

ARTFORUM

Steve Carr

DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY

30 the Octagon

March 8–June 15

Steve Carr's solo exhibition comprises three works, but the six-channel video projection titled *Transpiration*, 2014, is the showstopper. Large-scale hyperrealistic carnations are strewn across two gallery walls—a pastel spectrum of baby blue, pink, and yellow—their quivering tissue-paper petals much larger than life. The effect is exhilarating and just a touch embarrassing, since the carnation is a lowly flower, ubiquitous and a bit tacky, and offers longevity over beauty.

Carr revels in offering the viewer the iconic and the imperceptible, the instant gratification and the *longue durée*, so things are not how they first appear. These luscious images eventually reveal movement, a glimpse of a petal folding or fluttering, and the carnations' colors change, too, each pink, yellow, and blue slowly deepening. Carr has filmed a classroom science experiment with a time-lapse camera: Place a white carnation into dyed water, and the flower absorbs the water through its stem, adopting its dyed color in the process. The work's points of reference are as avant-garde as they are populist: for instance, Warhol's flower paintings that were in turn inspired by Jean Cocteau's 1959 film *Testament of Orpheus* (thus Carr returns the flower imagery to its cinematic roots).

But the video installation on view is astonishing for its perceptual rather than metaphorical effects and is, ultimately, a gift for the patient viewer. Time sped up, then slowed down, and presented in high-definition lushness hints at other orders of perception. This is true as well for the two works that bookend *Transpiration*. They include a wall of perfectly gridded prototype golf balls for pro golfers, sliced in half to reveal their multicolored concentric interiors, and a small video projection of a mechanical bird set in front of a theatrical backdrop, filmed over the course of a day, but now condensed into seemingly artificial cycles of light and shadow.

— Tara McDowell



Steve Carr, *Transpiration*, 2014, six-channel video projection, color, 15 minutes looped. Installation view.