

SCIENTIFIC MAGIC

Sarah Cromarty and Christopher Russell



HARRIS GALLERY | THE UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE

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April 2 – May 15, 2015

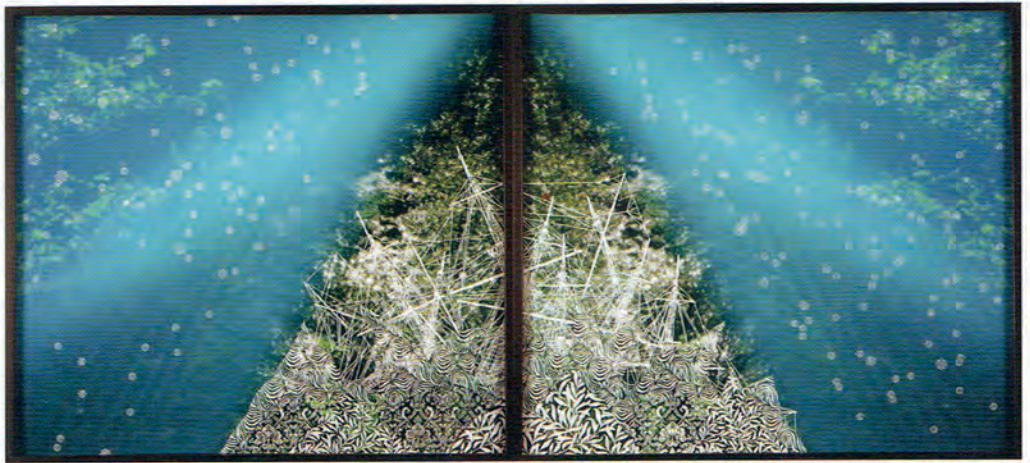
Gallery Hours M-Th 11-4PM or by appt

*Scientific Magic* juxtaposes sculptural paintings by Sarah Cromarty with photographic works by Christopher Russell. This exhibition encourages viewers to wonder beyond their first impressions and discover idiosyncratic imagery and narrative oddities. Linked by complex and sometimes counterintuitive studio practices, Cromarty and Russell create art objects that conjure surprises and chart new visual territories.

In 'The Falls' series, Christopher Russell's razor-scratched photo works skillfully integrate photography and drawing to create distinctly mysterious pictures. Most of his pieces are symmetrically structured diptychs or triptychs with pulsating veils of bold monochromatic translucency. Frosty silvers, aquatic blues and glowing golds illuminate ambiguous landscape-like spaces. White razor-scratched lines are superimposed atop these saturated photographic fields. The scratched line technique violates the photo print surface and the resulting imagery seems to both fracture and unite the color space.

Gazing into Russell's carefully orchestrated scenarios, viewers are invited to explore gossamer precise drawings that flow through his compositions: floral patterns interlace and transition; texts appear and terminate; ship masts connect and cluster. Whether alluding to Victorian interior décor or ships lost at sea, Russell's fragmented narratives seem to hover between haunted memories and daydreamt hallucinations.





Sarah Cromarty makes elaborate mixed media works using paint, found trinkets, glitter, cardboard, photo-collage and more. Cromarty's expansive ingredients list echoes the layers of meaning that she carefully crafts into each piece. Working with cardboard armatures and structural design, seemingly two-dimensional imagery is pushed off of the wall to become physical and sculptural. Ornamental chains and dime store jewelry may dangle from a highly sophisticated assemblage; gauzy layers of beads and lace may obscure a constructed window motif. Her use of rich textures and relief surfaces energizes fantastic themes of psychic phenomena and trans-dimensional travel.

Embracing a runaway imagination is the perfect mindset for viewing Cromarty's work. Faux leaves and preternatural logs are assembled via cutting, pasting and painting to create magical talismans and enchanted totems. Practical ingenuity flirts with cosmic uncertainty, as these ritualistic-looking objects seem to offer access to parallel realms.

Dion Johnson 2015