

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Smith, Roberta, "Sharon Lockhart," *The New York Times*, March 20, 1998

Sharon Lockhart

*Friedrich Petzel Gallery
26 Wooster Street, SoHo
Through April 4*

Sharon Lockhart's carefully staged photography has gone from one extreme to the other. The works in her first show featured images of ersatz domestic interiors with a lone teen-age inhabitant (think 90's versions of Eric Fischl's early work) and were notable for their sense of alienated normalcy and nonchalance.

Now structure and control are right up front. Ms. Lockhart has turned to images of a girls' basketball team at a school in the Tokyo suburb of Goshogaoka, mimicking the style of the professional athlete's publicity still. The images were made in conjunction with the artist's recently completed first film, of the team executing elaborate (actually choreographed) practice drills. It is a work steeped in early 70's Process Art and film, especially recalling Michael Snow's "Région Centrale".

The photographs, taken in the gym with lights dimmed, contrast the relentless motion of the film with an almost religious stillness. Wearing contrasting red or blue jerseys normal to team practice, the players assume frozen poses of alertness and anticipation, hands outstretched, eyes lifted upward and basketward. There is something mildly hypnotic about their stasis, and they seem mesmerized themselves, like the minor angels or shepherds who witness miracles from the margins of a big religious painting. And as images of Asian women imitating Western men, who are themselves imitating real action, they are in effect shown in a double masquerade. Still, it's hard to get a bead on these oddly ennobling, anti-heroic images. Although their artifice is certainly of the in-your-face variety, Ms. Lockhart needs to put more of her carefully chosen cards on the table.

ROBERTA SMITH