in Winchester, MA has established The John Chervinsky Emerging Photographer Scholarship. The scholarship seeks to recognize, encourage and reward photographers with the potential to create a body of work and sustain solo exhibition. Awarded annually, the Scholarship provides recipients with a monetary award, tuition-free enrollment in Photography Atelier, exhibition of their work at the Griffin Museum of Photography, and a volume from John's personal library of photography books. The Scholarship seeks to provide a watershed moment in the professional lives of emerging photographers, providing them with the support and encouragement necessary to develop, articulate and grow their own vision for photography. Please consider making a contribution to the fund. In doing so, you will honor John's memory by making it possible for others to continue his work of tirelessly questioning the world around us. We would like to extend our thoughts to John's wife, Kirsten, and all of our colleagues who knew John's gentle spirit, intelligence, and creativity.