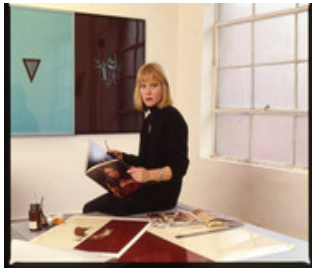


Kazakina, Katya, "Sarah Charlesworth Leaves Magic Images, Beloved Garden" BLOOMBERG, 28 June 2013.

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Sarah Charlesworth Leaves Magic Images, Beloved Garden

By Katya Kazakina - Jun 28, 2013 12:01 AM ET



Sarah Charlesworth in New York in 1990. The photographer, who died of an aneurysm on June 25, 2013, was 66. Photographer: Anthony Barboza/Susan Inglett Gallery via Bloomberg

The news of Sarah Charlesworth's sudden death sent me back to October last year, when I visited the artist in her 19th-century house in Falls Village, [Connecticut](#).

I asked if I might come by after seeing the magical images of her "Available Light" show at New York's [Susan Inglett Gallery](#). Set against a blue, white or black background, ordinary objects seemed to levitate, thanks to reflections, refractions and masterful camerawork.

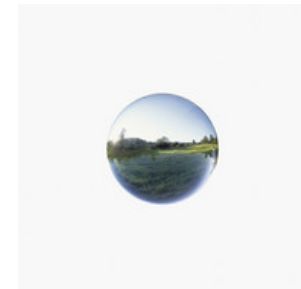
Charlesworth's home sat on the town's quiet Main Street. There was a garden, where she grew herbs, kale, peonies and tomatoes. Her studio was a storefront nearby, which she liked to decorate with creative ghouls come Halloween. Autumn in northwestern Connecticut was painting the trees before stripping them for winter.

Born in East Orange, New Jersey, in 1947, Charlesworth graduated from Barnard College in 1969, having majored in art history. After college, she worked as a freelance photographer and became active in downtown-Manhattan art circles.

In the 1970s and '80s she and artists such as Richard Prince and Sherrie Levine appropriated images from the media and popular culture to probe the world around them.

She was also part of a group of female artists, including Cindy Sherman and [Laurie Simmons](#), who came to prominence in the 1980s using photography as their main medium. The generation was defined in the 2009 exhibition "The Pictures Generation: 1974-1984" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Charlesworth dated conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth and wrote for a short-lived art journal he edited called The Fox. The first of its three issues starred Charlesworth's essay "Declaration of Dependence."



Crystal Ball" (2011) by Sarah Charlesworth. The artist's studio occupied a storefront in Falls Village, Connecticut. Photographer: Sarah Charlesworth/Susan Inglett Gallery via Bloomberg

White Gloves

"It was Marxist, political and brilliant," said Walter Robinson, a painter and former editor of Artnet magazine.



"Half Bowl" (2011) by Sarah Charlesworth. The artist influenced a younger generation of female photographers, including Sara Vanderbeek and Liz Deschenes. Photographer: Sarah Charlesworth/Susan Inglett Gallery via Bloomberg

Blond, slender and elegant, Charlesworth cut a striking figure in those years. She wore black clothes and white gloves, smoking cigarettes through a long holder. She began exhibiting in 1976 and had more than 50 solo shows.

"Her aesthetic was very minimal and cool, almost like Judd in its pure quality," said writer Glenn O'Brien, who co-founded [BOMB](#) magazine in 1981 with Charlesworth. "But she was also as close as a photographer can get to being a painter."

At the time of her death, Charlesworth was on top of her game. A major influence on a new generation of artists, including Sara VanDerBeek and Liz Deschenes, she taught at Princeton alongside James Welling. In the past year, three major institutions acquired her works, including her 27-photo [piece](#) "Movie-Television-News-History" (1979) by the Museum of Modern Art.

First Lettuce

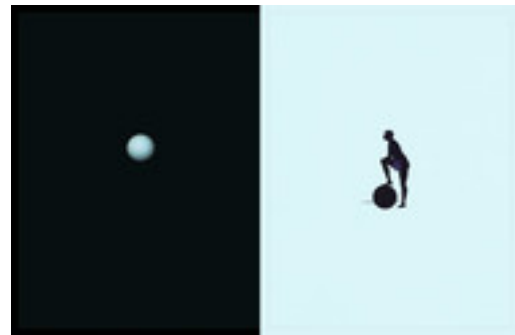
She died Tuesday of a brain aneurysm, according to her representative at [Company Agenda](#). She left behind two children, Nick and Lucy, from her marriage to filmmaker Amos Poe, whom she divorced after many years. Summer had officially started only a few days before, and Charlesworth would have been harvesting her first lettuce.

"It was her favorite time," said artist Simmons. "Everything about her garden was thrilling to her. Whatever was happening in the garden, she found a way to use in the kitchen. It was as important to her as the creative work she was doing in her studio."

I remembered the kitchen from my visit.

There was a long table for preparing food and lots of herbs. Charlesworth and I sat by the fire in the living room, drinking tea and talking about her art, garden, teaching, commute and plans to build a larger studio.

Before I left, she went to the garden and cut fresh kale for me to take home.



"Regarding Venus Diptych" (2011) by Sarah Charlesworth. The photographer was part of the Pictures Generation of artists who appropriated images from popular culture and media. Photographer: Sarah Charlesworth/Susan Inglett Gallery via Bloomberg

“Let me know how you like it,” she said, waving goodbye.

Clad in all black, her long blond hair rustled by the wind, she resembled a hip fairy godmother, whose herbs had magic that might guard you against evil.

(Katya Kazakina is a reporter for Muse, the arts and leisure section of Bloomberg News. The opinions expressed are her own.)



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"Shiva" (2011) by Sarah Charlesworth. Her show, "Available Light" ran in October of 2012 at Susan Inglett Gallery. Photographer: Sarah Charlesworth/Susan Inglett via Bloomberg



Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons and Sarah Charlesworth. The three were among female artists who came to prominence in the 1980s using photography as their medium. Source: Cindy Sherman via Bloomberg