

2015

Finestra Aperta

Shara Hughes
Elizabeth Jaeger
Meredith James
Annie Thornton

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Art as a window into another world is the sincerest sort of pun. Throughout the ages, artists have referenced windows as a paradigm for summarizing the notion of reality.

In the late 19th and early 20th century windows seem to resonate potently as a symbol of modernity and the shift in notions of public (exterior) and private (interior) life. The flâneur, both participant and observer, serves as the archetype for this moment in history, and the major shifts in the way people could function in the world. Today, social media symbolically replaces the literal window as an intermediary space in denoting interior and exterior lives and most people are engaged as both participants and observers simultaneously. As our lives become more public, public 'reality' is also increasingly curated, and therefore our perceived realities of each other and even ourselves are a curated personal mythology, blurring the lines between public and private life even further. Presenting works in photography, sculpture, video and painting by; Shara Hughes, Elizabeth Jaeger, Meredith James and Annie Thornton, *Finestra Aperta* reconciles the psychological space between public and private narratives and how we selfsurveil in relation to each of our personally crafted, surreal windows.

Window Loop by Meredith James underscores the fallibility of observation. Literally, a window serves as an intermediary space often as the guardian to one's private world, highlighting what is inside and what is outside, and allowing for controlled exchange. Acting in the role of both observer and the observed, (by acting in and filming the video) James playfully links these experiences together, questioning perception through the interaction of theater and video within a surveillance footage style self portrait.

Elizabeth Jaeger's sculptures bend toward a surreal space that stops short of disillusionment. The positioning of the vases within their stands indicate a literal slipping through of their own reality or stability. As a stand in for the body, the phenomenology of Jaegers' pieces ask the viewer to be immediately aware of one's physical self. Both intense and banal, these anthropomorphic features, at the same time reference cherished relics from times past, suggesting a narrative that isn't really there. These works are reminiscent of the fictive nature of art and, in tandem, the taboo nature of experiencing genuine emotion in today's culture. Intelligence is ubiquitously aligned with snark, sarcasm or irony rather than real feelings and Jaeger presents a loathing in each, Untitled sculpture's simultaneous potential and lack of.

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Shara Hughes's paintings place the viewer at a high vantage point within technicolor boundaries that clearly denote the space of entry as different or separate from the landscape below. In four of Hughes's five paintings, scale alone is a visceral indicator. The border acknowledges one's body, and acts as a repoussoir device, pushing the viewer into the landscape unfolding in the distance. One can read the space as looking out from a room into surreal landscapes denoted by form as well as a textual shift in medium and its application. In her five paintings, Hughes presents a dreamlike landscape as an exterior world that falls short of reality.

Fictive pictorial space is central to Annie Thorton's photobased assemblages. These digital collages of layered images and drawings are sincere in their conception of reality. The artist composes autobiographical photographs alongside found images in Photoshop. The outcome of these social and personal still lifes exemplifies both additive and subtractive methods, just as she draws parallels between the social world with her found images and her personal realm with her family portraits. The conflation of an interior versus exterior viewpoint is most clearly displayed in her assemblage of chewed gum, comprised of 25 versions of gum chewed with friends and moulded into sculptures.

A photograph is a window but also an edited lie. Thorton's work pulls from an autobiographical trove of objects and people. A direct portrait would be too limited and so the artist assembles various elements that define her life and those closest to her through several viewpoints. In these works a cream colored background unifies the different aspects like thumbnails from a googleimage search. The familiarity of these compositions, at the same time identifies a unique experience and the impossibility of that idea. The presence of windows have long been a symbol for technological and scientific innovations. Alberti's original sentiment of the *finestra aperta* or open window, claimed that artists translated the outside world onto canvas. The vast experience of life today cannot be captured by draftsmanship alone. The prevalence of cameras and image-making by the masses does more than enough to record most of our daily lives, transforming us all into participants and observers as we feel our way through the shared and private self and the radical fluidity between these two increasingly psychological places.

327 Broome St.
New York, NY 10002
(646) 918 6824