



ARTIST

Anouk Kruithof

TITLE

Pixel Stress

DATE

2013

DIMENSIONS

12.5 in H x 7.875 in W

MEDIUM

Artists' Books

IMAGE NOTES

Limited Edition of 1000 Softcover Book

CATALOGUE NUMBER

2014.082

CURRENT LOCATION

3D-5

ANOUK KRUIHOF

BORN

1981

BIRTHPLACE

Dordrecht, Netherlands

GENDER

Female

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 2013

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 177

BIOGRAPHY

Anouk Kruithof is a photographic artist and bookmaker from the Netherlands. She has published six artistbooks including *Playing Borders* (Revolver, 2009), *Becoming Blue* (Revolver, 2009), *The Daily Exhaustion* (Kodoji Press, 2010), *Happy Birthday to You* (Self-published, 2011) and *A head with wings* (Little Brown Mushroom, 2011). She is currently shortlisted for the Emerging Artist Award, part of the new international photo prize PixSea. In 2012 she won the International Center of Photography's Infinity Award and in 2011 she won the Grand Prix Jury as well as the School of Visual Arts' Photo Global Prize at Festival International de Mode et de Photographie à Hyères, France.

ESSAYS

In the artwork of Anouk Kruithof there is an alluring, unexpected mixture of ingredients, a cocktail with equal parts humor, confusion, and grace. Her projects explicate some of the more troubling aspects of contemporary Western culture—the financial crisis, the surveillance state, and the existential stress of modern life—yet her style is upbeat and presents her viewpoint in vibrant candied colors. This is what is most captivating in her work, the ability to navigate dark and cynical territory with sunny, smart optimism. This tension produces a wonderful uneasiness in her multilayered projects. Kruithof is like a taxi driver taking you through a grim neighborhood via her insider shortcuts, cheerfully and with confidence. Each turn makes you question if she is really taking you where you want to go, but the route is so fascinating that you, in the end, don't question it. In *Pixel Stress* the appropriated photographs are just the seeds. Images are enlarged 3200% in Photoshop and then captured as a screenshot on the computer, making each pixel its own square of color. The blown-up pictures make an almost monochrome grid of color swatches. The palettes evoke the drab, business-like atmosphere of the originals and allude to the traditions of abstract painting. These are strange photographs to begin with, and made stranger. They are seductive, even beautiful, and they definitely look like art. A schlocky photo transforms into a serious artwork by the simple act of looking more deeply into a photograph. The pixelated images are placed in elegant white frames and taken to Wall Street in Manhattan. Camping out on the sidewalk for a day, Kruithof asked passersby what they thought of the pictures and how much they would be willing to pay for them. The authority and power of a framed artwork next to its artist is palpable. The responses range from annoyed, to vaguely intrigued, to downright enthusiastic. One man sees a large closed eye, another finds them sexual, and most seem at least a little confused by the encounter. The combination of their curiosity and mistrust is noticeable in the photos that document this intervention. Those who engage with Kruithof furrow their brows and squint at the pictures. They seem unsure if this attractive young foreigner is a member of the avant-garde or a huckster. Their bewilderment in the photographs echoes the original Google search results, but their uncertainty, unlike the original stress photos, is authentically stressed. Kruithof asks the people she encounters on Wall Street how much they would pay her for the pictures and if they would like to buy them. Prices range from \$500 to \$10 and everyone still seems deeply unsure if the artist is serious about a deal. If someone offers to become a patron, Kruithof refuses their money and gives them the picture for free. She calls this an "imaginary sale." The humor of selling something imaginary on Wall Street is not lost on Kruithof. There is remarkable beauty in the way *Pixel Stress* unfolds. The path wanders from found photograph, to abstract artwork, to street intervention, back to image in the form of a glossy unbound book. Each step in the project is logical, yet somehow completely unexpected. Kruithof notes that to her, the most important aspect of this project is the intervention on Wall Street and the conversations and interactions that occurred there. The people she interacts with seem powerful and self-assured, but are cowed by their lack of expertise. It is the rare place in their world where they are directly confronted, even challenged by art and an artist. Yet she is gracious, charming, and kind with her power. The recent history of fraud and greed on Wall Street fill her location choice with meaning, but Kruithof's version of commerce is the very opposite of that place's. Value is created through human interaction, artistic creation, and generosity. David Oresick David Oresick is an artist, curator, and the manager of Light Work Lab. www.davidoresick.com — Anouk Kruithof lives in Brooklyn, NY, and completed her residency at Light Work in May 2013. www.anoukkruthof.nl