



Read My Lips

Loren Britton and Kerry Downey

Curated by Ashton Cooper

October 28 – December 18, 2016

Programming

November 5: Opening reception, 7pm-9pm (After party with DJ Robi D Light 9pm-late)

November 12: Round table, 5pm

December 8: Poetry reading, 8pm

December 16: WOAHMONE party, 10pm-late

Read My Lips brings together recent paintings and sculpture made by Loren Britton and video and prints by Kerry Downey. Although working in different media, both artists tangle with representing marginalized bodies, problems of language, and the complexity of subject formation in a binary world.

Downey's textured monotypes, many of which are embossed or use chine-collé, hang alongside Britton's anthropomorphic plush sculpture and large four-by-five foot paintings, which sit on blocks. Downey's projected video piece is paired with several more of Britton's sculptures, which are made specifically to be used as seating.

Both series of work are grounded in a consideration of embodiment. The exhibition title takes the mouth specifically as a site from which to examine some of the central issues of this show: It is a source of language, an entrance to the interior, and a site of desire.

These artists also explore a politic of non-visibility through languages of abstraction. Refusing visibility is an important tenet of the constellation of art practices that have been termed Queer Abstraction, a moniker not without its own limitations. While many queer and feminist artists — Harmony Hammond, Louise Fishman, Joan Snyder, to name just a few — have worked in abstraction since the 1970s, a new generation of queer, gender-queer, and transgender artists are taking up the style to deal with issues of gender, and in this case, to talk about the body without explicitly signifying it. In his recent research, art historian David J. Getsy has asked, "What happens when the body is invoked but not imaged?"

In such a mode of image-making, abstract art exceeds binary constraint; the body is positioned as a catalog of sensory experiences and a place of flux. In Britton and Downey's hands, abstraction becomes a space of infinite possibility where multiplicity is the principal feature. The work plunges us into indeterminacy and makes us step outside of prevailing modes of understanding selfhood and language. There is no finality, no fixed meaning, no stability.

Loren Britton is an artist and curator based in New Haven, CT. Britton's work explores hybridity in image and form. They create things that exist between drawing, painting, and sculpture. Their work exists in relationship to the body and seeks to reimagine the possibilities of embodied language. Britton has exhibited nationally and internationally in solo and group exhibitions at Boston University, Boston, MA; Scott Charmin Gallery, Houston, TX; LTD Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Vanity Projects, Miami, FL; Field Projects, New York, NY; Pelham Arts Center, Pelham, NY; Schwules Museum, Berlin, Germany; and Siena Arts Institute, Siena, Italy. Britton has participated in residency programs at Eastside International, Los Angeles, USA and Studio Kura, Fukuoka, Japan. Britton holds a BFA & BA from SUNY Purchase and they are currently an MFA candidate in Painting at the Yale School of Art.

Kerry Downey (born Fort Lauderdale, 1979) is an interdisciplinary artist and teacher based in New York City. Downey's work explores how we interact with each other physically, psychologically, and socio-politically. Encompassing video, printmaking, and performance, their work wrestles with the possibilities and limitations of gender, intimacy, and relationality in late capitalist America. Recent exhibition venues include the Queens Museum, Flushing, NY; EFA Project Space, New York, NY; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, CA; the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale, NY; the Drawing Center, New York, NY; and Taylor Macklin, Zurich, Switzerland. In 2015, Downey was awarded the Joan Mitchell Foundation Emerging Artist Grant. Residencies and Fellowships include SHIFT at the EFA Project Space, the Drawing Center's Open Sessions, Real Time and Space in Oakland, CA, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Queer/Art/Mentorship Fellowship. They hold a BA from Bard College and an MFA from Hunter College.

Ashton Cooper is a Brooklyn-based independent writer and curator. This past summer, she curated "Mal Maison" at Maccarone in New York. Recent writing projects include an essay for a publication on artist Ellen Cantor to be released by Capricious in late 2016 as well as a catalog essay for Mira Dancy's exhibition at the Yuz Museum in Shanghai. Her writing has appeared in the Brooklyn Rail, Modern Painters, Hyperallergic, Artinfo.com, Cultured, Art + Auction, Pelican Bomb, ASAP Journal, and Jezebel. She contributed the essay "The Problem of the Overlooked Female Artist: An Argument for Enlivening a Stale Model of Discussion" to the exhibition catalog for "Lucid Gestures" at the McCagg Gallery at Barnard College. She is the director of Nicelle Beauchene Gallery in New York.

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