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Laughing at the Image Screen: A Review of Sara Greenberger Rafferty at Document

NOVEMBER 28, 2018 AT 1:30 PM BY RYAN FILCHAK





Sara Greenberger Rafferty, "8" 2018, Gelatin silver print mounted to 8-ply archival board, 20h x 16w inches, Edition 1/5

RECOMMENDED

Nine black-and-white images of a mouth, printed in gelatin silver and mounted on matte-black archival board, hang in stoic repose against Document's



southern wall; nine sets of lips and nine mouths, unspeaking, each lit by an overlapping numeral respective of the order in which each print appears in the series. These nine semi-portraits, of indeterminate gender and identity, hang equidistance from each other and in uniform height. From here these images will undergo further manipulation through repetition. Behind the framed pieces, more mouths appear, edited and composed within a larger digital collage that when viewed from a distance resemble the iris and pupil. In this effort to layer the tools and methods of perception, Sara Greenberger Rafferty layers and teases the image screen to a hypnotic effect.

The Chicago native's exhibition, "The Laughter," sources the ephemera of pre-digital photography in service to a highly advanced, process-based post-digital printing practice. Discarded materials of commercial film photography, often used for light and color testing, sometimes in the form of slides, provide her materials for her collage and multimedia-based works. In her second solo exhibition with the gallery, instructional-based mediums such as slide film receive the treatment and consequential gravitas of the museum archive.





Sara Greenberger Rafferty, "Dollar Test (University of Michigan Extension)" 2018, Acrylic polymer and inkjet print on acetate mounted to Plexiglas, 16h x 20w inches

Best seen in "Red Hand," Rafferty prints the image of a former slide onto acetate, paints this printed surface with acrylic polymer and mounts this work on plexiglass. Image aside, the tension contained within this process and these materials disrupts the formerly pristine surface. Textural imperfections contradict the delicate printing methods involved to make this body of work. The outstretched hand, palm up, ready to receive, now presents itself torn, warping the former tools of perspective and placing the image into conflict with itself.





Sara Greenberger Rafferty, Installation view of "The Laughter" at Document, Winter 2018

The punchline lies within Rafferty's less complicated treatment of her own cultural artifacts. Text and images pulled from her phone, selfies, text notes, and so on, make up the vinyl wall coverings that provide the backdrop for another exhibition piece in the same fashion as the nine semi-portraits. "Eye Test (University of Michigan Extension)" follows the process method of "Red Hand," but instead repeats the ocular motif of an eyeball with a greater degree of abstraction. Rafferty's maximalist display of digital clutter behind this piece, although seemingly personal, more closely mimics the cold inner workings of a hard drive or circuit board. This ever-growing network of digital communication, like the Kodak gray scales, provide information that is neither harmful nor unimportant.

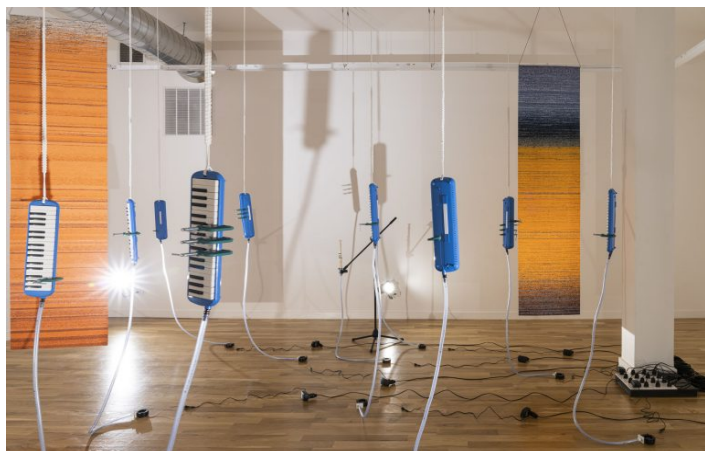
Recent exhibitions by Rafferty have used more specific references to female comediennes such as Joan Rivers and Kathy Lee Griffin to address her concerns of sensory perception. "The Laughter" employs more overt symbolism to rework the value we place on photography's history and our



ability to preserve the tools and methods of the medium as it actively works against our own unmitigated physical perception. (Ryan Filchak)

Sara Greenberger Rafferty's "The Laughter" shows through December 22 at Document, 1709 West Chicago.

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