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5 Must-See Gallery Shows in New York
by Scott Indrisek | October 30, 2014



Sara Greenberger Rafferty, untitled, 2014, Acrylic polymer and inkjet prints on acetate on Plexiglas, and hardware, Irregular: 60 x 57 1/2 x 1/2 inches (152.4 x 146.1 x 1.3 cm)

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Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe at **Marlborough Chelsea**, through November 29 (545 West 25th Street)
Certain exhibitions get called “immersive” because there’s some wall-painting and fancy lighting. But when Freeman and Lowe do immersive it means knocking down walls, putting in ceilings, installing wood-paneled, carpeted rec rooms, and changing the nature of a space so completely that you’re left wondering where you *are*, exactly. “Floating Chain (High-Res Toni)” is no different. Though perhaps a bit less exhaustively dense than their last outing at Marlborough Chelsea, it’s still a maze, and includes a purpose-built movie theater screening “The Floating Chain,” a sort of future-noir head trip that’s perhaps enjoyed under the influence of some of the psychotropic cactus discussed in one of its scenes. Certain rooms appear like typical gallery spaces, showcasing silkscreen-on-mirror works and rice sculptures by the duo; round a corner and you’re in a hollowed out shithole of a room, its wall festooned with typewritten pages listing enigmatic phrases: “homo robot chapter one: dick in the dirt”; “Marxism 24/7.” An abject, abandoned “store” (its display cases filled with empty fish tanks) leads to a small tableaux of someone’s abandoned domestic life: A family portrait on the wall, an Ab Roller and a plastic flute on the floor. Throughout the installation paintings, collages, and fictional books act as both discrete artworks and props supporting the greater insanity.

Jessica Sanders at **Johannes Vogt Gallery**, through November 15 (526 West 26th Street, Suite 206)
This Brooklyn artist makes process-based abstraction with a very limited range of materials: beeswax, linen, the occasional piece of wood. The resulting, mostly monochromatic paintings have a crackled, gossamer surface. In more sculptural works — like two leg-like planks gunked with dried beeswax, or a series of curved forms arrayed along the floor — Sanders’s chosen material recalls the viscous petroleum jelly favored by Matthew Barney (himself a real bee freak, incidentally).

Mira Dancy and Sarah Peters at **Asya Geisberg**, through November 26 (537B West 23rd Street)
This two-person show, titled “BODYRITE,” is an exuberantly free, quasi-comic celebration of femininity. Dancy’s paintings — shot through with blues and pinks — blare brightly alongside Peters’s ceramic busts and small figurines, the latter depicting women in poses that are either erotic or yogic, their limbs over-long and gangly.

Tommy Hartung at **On Stellar Rays**, through November 30 (1 Rivington Street)
Hey, did you actually eat that psychotropic cactus we recommended for the Freeman/Lowe video at the top of this post? If so, catch a cab down to the LES before it wears off — though on second thought, Hartung’s proudly freaky exhibition of DIY special effects, “The Bible,” might be a bit too much to process with a muddled head. Altar-like sculptures and photographs on view in the gallery also appear in an accompanying video, a masterpiece of stop-motion animation mixed with found footage. The mix of the all-too-real and the artificial can be horrifying, as in a segment that pairs rough documentary video taken in advance of a possible massacre with shots of a small toy tank constructed in Hartung’s studio. (“Don’t take video,” the man in the former tells the camera operator. “Please get in the bunkers.... They are killing everyone.”) Mannequins, blow-up dolls, and other puppet-like bodies stagger through abject scenarios, like Cindy Sherman’s grotesquerie brought to shaky life.

Sara Greenberger Rafferty at **Rachel Uffner Gallery**, through December 21 (170 Suffolk Street)
This exhibition reads like a logical outgrowth of a 1970s obsession with both plastic and the photographic object. Greenberger Rafferty presents flat sculptural wall pieces — many of them identified as “acrylic polymer and inkjet prints on acetate on Plexiglas” — trapping the images between several layers of mediation. The piece that greets you in the entrance hallway is a full-size photograph of a door bearing the words “AUDIENCE ENTRANCE,” which sets the whole show up as a piece of unfolding theater; large, ceiling-to-floor curtains in the main gallery space (printed with images of colorful flies, and with transparent plastic clothing affixed to them) continue that theme. Still, much of the artist’s chosen imagery is fairly mundane; the drama is in how she buries it in material.