

Imaginative Play

If you have ever observed children at play, you will notice that they are quite serious at it. Some early childhood educators champion imaginative play as an essential for them to “invent and re-invent themselves as thinking people, before the world tells them what to think.” A child at play will create her own intricate set of structures and rules guided solely by her imagination. What we observe from the outside is evidence of that pursuit.

That is the strange and unlikely metamorphosis of survival and transcendence that Avisheh Mohsenin creates for us in her dreamy works that are at once melancholic and playful. Armed with building blocks and a camera, Mohsenin allows her own impulses and instincts to guide her. She maps her way through the beauty and uncertainty of motherhood, as a photographer would— with her camera.

The constructed photographs in *Playing Fields* reveal a very personal visual language. Representations of how an urgent desire to make sense of one’s place in the world comes smack up against its fundamental unknowability. It was in the pursuit to render her sense of the strangeness of a particular time in creative limbo that the artist began using layered composition; an assemblage of small elements, to create a new kind of experiential art, with toys and found playground items transformed, into photographic objects. Objects that reveal the creative and mundane push-pull of an artist/mother experiencing this dual role.

Avisheh Mohsenin revisits the most primal place of creativity through this visually compelling body of work; embracing an activity considered traditionally for children, and creating a filtered experience, in much the way emotions and personal history shape everyday perception. What is given to the viewer is evidence of how the curiosity and need for experiment and play may linger in the psyche, long into adulthood, stirring a creative urge to find a response, if not an answer, to a world in flux.

Constance Lewis

CONSTANCE LEWIS is a curator, photography specialist and advisor. She received her MFA in Photography from the San Francisco Art Institute, where she studied under noted California photographer Henry Wessel. She studied photographic conservation at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and honed her curatorial skills working with multiple exhibitions and collections including André Kertész; Lee Friedlander: At Work; La Guerre d'Algerie. Soon after earning her degree in Photography from San Francisco Art Institute, she founded Opal Gallery, an artist collective that exhibited an international selection of artists. After returning to the United States, Lewis moved to Atlanta where she founded Opal Gallery. She published *Oraien Catledg: Photographs* (University Press of Mississippi) with Richard Ford in 2010. In addition to her work in photography, Lewis holds a Masters degree in Education with an emphasis on Visual Literacy from Rice University. She currently resides in New Orleans and Houston.