

Writing regarding the exhibit Technolust, Emma Beatrez, August 2022

emmy e smith

2022

The Fountain

Teenage abandon, grecian cliffside, gay public sex.

Before we notice the carpet, we are brought first into male adult sexual worlds - red glow, sticky floor accuracy - allowed to become disgusting like a bathroom.

Like the pulp style painting near the gallery entrance - it stays "alive with pleasure" (movement of drips, joyous multiplicity of pissing, unpredictably- it is an ecstatic movement.) Its rhythms are stimulating. They recall to me the freedom of crowded dancing, both read, such as in Douglas Crimp's 1970's "Diss-co (A Fragment)" and those experienced. It is like a teen's room, the wet carpet studded with melting chrome chocolate chips and little belly stars from a piercing. It is saturated with the unapologetic grime of teenage life, not yet burdened by an awareness of ants. For a show called Technolust, it's ok to start with the most sensational. The sprinkling heart of Emma Beatrez's show is a fountain cycling Mountain Dew through its plasticky tubes, splattering around in its ceramic basin, dancing in droplets onto the rug. It features: Piss, a drinkable substance, the wet look carpet, the action of carbonation giving way to the motion of the fountain, a mimicry of the action of a no longer fizzing drink. Fountain transubstantiation. In this room I am most struck by a small prefabricated cavity sitting at bedside table height in the corner behind the fountain. It is a sorrowful and obscure container; it looks like packaging material that shipped a series of objects. What is to be made of the empty specialized box? All I can identify is a spot for an inhaler and so I know the other articles must be exactly as necessary and as specific to someone's daily experience. The action in them is that they are absent.

Bodily metonymy

We exit the fountain room passing a vertical display of plaster busts. The lingerie and camo appliqué on the cast virgin heads show many un-Mary-like modes of femininity, but she's here for it, gaze down, quietly still being Mary.

Largely

Silver phrases swoop through the space, a room busy with paintings, text, rusted and ceramic sculptures. A plaster rope chain hangs from a truck grill that says "disco," as if disco is the truck that hits you and it's wearing an ironic nautical chain. There are clean articles of genders (camo, rhinestones, the virgin) kind of wal-mart dyke meets pin up girl. The space takes me to a cosmo or teen ppl magazine segment breaking down an outfit into components but in an imaginary magazine tempered by reality and exhaling poetry.

Camo as the new Camp

The camouflage maybe lends an avenue for blending in - you could be any one of the many queers with a mullet and carharrrt hat with a bill and a camo jacket, landing with a soft thud in someone else's prefabricated cavity. The expectation precedes you, step through... its ok to do it because this conformity is a thrust on only one of several connected roller skates, pulling violently at the crotch of american politics. The straddle tears greater and greater, the feet away from one another as the ironic camo (camp) is brought to and past the mainstream of queer life, while in strictly rural settings, camouflage still functions as a social demarcation of a very classic red politic which accompanies real violence toward queer ppl and all the while, and all of this is confused by camouflage's necessary involvement with practicality through the avenues of hunting.

Yass, huntee

Is Paradise biblical- is paradise to be concealed? Is it to be the hunter? Kick board tombstones ask these questions and many more. Somehow imperviously conveying foam-ness, the pair of works sit at the base of the gallery stairs. Facing at a 45 degree angle, these apparent kick-boards each have the distorted text "PARADISE" printed on a spray painted x on top of real tree camo slip covers. They're underlit with a harsh neon. A vertical kick-board is a weaponized pool article, on the ascent to paradise at a dangerous velocity. In these pieces, the words are a vapor, the perfume of them works like an irreproducible substance, smell: midsummer, evening, humidity just like this, on a block with ash trees, on a block with no lawns, on a block of brick apartments, tar streets, specific people at this time in their lives and their habits and the odors of their lives. The words around the kick boards, strung like a belly belt on a mean teen I grew up with, breathe this intimate odor from their sticky phrases.

Horse as action, words as meaning

With the acuity of a bomber, Beatrez has soldered glamour by the foot into phrases that are incantations (an incantation: melodic, for a divine purpose, power through symbol and vibration). Horse gear hangs heavily here and there on larger sculptures and directly on the gallery walls. The absence of the horse calls in a stunt double, maybe it is us, maybe it is the sculptural - specifically the not-verbal - works. Well, and the works that have a word on them, distinct from the word. The mute forms contain a great action, muscular legs of a horse. The hardware to the software of interpolation. Actions and adornments. Meaning is an adornment, but it is also only as clear as the koan, harder for me to discern than the thrust of the actions in the objects. Spikes? Spikes protect, or they could be for sex (via sensation). A truck drives. A chain weighs, is swagger; a boat walks on a chain, the heavy item kept. A screen sells me to myself, and the phrases conceal their meaning in the logic of poetics (a place safe from fools for secrets, a perfect fiber optic channel of experience.) Spiderwebs are technically words (E. B. White, 1952) A fountain is for drinking, or for pissing.

technolust

Finally we are apprehended in the basement for our endeavors by a monolith. Of all of the acts to be caught in, we are here most surveilled when we look up at a small bite guard and a tassel, two small elements that feel directly tied into the building, bearing the traces of immanence and interaction with the gallery space (surveilled at our most vulnerable, the table leg you always hit your knee on.) The screen encounters me like an inevitability. My ontology is frail, needs my form to appear to myself in order to verify the experience anymore. The expansive static of the poetic language (lust) evacuates me, i remember my conditions (techno-)

~ Tattoos & Permanence, a review of works by Monica Berger
Emmy E Smith 2022

Two pairs have come into and left the gallery. They seem to have taken interest in some of the same things I was drawn to. I cannot tell if they are put off from taking too long of a look at these paintings because I am here, looking. The crystal glass, the neon sign. We are in a bar. The bar has been deconstructed and the woman is nude (Sex work?) She smokes indoors, the filters of her cigarettes are purple. The cigarette pack, blue american spirits, is overly familiar despite this tonal interruption.

Tattoos, although widely heralded as permanent are only symbolic of permanence of choice, they signify permanent alteration. Tattoos are, to the health of the body, meaningless but honest wounds, wounds that speak to the actuality of loss, (through their immediate degradation/ deviance from the perfect image) corruption of purity, (of the moral, nubile, unmarked) and change (fading, image death, body death.) They show wear, they reflect sunburn, friction, pressure. Despite their reputation, they are in many ways some of the least permanent forms images take. A drawing on a piece of paper can outlive a human being. An image on the internet, though instantly possibly lost in the insanity-samsara river, exists as an image (with a dependance on a server and physical internet structures) for much longer than intended, and in its ripples through the desire/consumption channels that information flows and replicates and travels through as culture via the internet, they can certainly outlive a human being. Tattoos are on skin, they are only on the skin.

Once, years after initially meeting Erin, I saw a tattoo on an arm - an apple cut in half along its vertical axis and a green pear (whole)- and the present rotated to the past, and I remembered where I had met her, the room, the light, the people there, who had been dating whom at the time. They had all been working together at Charlie's Produce delivering fruit and vegetables. I had no memory of Erin's face, and I wouldn't have thought that I remembered her tattoos, but they fit like a key into my mind and I recalled the past with vivid, unexpected clarity. And likewise, I know now the pink figure in this painting by Monica Berger. Her tattoos are with me, as language which I will not forget despite not really being able to recall how they look. Tattoos maybe are permanent in their role as mnemonic.

On these figures, the skin becomes the second painting. Its separate treatment, as the only area with blue airbrush and one of few significant areas of airbrush (also notably on leopard skin patterned rug ~below the ottoman) resituates the reclining nude *as the painting*. So heavily layered with projected interpretation, her skin crawls with imagery, a chosen dialogue to direct the inevitable reader (redirect? *misdirect?*) The tattoos are the text of the painting; we can find her subject is somewhere *on* her body. It is possibly concealed around the back of her, or between her arm and her body, where her legs overlap, maybe the subject is there?

What we cannot access, her *interiority* is centralized, not bled all over the canvas like the venus standing on her shell. That venus's face is vacant of herself. Her personhood is decentralized, she has no attitude, standing clumsily while a literal blowhard directs her out of the sea and into the matronly care of some clothed woman. She and the white pearl are pure decoration, her attitude conveys no mystery, nothing internal, only an availability that is utterly relaxed into subjecthood.

The figure's attitude, her interior life can almost be mapped in association to the constellations of familiar objects. We can know her by her *accoutrement* and her environment. We do. She smokes, but she cares about her body, or at least prefers a more natural taste, so she smokes American Spirits. She drinks from a decanter, her cocktail glass is dressed. She chooses to do her eyes and lips and lashes. The brush work constituting these elements is slower than the airbrushed tattoos, and the time taken rendering them gives these objects a hovering sensibility. Shakily on the table, their liberation from planar realism further positions them as symbols.

Exhaustively much has been said about the female nude. In an era post body positivity, sex positivity, while a groundswell of collective desire to urges us recognize sex work as work, to loosen our desperate and damaging grasp on the gender binary, questions of "female subjectivity" reach us in a different way. The horrors of the male gaze belong to us all, the inherent powerlessness of subjectivity gets disrupted and complicated in this breaking of purity and binary. Shock value has suffered unprecedented inflation, vice is fine, I guess. These nudes, the pink and the green, situate themselves in this canon playfully, since they are paintings, and like a horse or any other fine thing, and they have to get their papers and be handled with white gloves and be subjected to bureaucratic assessment. The pink figure looks a bit past us as though she is the Obelisk, and she has grown terribly bored.

Leaving the gallery after a prolonged and intensive period of observation, I walk past the gallerist; she does not say goodbye.

Writing regarding the exhibit contrapunctual, Na Mira, May 7 - July 1 2022
by emmy e smith

\needless to say, we all had strange dreams after the opening. I slept heavily into the rainy morning, retaining only colorful angles and clothing, spiritual and relational ripples from my dream. Na Mira's exhibit opened into a red room, loud with sound looping through either speakers or the tube amp on the ground. The garage door and glass entrance door and windows, coated with a red film, transformed the light in the space.

Vaults of oil,
the unseen, the unknown. It is a pure mystery, the specific darkness inside of the body. It's in shadow, shifting and hiding, not purely mechanical.

Dizzy in the red room, I have forgotten to pay attention to my dreams. The storm outside is immaterial, only brewing. The summers here bloom less, the ground plants, miraculously unchanged by the intense refrigeration of winter, blast up chest-high and stay there, their tips transforming into flowers (sexual) and seeds (children). The speaker is here, receiving its own recorded receptions, awash in the buoy sounds, the popular songs and voices speaking Korean through frosted glass, brittle with white noise and treble. The reds draw a glowing cyan anywhere where there is some light. It's the cyan of screens. We reflect about the holographic screen and the incidental reflections into four corners.

The technology is a moderator of the experience, Dictée, by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, weaves through five hazy, stinging biographical narratives, Joan of Arc, Theresa, Mother, Yu Guan Soon, Demeter and Persephone. The narrative is built on a mythic armature which is weathered and disintegrating into sand. The sand, the dislocated elements of the structure, are scattered in a specific pattern only achievable through processes of time. They bear their previous position, their former purpose. The wearing down of time, the dilution, the revelation of core architectures, passive shapes that form through gravity and geological elements. we walk through the space, a simulacrum of the characters 1 and two, casting my shadow, with my similar hair onto the reflected screening on the east wall.

The work brings the dead across in scattered sounds, hum, a shadow. The clicking projectors, marring the infinity reels with each passage make a cinematic sound, mechanical crickets, some insect-minded time keepers, doling out whispers to us if we too can soak our ears in mugwort, stay up all night.