

ACME.

6150 WILSHIRE BLVD., SPACES 1 & 2
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90048
T 323.857.5942 F 323.857.5864
WWW.ACMELOSANGELES.COM

Los Angeles Times

Review: Miles Coolidge digs for meaning

January 31, 2014 | By Christopher Knight



The rich coal deposits at Bergwerk Prosper-Haniel mines in Germany's Ruhr Valley are what lurk beneath the industrial towers shown in many of Bernd and Hilla Becher's classic Minimalist photographs from the late 1960s and '70s. For his most recent series of photographs, Miles Coolidge went down into those mine shafts. Four large, luxurious inkjet prints of the coal seams are at ACME Gallery.

At first the images are difficult to make out, the sooty blackness yielding a velvety surface flecked with spots of white. As the coal seam slowly comes into view, with its fractured layers of carbonized vegetable matter transformed by intense pressure into potentially combustible fuel, an image deep within the Earth seems to fuse with the exquisite intimation of a star-studded galaxy as remote as the Milky Way.

Coolidge deftly compresses social, scientific, aesthetic and material histories into otherwise banal pictures. Visually, the photographs' horizontal smears of light-flecked pigment echo the squeegee paintings of German artist Gerhard Richter. According to a gallery handout, the standard pigment inks used to print them are almost entirely composed of carbon derived from coal.

Also on view are two new photographs of peculiar architectural mock-ups in empty lots, one for a medical building and one for a university alumni center. As with earlier examples from the series, which Coolidge showed at ACME. in 2011, the strangely fragmentary pictures dismantle photography as a tool that constructs modern knowledge.

Finally, a monumental, four-panel photograph shows detritus piled up at the backwash of canal sluice gates in a faded New England industrial town. On one hand, it recalls a high-tech satellite photograph of a disintegrating Earth. On another, a shadow seems to be descending over a 20-foot-wide skein of tangled material -- nightfall over a heroic Jackson Pollock painting.

ACME, 6150 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 857-5942, through Feb. 8. Closed Sun. and Mon.
www.acmelosangeles.com