

GREENE NAFTALI

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ARIA DEAN
HELEN MARTEN
KELLEY WALKER
OLGA BALEMA
RAQUE FORD

January 18 – February 22, 2020
8th Floor

This exhibition brings together a group of artists who attempt to locate sculpture within social space, questioning the medium's overall resilience and receptivity. Weaving together diffuse narratives and techniques, the works hover between personal and public significance, fact and fiction, presence and absence. Employing found and fabricated materials, forms, and imagery, each piece exposes how signification and representation function, pointing to a space and time outside its material reality. While some works display their material in a direct and literal way, others enhance meaning through obscuring it. Against the backdrop of contemporary socio-political conditions in constant flux, the exhibition presents a series of artworks that grapple with shifting circumstances and the conflation of objective and subjective truths, twisting "given" meaning inside out.

Aria Dean's sculpture, *Ironic Ionic Replica* (2020), is a to-scale reproduction of Robert Venturi's *Ironic Column* (1977) from the campus of Oberlin College, her alma mater. Dean, like Venturi, relates the column to the surrounding permanent architecture, but paints over the wood grain that Venturi left exposed. *Mise en abyme 1.0* is a black oxidized steel panel produced from a digital drawing of an empty picture-frame by Dean. Engaging with the physical space of the gallery while incorporating a wide range of material and ideological references, both works manipulate semiotics. Questioning modes of representation, form and content are rendered indistinguishable, thus building upon Dean's ongoing inquiry into time and subjectivity.

In her sculpture *Rookie Stems* (2014), Helen Marten assembles original and found objects, industrial and organic materials, thus reimagining our understanding of everyday objects and ideas. Decontextualized in her compositions and isolated for examination, these materials have the potential for new significance. Alluding to language, systems and intentionality, Marten's assemblages string together dislocated and contradicting narratives. Together forming abstracted representations of everyday structures and functional objects, her work sets out to imagine the miraculous substructure beneath the veneer of our habitual lives.

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Kelley Walker's *So We Joked about Always Wanting* (2002), constructed from a broken and contorted windshield, reads as the aftermath of a fatal car wreck. However, colorful stickers disrupt this grim narrative. Implicating the past, present and future, Walker's practice of circulation, revision and recombination continues with his brick paintings. As silk-screened bricks cover newspapers and magazine headlines, Walker comments on the inextricable connection between popular culture and consumer society. His works at once invite reading and refuse intelligibility—obscured press becomes the mortar between bricks that build a literal boundary between text and viewer. The canvasses read as brick walls themselves, mimicking the depth of architectural space, while simultaneously reading as a flat surface.

Olga Balema's floor piece *Manifestations of our own wickedness and future idiocy* (2017) uses a wide range of found and fabricated objects—from common photographs to Rowlux Paper used for lighting design—to trace human beings' ambivalent relationship with their environment. Using fragmented sculptural gestures, Balema reflects on the double-bind in extricating the concepts of object and subject. Referencing art, cinema, literature, bodily processes, and personal history, Balema's sculptural practice overlaps and suspends materials in unsettling combinations.

Raque Ford's installation *I did it for myself* (2019) comprises a black-acrylic wall work that traces the perimeter of the gallery, guiding the viewer along turns and corners. Through the reflective surface, Ford laser cuts a fictionalized narrative of a mother-daughter relationship in which the daughter seeks self-definition but struggles to separate herself from her mother's own story, a struggle mirrored in the difficulty with which one strives to read the deliberately obfuscated text. Ford co-opts Minimalist formal tactics—monumental scale, simple gestures, dense materiality—to convey presence and infuses the work with nuanced, layered Black and female subjectivities.