

EDITORIAL

Eigenheim at Soft Opening



Soft Opening debuts their new gallery space on Minerva Street with a contemplative group show. In Eigenheim, the artists fill the former tattoo studio with objects and talismans of past lives, fretful prophecies and “spaces that invoke the presence of an individual implied by their absence.” At once devotional and lonely, stepping into the gallery feels like moving around outside time – a still and private purgatory where memories are held for safekeeping.

Antonia Marsh, Soft Opening’s director and curator, has taken inspiration from a Mathew Higgs curated group show at the Gladstone Gallery in 2006, Dereconstruction, where “works seek to establish an entanglement between the organic and the inorganic, between interiority (i.e. that which is hidden, or suppressed from view), and exteriority (i.e. that which exists on or beyond the surface).” This feeling of entanglement is perfectly embodied in the delicacy of Marsh’s curation.

Shannon Cartier’s painting *Summertime* aptly marks the entrance to the show, gently ushering you in from the midsummer heat of the pavement outside. A fruit bowl rests precariously on a girl’s head as she slumps forward against a sea scene. Fanciful and adrift, anxious and waiting. Tenant of Culture’s fossilized boots and hats, monuments of waste and preservation, are arranged henge-like around one of the structural steel columns. Encased eggs look on, plastically transcending their sell-by dates in their lofty homes (a pair of works that Carlos’ Reyes made for the exhibition).

Gina Fischli’s confined glitter paintings are suspended on either side of Kayode Ojo’s looped video *Lower East Side (High Rise.)* A triptych of sparkling clues that nod to the cyclical and endless time-scape that rules the exhibition and our own reality. An empty birdcage, the repetition of luxury demise through mirrors, a floral map of daily infinity.

A selection of diagrammatic felt tip drawings by Brie Moreno foretell visions of potential selves marching into trivial fates. Brook Hsu delves into the complexity of relationships, intricately reproducing the last letter between Paul Thek and Susan Sontag in a spiralling and obstructive script over three panels. Both artists deal with the sacred language of letters and paper, and the ability to exercise aspiration, grief and love through repetition.

Derosia

Molly Cranston, Editorial Magazine, August 10, 2020

Theodora Allen's paintings present ideas of herbal inhibition, framing psychotropic flora suspended in heraldic shields and a chipped chalice to be sipped as a portal to a veiled blue world. The faded but mystical power of botany is substantiated and electrified by Ariana Papademetropoulos's painting *Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered*, in which a female eye bores sideways out of the centre of a fiery flower, eerie and erotic.

On the opposite wall, fantasy is established in six egg tempera panels by Stephen Polatch, depicting faraway landscapes and fairytale archetypes in various states of searching and in vibrating shades of warmth. The last panel, *I'm so lonesome I could cry*, shows a pinstripe cowboy singing at the tearful moon and is bookended with Nevine Mahmoud's glass blown breast sculpture, emanating pink and glossy. The positioning is such that the forlorn moon from Polatch's dreamworld seems to have cried itself into the oscillating breast.



Carlos Reyes, *Untitled (Eigenheim) 1 Detail*,
2020 Eggshell, dye, acrylic paint, lace, plastic
30 x 12 x 12 inches

We close on Olivia Erlanger's architectural and symbolic understanding of the home. A model of a suburban house in an oversized snow globe provides a striking and damning image of the American Dream, surveilled and suffocating itself.

Marsh details how the word 'Eigenheim' translates from German to 'describe a single-family home or stand-alone house'. Throughout the exhibition there is a creeping sense of something natural and fantastical overrunning the industrial sparseness of the gallery, upending preconceived ideas of what home has been. *Eigenheim* reflects and reacts to this point in time where our notions of homes, material and in ourselves, have become overgrown, complicated and are re-wilding themselves.

Eigenheim is on view at Soft Opening until September 13th