

ARTFORUM

Los Angeles

Sarah Conaway

THE BOX

805 Traction Avenue

March 21–May 2

A ledge in the back of the gallery holds a row of small, darkly patina'd sculptures. On the far left, above the rough-cut titular opening of *Archway* (all works 2015), the metal bears a looser, bowing scratch made in the styrofoam original. That the casting process preserved this detail even in bronze, a material perhaps destined for greater posterity than framed photos, underscores the often provisional and fragile objecthood of Conaway's subjects. Her elegant still lifes are modernist in program, oddly post- in parenthetical design and display. Careful and technical, Conaway's images wink at Edward Weston's peppers; Harry Callahan's sticks in snow; or James Casebere's flooded miniatures; posing questions about weighty subjects such as "beauty" with pieces of wrinkly paper. In the diptych *Mourner [Horizontal] and Mourner [Vertical]*, an ingot of crinkled black foil recalls the two Noguchi monoliths anchoring a nearby Little Tokyo plaza. *Multiple Archway*, a colonnade of Styrofoam in sharp focus, exhibits the puffy cross sections of its cells.

Every photo here is a C-print; the handful that were rendered in yellowed, antiqued palettes mix with warm color images of grayscale scenes. Most are underprinted, pulling the show deeper into a silvery, dreamlike suspension. This sensation is furthered by the awkwardness and irony of compositions weighted with richly printed negative space, such as the wheat-gold backdrop of *Empty Vessel*, which fills three fourths of the picture above a tiny black bowl. In *Foam and Clouds*, an object that is clearly recognizable as a plank of Styrofoam juts into liminal, abstract black space—photographic space, even—the lens's shallow focus grazing the plank's end. Wispy cotton "clouds" hover like a punch line, "dumb and dull," per the PR—but also playing up how dumb and dull most objects are—that is, until they're photographed.

— Travis Diehl



Sarah Conaway, *Mourner [Vertical]*, 2015, chromogenic print. 35 x 28".