



Sharon Lockhart Lunch Break

Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum

February 5 – April 19, 2010



Stanley "Tom" Durrell, *Tinsmith*, 2008. Framed chromogenic print, 24 3/4 x 30 3/4 in.

Sharon Lockhart: *Lunch Break* is organized by Sabine Eckmann, director and chief curator at the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum.

Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri
February 5–April 19, 2010

Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine
July 10–October 17, 2010

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California
May 21–September 6, 2011

Support for this exhibition was provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; James M. Kemper, Jr.; the David Woods Kemper Memorial Foundation; the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; Helen Kornblum; and members of the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum.

All images by Sharon Lockhart, unless otherwise noted.

Cover: *Outside AB Tool Crib: Matt, Mike, Carey, Steven, John, Mel and Karl*, 2008.
Framed chromogenic print, 49 1/16 x 62 7/8 in.



Panel Line Break Room: Roland, Phil, John and Shermie, 2008. Two framed chromogenic prints, 49 1/16 x 61 1/4 in. each

Sharon Lockhart is a photographer and filmmaker known for her intensive collaborations with diverse communities. For large-scale projects such as *Goshogaoka* (1997), *Teatro Amazonas* (2000), *Pine Flat* (2005), and *Lunch Break* (2008), she approaches a community with whom she would like to work, establishes a relationship of mutual trust, and then develops the project in collaboration with them, often over a long period of time. The formally innovative photographs and films that result from each collaboration expand the viewer's capacity to perceive the familiar experiences of everyday life from new perspectives.

Lunch Break focuses on the community of workers at Bath Iron Works (BIW), a massive shipbuilding factory located on the Kennebec River in Bath, Maine. Founded in 1884, BIW employs about six thousand people, many of whom are specialized craftspersons, such as pipefitters, welders, electricians, and carpenters. Lockhart came to BIW after having visited various factories, including in the St. Louis and Los Angeles areas. She ultimately decided that she wanted to develop a project with workers in Maine, due to her strong personal connections to the state, and with BIW in particular, the state's largest employer. For several months, she attempted to gain access to BIW, with no success. But after coming to Bath and talking to the town's residents, she was invited by Local 6, one of the unions that represent the workers at BIW, to discuss her project. The union was receptive and helped her obtain the permissions she needed to develop the project at the shipyard.

Lockhart spent about one year at BIW. During this period, she observed, talked to, and passed time with workers during their daily shifts. She was interested in focusing on the break from work, rather than work itself, in part because the lunch break is a social ritual that is rapidly disappearing in the American workplace (BIW is one of the few factories in which the entire yard still stops work at the same time for lunch). Moreover, this perspective enabled her to focus on the workers as individuals, rather than as "workers," and to explore the meanings of free time versus structured time. Both before and during her work at BIW, she conducted intensive research. This research included reading books and articles on American labor laws relating to the lunch break, as well as labor poetry; listening to union songs; looking at paintings, photographs, and posters representing workers, as well as people sharing meals; and above all observing everyday life, including from the perspective of the workers.

From this experience, Lockhart produced the body of work presented in this exhibition: two films—*Lunch Break* and *Exit*—and three series of photographs. As is often the case with Lockhart's work, the films and photographs of *Lunch Break* are interconnected. Her photographs approach the realm of cinema in that her subjects appear staged and sequentially arranged. At the same time, her films approximate photographs in their engagement with a fixed camera and angles that evoke photographic techniques. By pushing the formal boundaries of both mediums, Lockhart critically investigates the ways in which photography and film inform each other, as well as our perceptions of everyday life.



Lunch Break (Assembly Hall, Bath Iron Works, November 5, 2007, Bath, Maine), 2008. 35mm film transferred to HD, 80 min.

Lunch Break is the exhibition's centerpiece. This film consists of one continuous tracking shot in which the camera moves in extreme slow motion through a long corridor in the shipyard, recording numerous workers as they are taking their midday break. Originally, Lockhart shot ten minutes of film on a 35mm camera—a total of 14,400 frames. She then transferred the film to a high-definition digital medium and copied each frame eight times, which lengthened the film to eighty minutes. In addition, she made the visual transition from each sequence of eight frames to the next a dissolve, which ensures that the transitions are fluid rather than static. In essence, she presents 14,400 still photographs, each of which is shown for less than a second and then dissolves into the next—a strategy that situates the work in between photography and film.

Lockhart's fusion of older (analog) and newer (digital) film technologies gives form to a distinctive hybrid style: the 35mm film captures great depth of field, while the digital projection allows for intensities of color, light, and detail in the long, slow tracking shot. Lockhart's transfer from analog to digital film parallels the industrial shift away from the more traditional assembly line procedures practiced at BIW, to the automated, computerized processes implemented by many factories today.

Moreover, by slowing the film down through the use of digital technology, Lockhart enables the viewer to see minute details of the workers' gestures and their environment. We witness them sitting alone or congregating in small groups in niches along the corridor, eating, reading, drinking coffee, sleeping, or talking. We partake in a unique kind of suspended meditation on this brief interval of "free time" in their daily work schedule, almost as if we were looking at a series of photographs or film stills.

The film's soundtrack is an integral part of the work; it is a collaboration between the composer Becky Allen, the filmmaker James Benning, and Lockhart herself. To create it, Lockhart walked the corridor at the slowed-down speed and recorded sounds in real time. Allen then wrote a composition using an electronic keyboard. Allen, Benning, and Lockhart used this instrument to complement the harmonic frequencies of the machine sounds recorded in the corridor. The result is a soundtrack in which human voices surface only to disappear again beneath the perpetual drone of factory sounds, creating an aura of suspense. The disjunction between the edited sounds played at normal speed and the intentionally slowed-down motion of the images confuses our sense of time, calling attention to the fact that our perceptions of the workers' reality are mediated by both the objective eye of the camera and the subjective vision of the artist.



Exit (Bath Iron Works, July 7–11, 2008, Bath, Maine), 2008. 16mm film transferred to HD, 40 min.



The companion film to *Lunch Break* is titled *Exit*. For this film, Lockhart used a static camera to document in real time the progression of workers exiting the factory at the end of their shift. She spoke at length with the workers about this simple everyday ritual—about what they were thinking as they walked out each day, about the friends who waited for them at the corner to walk out together, about the weight and swing of an empty lunch box in the afternoon versus when it is full in the morning.

Covering each day of the workweek, the film is divided into five eight-minute sections. By positioning the camera in proximity to the factory gate, Lockhart marks a visible boundary between free time and work time. Repetition—the workers' daily departure from the factory—is the film's dominant structural principle. Yet as we reflect on the inevitable repetitions of the daily exit, we also witness subtle differences: varying snippets of conversation, cloudy versus sunny days, and the visual patterns created by the workers' themselves. These variations, viewed within a rigid framework of repetition, call to mind the intriguing particulars and unpredictability inherent in everyday life.

The film also recalls Auguste and Louis Lumière's *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895), a forty-six-second-long, black-and-white silent film that is generally considered the first film ever made. Like Lockhart, the Lumières recorded the end of the workday at a factory, but did so by directing a fixed camera from outside the factory gate, capturing their workers on film as they streamed out of the workplace to the right and left of the camera's frame of vision and beyond. Lockhart, by contrast, positioned her camera within the workplace, focusing on the departing workers from behind. Whereas the Lumières' film presents viewers with the spectacle of a controlled and monolithic workforce, *Exit* undermines the power of spectacle by presenting the rhythmic and spontaneous movement of individuals, who, in effect, stage their own exit.



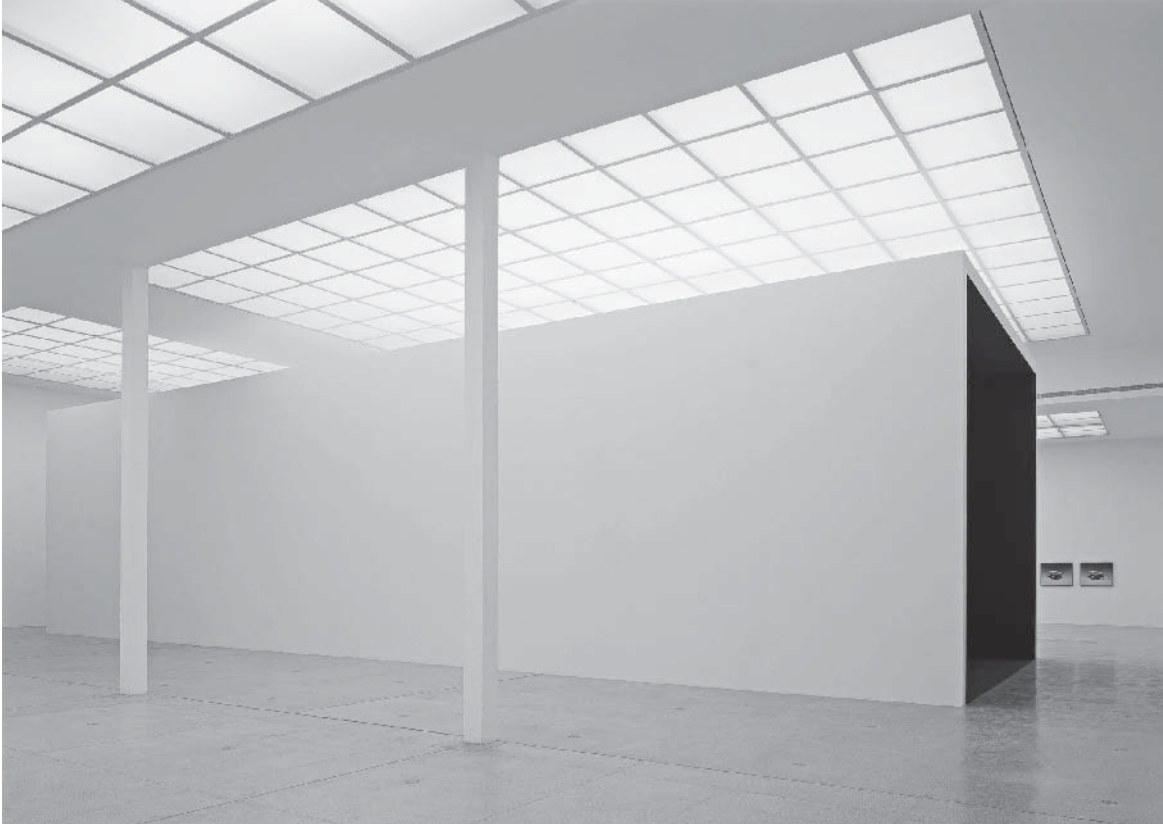
Dirty Don's Delicious Dogs, 2008. Framed chromogenic print, 41 1/16 x 51 1/16 in.

In addition to the two films, the *Lunch Break* installation includes three suites of photographs. In one series, single photographs, diptychs, and triptychs show the workers' lunch boxes, but not the workers themselves. A second series features photographs of unstaffed refreshment stalls— independent businesses operated by the workers—located in niches along the factory corridor. And a third series reveals groups of workers socializing during lunch time in various areas of the factory. These photographs portray the workers and the social spaces they inhabit with a dignity that is never sentimental, melodramatic, or mythologizing.

The lunch box photographs are unconventional portraits of the workers. Lockhart shipped to her studio several workers' lunch boxes (she gave these workers new lunch boxes in exchange). Later, she asked some of the workers to send her their lunches by overnight mail. The resulting portraits draw on the strategies of product photography and archaeological photography to create a new form of art photography. In these photographs, the lunch boxes seem almost sculptural—objects personifying their owners. Seen together, they reflect the diversity of their owners, who come from different backgrounds, have diverging interests, and hold a range of social and political beliefs. Moreover, details in the still life images of the lunch boxes—a handwritten note from a spouse, a magnifying glass for working crossword puzzles, and the material and construction of the boxes themselves (some of which are handmade)—combine to create portraits of the workers as individuals.

Like the lunch box photographs, the photographs of workers on their lunch break are carefully structured works of art that demonstrate meticulous attention to compositional detail, contour, surface structures, and natural lighting. Within the austere settings of the old boiler shop, outside the tool crib, and the panel line break room, the workers eat, converse, read, and create spaces in which bonds of friendship, collegiality, and community can grow. These photographs also reflect various art historical sources, ranging from Baroque paintings of people sharing a meal or playing cards, to photographs of workers made by photographers employed by the Farm Security Administration during the New Deal in the 1930s and 1940s, to hyperrealist sculptures of groups of workers by the artist Duane Hanson. In this way, Lockhart inserts the workers at BIW into an existing visual history of labor representations.

The third group of photographs presents makeshift stalls in the shipyard operated by the workers themselves, where their peers can purchase coffee and refreshments, both store-bought and homemade. Customers take items as they wish, placing their money in unattended cash boxes, and help maintain the coffee pots, microwave ovens, and other appliances in the stalls. As Mark Godfrey has observed, the real subject of these photographs "is the humor and camaraderie of the work place, and the values of trust, self-sufficiency, and independence, so central to the working life of the shipyard."



Lunch Break film installation from *Lunch Break*, Vienna Secession, 2008. Photo by Werner Kaligofsky

The architectural component of the *Lunch Break* installation is a result of Lockhart's longstanding collaboration with the Los Angeles architectural firm Escher GuneWardena, whose discussions and practice revolve around a critical examination of traditional notions of the neutral exhibition space that privileges the art over the container in which it is housed. Working together, Lockhart, Frank Escher, and Ravi GuneWardena move beyond these parameters by developing installations that incorporate sculptural and architectural practices, facilitating a meaningful consideration of the relation between the objects and the spaces they inhabit.

At the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, the two films *Lunch Break* and *Exit* are each situated in large architectural structures that penetrate and alter the Museum's "white cube" setting. Minimalist and monumental, the architecture is formally consistent with Lockhart's precisely structured works, underscoring the conceptual rigor of her project. The larger of the two structures houses the film *Lunch Break*; its scale and proportion recall the monumentality of the factory's long corridor where the workers take their lunch breaks. Entering this dark, corridor-like structure, open at one end with the film showing at the other end, draws one into the space similar to how the camera draws one down the corridor in the film, intensifying our connection to the workers taking their breaks. The smaller structure, in which *Exit* is screened, is located in the Museum atrium outside the main exhibition space. The placement of this structure near one of the building's exits reinforces our filmic experience of workers leaving the factory, as we, too, move toward a closure or ending of sorts.

Sharon Lockhart
Born Norwood, Massachusetts, 1964

Sharon Lockhart lives and works in Los Angeles and has had solo exhibitions at international venues including the Secession, Vienna, Austria; Kunstverein Hamburg, Germany; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge; Sala Rekalde, Bilbao, Spain; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany; and MAK-Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna. Her films have been included in the New York Film Festival, Vienna International Film Festival, Berlin Film Festival, and the Sundance Film Festival, where *Lunch Break* and *Exit* were shown in 2009.

Special Events and Public Program

OPENING

Friday, February 5, 7–9 pm
Exhibition Opening and Public Reception
[MILDRED LANE KEMPER ART MUSEUM]

LECTURES, SEMINARS, TALKS

Saturday, February 6, 2 pm
Gallery Talk: *Sharon Lockhart: Lunch Break*
Speakers: Sharon Lockhart and Sabine Eckmann,
director and chief curator

Friday, March 5, 5 pm
Tour: *Sharon Lockhart: Lunch Break*
Curator-led, featuring highlights and insights from the
exhibition

Monday, March 15, 6:30 pm
Lecture: George Baker [STEINBERG AUDITORIUM]
An associate professor of art history at the University of
California–Los Angeles, George Baker teaches about
modernism and the historical avant-garde, the history of
photography in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries,
and specialized topics in postwar and contemporary
art history. Baker has written for *Artforum* magazine
and is currently an editor of the journal *October*. Widely
published on a range of modern and postmodern topics,
he is working on a book, *Lateness and Longing*, about the
work of Zoe Leonard, Tacita Dean, and Sharon Lockhart.
A reception will follow in the Kemper Art Museum.

Friday, April 9, 5 pm
Tour: *Sharon Lockhart: Lunch Break*
Curator-led, featuring highlights and insights from the
exhibition

Saturday, April 10, 3 pm
Seminar: Contemporary Photography:
A Closer Look (part one) [KEMPER 103]
Sabine Eckmann, director and chief curator, and
Francesca Herndon-Consagra, senior curator at
the Pulitzer Foundation, will discuss the conceptual
practices inherent in the works of Gordon Matta-Clark
and Sharon Lockhart. The hour-long discussion will
include light refreshments and is followed by a screening
of Lockhart's film *Pine Flat* (2005). See film listings for
further description.

Saturday, April 17, 3 pm
Seminar: Contemporary Photography:
A Closer Look (part two) [KEMPER 103]
Anna Warbelow, PhD candidate in the Department of Art
History and Archeology, and Pier Marton, professor in
the Department of Film and Media Studies, will discuss
the relationship between contemporary photography
and poststructuralist film in Sharon Lockhart's work. The
hour-long discussion will include light refreshments and
is followed by a screening of Lockhart's film *Double Tide*
(2009). See film listings for further description.

FILM SERIES

FACTORY FILM FESTIVAL

[TIVOLI THEATRE]

TUESDAY, MARCH 23 –THURSDAY, MARCH 25
FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Tuesday, March 23, 7 pm
Modern Times, 1936, 87 min.
Director: Charlie Chaplin
This hilarious, socially conscious comedy stars Charlie
Chaplin as the iconic Little Tramp struggling to survive
in a modern, industrialized world. Also starring Paulette
Goddard, Henry Bergman, Stanley Sandford, and
Chester Conklin.

Wednesday, March 24, 7 pm
Norma Rae, 1979, 110 min.
Director: Martin Ritt
In an Oscar-winning performance, Sally Field is
unforgettable as Norma Rae, a Southern mill worker
who revolutionizes a small town and discovers a power
in herself she never knew she had as she struggles to
organize her fellow factory workers to fight for better
conditions and wages. Also starring Beau Bridges and
Ron Leibman.

Thursday, March 25, 7 pm
24 City, 2008, 110 min.
Director: Jia Zhang-ke (Mandarin with English subtitles)
Blending fiction and documentary, director Jia Zhang-ke
puts a human face on the consequences of rapid
industrial and economic growth in contemporary China.

SHARON LOCKHART FILMS

[STEINBERG AUDITORIUM]

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Saturday, April 10, 4:30 pm
Pine Flat, 2005, 120 min.
This 16mm feature-length film, set in the small town of
Pine Flat at the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada
Mountains, provides an intimate view of the youth in this
community.

Saturday, April 17, 4:30 pm
Double Tide, 2009, 99 min.
Lockhart's newest film documents the work of a female
clam digger in the mudflats of coastal Maine, filmed on
the rare occasion when low tide occurs twice in a single
day during daylight hours—once at dawn and once at
dusk. Expanding the focus of Lockhart's recent films
Lunch Break (2008) and *Exit* (2008), *Double Tide* creates
a portrait of a relatively unseen and singular form of labor,
taking as its subject a worker whose job is defined by the
most elemental and unchanging forces of nature.

EXHIBITION CATALOG

A fully illustrated color catalog accompanies this
exhibition. The volume features essays by Sabine
Eckmann, Mark Godfrey, and Matthias Michalka, and
includes an illuminating interview with Sharon Lockhart,
conducted by filmmaker James Benning, and an
interview with installation architects Frank Escher
and Ravi Gunewardena, conducted by internationally
recognized architect András Pálffy. The publication
is available through the University of Chicago Press
(custserv@press.uchicago.edu) and onsite in the
Museum shop.

EDUCATOR EVENT

February 13, 2–4 pm
Open House for Educators
Teachers and professors are invited to the Kemper Art
Museum to learn about the wide range of educational
programs available to student groups this spring. Don't
miss this opportunity to meet colleagues from across
the St. Louis area, gather resources, and collect new
teaching ideas. Program demonstrations facilitated by
Kemper educators are scheduled for 2:15 pm (*Sharon
Lockhart: Lunch Break* and *Allison Smith: Needle Work*)
and 3:15 pm (permanent collection). Light refreshments
will be served.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The Kemper Art Museum invites school and community
groups to participate the following educational programs
being offered in conjunction with the exhibition.
Contact Sydney Norton at sydneynorton@wustl.edu or
314-935-7918.

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY: BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION

The photographs and films featured in Sharon Lockhart's
Lunch Break appear to document the realities of work-
ers' lives at the Bath Iron Works shipyard in Maine. Yet
the artist prearranges her photographic subjects with
highly precise, formal concerns in mind. Under the guid-
ance of a Museum educator, participants will decode
some of the visual complexities inherent in Lockhart's
works, and will ultimately draw their own conclusions as
to how fact and fiction interplay in these photographic
representations. Ages: Grades 6-12 and older

LUNCH BREAK FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

How do the objects we own and the things we eat reflect
who we are? Sharon Lockhart's portraits of lunch boxes
offer viewers a glimpse into the personal identities of the
lunch boxes' owners. The Museum invites school and
family groups to take a closer look at these portraits
through a program that will include hands-on activities
and visual exploration. Don't forget to bring your lunch!
School Level: Grades K-8

RESOURCES ONLINE

Visit the education section at kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu
to access downloadable PDFs of this guide and
educational materials related to *Sharon Lockhart: Lunch
Break* and other exhibitions currently on view.

SCHEDULE A FREE TOUR

The education department offers ongoing tours of the
Museum's permanent collection and special exhibitions
free of charge to all interested parties. To schedule a tour
for your group, organization, class, or friends and family,
please contact Sydney Norton, museum educator and
coordinator of public programs, at sydneynorton@wustl.edu
or 314-935-7918.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Free and open to the public 11-6 every day except
Tuesday; open 11-8 on Friday. Visitor parking available;
easy MetroLink access (one block south of Forsyth
station). General Information: 314-935-4523 or
kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu.