

Amanda Means, *One Bulb (Version #2 - suite of 12)*, 2011, Gelatin silver prints

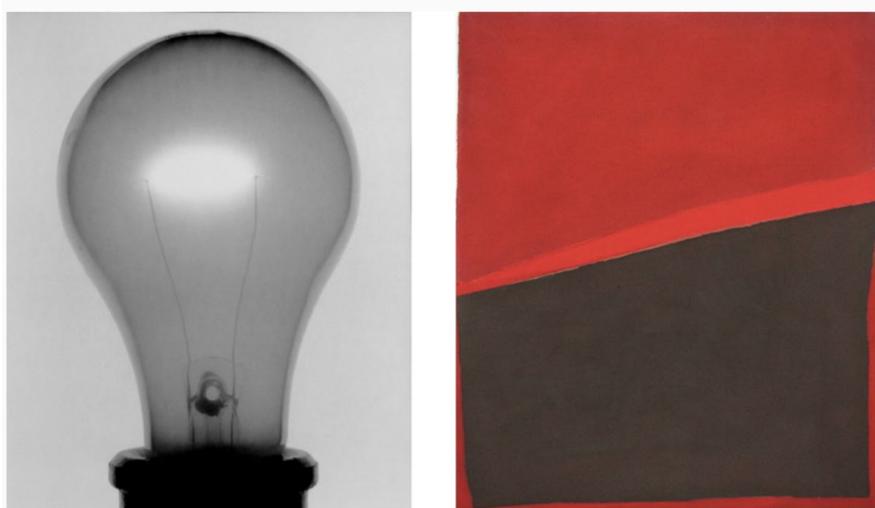
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The Merchant House celebrates the photography of Amanda Means and the Paintings of Beppie Gielkens. This exhibition, aptly titled, focuses on the “light” as the primary subject. Means explores the phenomenon of light in her work, using black and white photography to experiment with the usage of light and darkness. Her work is in direct conversation with the colorful works of Gielkens, whose paintings are representative of emotions and sensations felt in everyday life. Both artists have subject matter that is more geared towards the mundane usage, however they are transformed into a new evocative presence that allows the viewer to see behind the familiarity of the subject matter.



Amanda Means, *Water Glass 64*, 2023, Silver gelatin print

Amanda Means' usage of light is a way to reflect what is not usually seen. Her piece "Water Glass 62" is a black and white photograph of a clear glass holding water, bubbles, and ice. The light is reflected onto the bubbles inside the glass, which guide the eye to the various sized sphere shaped bubbles in the glass. The light also reflects the textures of the liquid inside the glass, highlighting its edges and dimension. There is a relationship between light and darkness in her photographs, as both inspire a curiosity and captivity to the subjects despite them being common household items. Another subject of Means' work is light bulbs. Her black and white lightbulb series shows various stages and reflections of light through the capturing of the light bulb. The morphing of the light bulb can be seen through side to side images of the unmoving subject. The silhouette of the light bulb never changes, being centered compositionally in each photograph, however the shadows and highlights of the light bulb change depending on how much light is involved with the subject. Conceptually, the photo series is an innovative way to show the complexities of light and blackness.



Amanda Means, *Light Bulb 4*, 2004 / Beppie Gielkens, *Untitled*, 2023

Bepie Gielkens' work revolves around color, providing a great juxtaposition of Means. Gielkens traveled around the world to observe the color hues of the sky, Earth, and life. The darkness and richness of her colors give an intensity that can be associated with a feeling: deep reds, luxe yellows and intense blues allow the mind to wander to a space of emotional exploration. In Gielkens' "Untitled 2022/23," the paintings are of square quadrants starting from the left, displaying various shades of blue with a red line which breaks up the quadrants into equal squares. The blues have clear thematic associations: sky, sadness, and sensitivity. While the second quadrant painting next to the blue is of yellows, this time the shades are similar; the viewer must observe with a close eye to see the difference in shade hues. Yellow has an opposing emotional association to blue, allowing the mind to explore a different set of feelings. The right quadrant - the final square - has a red square at the top left, a pale yellow one next to it and two dark yellow squares at the bottom. The variation of colors and mixing of intensities and saturations allow the free flow of digestion. Because the colors are open and up to the viewer's interpretation of their own mind, the work welcomes emotional openness. Light and colors are what allow us to see the world, vividly and fully. Through Light in its own language we are reminded of that.



Bepie Gielkens, *Untitled*, 2023, Tempera on cotton