

Anton Kern Gallery

Sarah Jones: *Gazing Ball*

Third Floor Gallery

October 26 – December 16, 2023

“A labyrinth is an ancient device that compresses a journey into a small space, winds up a path like a thread on a spool. It contains beginning, confusion, perseverance, arrival and return.”

- Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby* (2013)

Sarah Jones' new and recent work considers the medium of photography as just that: a medium, a receptor, a conductor, a transmitter. These to-life scale photographs in her sixth solo exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery suggest a parallel realm, an optical space to be immersed in. This is a distinctly photographic realm where time is stilled, and subjects are distilled; are held in suspension, in limbo. Through lighting, day collapses into night and space is condensed. A labyrinthine thread is drawn between works, looping references, sightings, and citations, like the cadence of a poem.

Subjects are drawn from everyday life: cultivated plants in public parks, collected objects set up in her studio and recorded with her large format analogue view camera. The screen reoccurs in her small studio works. Here, the screen is both a void to fall into and a surface to project on to, like the cinema, a phone, or a laptop. A floral painted vase is upended in *Narcissus (I)*, transfixed, its reflected image a twin or doppelgänger. A plant bends towards the bright light of day in *Torch Lilly (Icarus) (I)*, a photograph that captures a moment of phototropism. Other plants on location, set into a photographic night, are reversed and flipped to form diptychs. They unfold in and on themselves – mirroring – outwards and back again. For Jones, the diptych is a skewing device, a way to view the world in another light, like stereographic photographs or Da Vinci's mirror writing.

Jones' vitrine works suggest seeing double. The vitrine is a device for looking in which a subject is contained, like the photograph. A glass display case contains an empty, mirrored plinth *Vitrine (Plinth) (I)*, then an uprooted orchid *Vitrine (Orchid) (I)*. In *Golden Rain (Laburnum) (I)* the yellow bloom drenched branches of a beautiful yet toxic laburnum tree are sunken into a photographic inky black space. The diptych *Actor (Mimosa) (I)* and *(II)* responds to the known behaviour of the mimosa tree that mimics a response to touch, its leaves curling and opening back out again. *Conductor 71 (after Powell and Pressburger) (I)* and *(II)* recall the technicolored rhododendron garden in the directors' post war Orphic film *Matter of Life and Death* – the backdrop for a scene in which time has stopped except for two characters who debate love and death.

A gazing ball is a hand-blown glass sphere, first made in Venice in the 13th century. Venice, surrounded by water, where nature on land is all artifice. These reflective spheres were later commonly used as ornaments in gardens and homes. Like a convex camera lens, a mirror ball, a vitrine, or a photograph, they reflect, contain, absorb, condense and expand the world around them.

Sarah Jones lives and works in London and has exhibited in numerous international museum and gallery exhibitions since the early 1990s including solo shows at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (2013); National Media Museum, Bradford (2007); Huis Marseille Foundation for Photography, Amsterdam (2000); Museum Folkwang Essen, Essen (1999); Centre for Photography, Universidad de Salamanca, Spain (1999); Museum Reina Sofia, Madrid (1999); and Le Consortium, Dijon, France (1997). Her work was included in group exhibitions at: Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa, USA (2023); Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany (2021); Les Rencontres D'Arles, Arles, France (2019); FRAC Poitou-Charentes – Angoulême, Angoulême, France (2018); Fondazione Fotografia Modena, Modena (2017); Le Consortium, Dijon (2015); National Gallery, London, and CaixaForum Barcelona and CaixaForum Madrid (2013); Museum Folkwang, Essen; Galeria de Arte do Sesi, São Paulo (2012); Turner Contemporary, Margate; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Tate Liverpool and Peabody Essex Museum, Massachusetts, USA (2011). Jones' work is included in the public collections of Le Consortium, Dijon; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis; Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Tate Gallery, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London, among many others. Jones is a Reader in Photography at Royal College of Art, London.



Sarah Jones, *Vitrine (III)*, 2023, C-print from B/W negative mounted on aluminum, 23 5/8 x 18 7/8 inches (60 x 48 cm), Framed: 25 1/4 x 20 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches (64.2 x 52.2 x 3.8 cm), Edition of 5 plus 1 artist's proof