

## SARA ANGELOCCI: REGULAR 8

Wynick/Tuck Gallery, Toronto

by KRISTEN DEN HARTOG

*Regular 8*, a new series of photographs by Toronto artist Sara Angelucci, was a natural fit with Contact's 2009 theme of "Still Revolution" in that it examines the relationship between film and photography, and uses digital technology to explore the disappearance of analog processes for recording everyday events. Shown at Wynick/Tuck Gallery in May and June of this year, Angelucci's work pays homage to the home movies of the 50s, when middle-class families took to capturing their memories on 8mm film (then known as "Regular 8," the pre-cursor to Super 8). Her beautiful but complex series takes some unpacking, since the staged scenes are represented as still images, each approximating the numbered end of a developed film reel and, as such, include luminous white dots.<sup>1</sup>

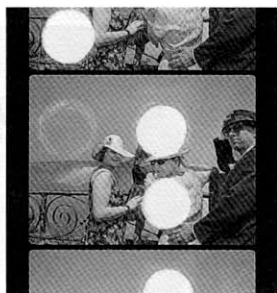
Angelucci's photographs convey a sense of optimism and idealism cut through with sadness. The images themselves, overlaid with white dots, are like lost moments that the camera cannot wholly recapture. That failure, however, is also what makes the images so riveting. There is a sense of time running out, of lost possibility with regards to viewing the previous or following frames that would permit finding out the rest of the story.

Angelucci says the series developed out of her love for both photography and film in their vernacular forms. In that sense, this work fits well with her other projects—such as the photo series *Al Rivverso* (2004), which mines her personal family photography archives, and the video *Snow* (2000), which blends the endings of several home movies where white dots ("snow") obliterate the scenes. But there is an interesting difference here: this new, staged series is all about manufacturing images and memories, and evoking a longing for something that may or may not have been.

In *Regular 8*, Angelucci meticulously constructs a fictional archive that uses digital means to simulate the look of analog documents. In showing the edges of the frames, the end results may look like film but are instead still photographs mimicking film. Again there is further artifice: the images haven't been stamped by Kodak, as home movies once were, but are simply made to

look that way by the artist. Angelucci's process is much like that of the novelist who attempts to describe truth by using fiction.

So what do we make of the people in the photographs, who look so convincing in their costumes, against carefully selected backdrops? A group of skaters; a woman in frumpy boots feeding pigeons; a girl twirling by a fountain as her mother looks on: these are actors in Angelucci's recreation, or characters in her fiction. However, there's a surprising honesty in the final images. As occurs in home movies and snapshot photography, the subjects are participating in the creation of an image of themselves, picturing themselves through the lens. Their awkwardness, their self-doubt, and their affectations are all vital parts of creating their own self-image.



Sara Angelucci, *Regular 8*, 2009

In one of the most striking images, a woman wearing a floral bathing cap and lipstick beams at the camera. This lifelike scene reveals, via the model and the viewer, an almost instinctive desire to perform for the camera and for posterity—a wish to be held in time and for others to see us the way we imagine ourselves. For the subject in the photograph, it is a perfect moment, untainted by the complicated world outside the frame.

The images in *Regular 8* are inspired by found and borrowed family films, which document real people's lives. Thus, several of Angelucci's photographs portray celebratory moments—for instance, a wedding, signified by the edge of the bride's veil, and a christening—special events for which the subjects dress up and try to live up to each other's, and their own, expectations. Others represent simple moments in family life, such as playing with the dog, or tossing stones into a lake. Either way, "home movies represent the memories of us at our best, happiest, most polished and special," writes Angelucci in her artist's statement. "They evoke something we wanted to hold close forever. Of course we never

can, and that immanent ending brings to light the painful beauty of the ephemeral nature of our lives." While the artists' exhibition stunningly describes a popular attempt to relive the past through the use of 8mm film, it also captures the analog form in its disappearance by creating simulated images of its loss. ▶

<sup>1</sup> Punched following developing by Kodak for identification purposes, these numbers were made up of small holes, which appear as white and glowing dots on Angelucci's images.