

Yola MONAKHOV STOCKTON
THE NATURE OF IMITATION and POST PHOTOGRAPHY
SEPTEMBER 12 - OCTOBER 24, 2015



Born in Moscow in what was then the Soviet Union, Yola Monakhov Stockton will be featured in two simultaneous exhibitions, one from her soon to be released monograph, *The Nature of Imitation* (Schilt Publishing, Amsterdam, 2015) and the other from her ongoing series of pinhole camera images, *Post-Photography*. For *The Nature of Imitation*, she both photographed birds in captivity, under controlled, pre-conceived settings, and introduced elements of modification and the artifice of the studio into the outdoors. The work showcases the photographer's intellect, honed at a finely tuned crossroads of art history and photographic experimentation, for the purpose of what Elizabeth Biondi states in the monograph's accompanying essay, "exploring and manipulating images without any loss of authenticity." Monakhov Stockton's background as a photojournalist with an MA in Italian literature eventually led her to an MFA from Columbia, two years after being wounded while covering an Israeli – Palestinian conflict in the West Bank. She expressed her doubts about the validity of the documentary aesthetic, confessing in an online interview "the documentary genre in photography has long had a troubled, or perhaps undefined, relationship to its subject." Biondi likens Monakhov Stockton's transformation to that of a painter's ability to control the subject: "In the studio an artist is free to take creativity wherever it leads. This is the freedom Yola wanted...."

The release of all constraints against creativity is on full display in Monakhov Stockton's simultaneous exhibition, selections from her ongoing project of unique pinhole camera images, *Post-Photography*. Perhaps it is a harkening back to the avant-garde spirit of her artistic ancestry from the Constructivism of the 1920s but *Post-Photography* bears all the markings of a salon-busting, anti-academic art practice, where all rules are discarded, resulting in a potent statement on the nature of photography, the documentary tradition and surveillance. By converting photographic paper boxes - and in an ironic twist of high tech subversion, an iMac box for her larger works - into pinhole cameras, which she then mails to herself, she enlists the forces of entropy to author her images. *Post-Photography* is devised to photographically trace the journey each sheet of paper goes through during its travels in the US Postal System, resulting in unique prints that reveal the skeletal outlines of institutional architecture. Her approach is simple, trusting the process of remote picture making, rather than imparting her vision directly on the images.

