

## ART IN REVIEW

---

### Sharon Harper

*Whitney Museum of American Art  
945 Madison Avenue, at 75th Street  
Through Jan. 6*

Sharon Harper took the idea of photography's freezing fleeting moments and ran with it. She got on high-speed trains in Europe, letting her camera register the rural landscape whizzing by. Other photographers have done similar things — clicking away in a moving car or on a galloping horse, for instance.

Pictures from Ms. Harper's "Flug" ("Flight") series can seem like so many variations on a blurry, brooding abstract theme. But as with Hiroshi Sugimoto's minimalist seascapes, if you keep looking, her fiercely abstract images can become strangely hypnotic, yielding surprising shapes and patterns.

The landscape in "Italy Mise en Scène VIII" (1998) has the vigorous going-every-which-way brush strokes of a van Gogh if it were done in black-and-white. In the whimsical "Germany III" (2000), the camera freezes the background landscape and sky but leaves hanging in the foreground two indistinct, whirling forms: one vaguely in the shape of a duck, the other the back of a big bird with long legs. Other images of passing scenes conjure up a dark snowstorm, even a phallic shape emerging from masses of dark striations.

Ms. Harper's installation of 22 cloud studies, on the other hand, does little to advance a popular photographic subject. Unframed prints of various sizes, color-toned several shades of blue, reddish-brown or sepia, are arranged along a long wall. Just as Ms. Harper had no precise idea what her camera would register as her train sped by, she didn't know how a black-and-white print of clouds would react to toners. That might have been the basis of her experiment, but color-toning in the dark isn't its own reward.

This exhibition begins a new series, "First Exposure," in which a young photographer's work makes its museum debut at the Whitney.

MARGARETT LOKE