

COOPER COLE

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Jesse Harris
Ad Nauseam

February 16, 2019 – March 23rd, 2019

Opening reception: Saturday February 16th, 4-7pm

COOPER COLE is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Jesse Harris. This marks the artists third solo exhibition with the gallery.

While the removal of the author may simply be a part of discourse (Barthes)... by hiring an art forger, the artist produces simulations of paintings that question questions of authorship, ownership, originality and plagiarism, et alia, et cetera, ad nauseam.

The following texts are written by Jenine Marsh.

Jesse Harris (1)

Nothing new is happening here. It's a doorless hallway of parallel mirrors, an endless regression where nothing is singular, and everything, even the shadows, even the reflections, are for sale. All these fruitless desires are haunted by the spectral original, the phantom of the opera, the specter of the spectacle. But in this vision, there can be no difference between ghosts and actors. Like food that's been over-processed, boiled and sterilized, filled with fillers, chemical preservatives, fake flavors and dyes, nothing remains that can be called original, real or authentic. The copy of a copy of a copy slips like beads of oil from one economy to the next. Money is simply rejection 1. Fantasy is the only possible product.

Through the 1980s, media shifted from analog to digital, advertisements switched from painting to photography, and markets became more global. These shifts ran parallel to my own developmental and transitional years, and trained in me an anxious expectation for rapid redundancy, not only of products, media platforms and devices, but of my own self images. Known through ever-changing desires, the concept of an authentic self becomes a series of willful hallucinations. A consumer is as faceless as the illustrator, as nameless as the counterfeiter, as unreal as a ghost. All the consumed and repressed images stand to fortify an insubstantial interior; a house of dirty mirrors.

Desire, like spice, is the essential ingredient, and a currency all its own. I was a thirsty little suburban sponge, and in the course of sopping up countless heavy-with-gloss magazines and two-minute commercial breaks, my unconscious mind was flooded by a thousand little addictions. Brainwashed is the word. But this sounds so clean and empty. It was more like a subliminal and thorough brain-staining. Not being a rich-enough kid meant that the ads themselves had to satisfy. And they did, in the way that junk food both feeds and triggers desire without nourishment.

Ads were feasted over, torn from magazines, tacked to walls, savored. The best ones used the theatrical frontality of pantomime and trompe l'oeil to shimmer enticingly as mirages on the page or screen or sign - they look so real. But each devoured image is a still-life painting of

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yesterday's banquet, whose imported delicacies were manufactured to cause salivation, not satisfaction. The fruit is painted, cloned meat is already dead, and only sand and cadmium hit the mouth.

Though already slightly dulled by time's greasy dust, reflected in the sheen of these images is still an unmistakable likeness. I am what I ate. Someday, once their ghostly shimmer has dried up into the sterile hieroglyphs of a long-dead world, they might be used to chart our dogged progress down the drain, to map out the edge where this world finally ended. But now, in the acid vat of the mind, they float to the surface like oil's Technicolor skin on water, suffocating what it covers. This stain can't ever be washed or spit out. So swallow it down into the draining SSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHHHHH of TV static.

1. Acker, Kathy. *Algeria. "Hannibal Lecter, My Father". Semiotext(e) Native Agents series, New York 1991*

Jesse Harris (2)

Beneath the lousy material way we live, beneath our petty crimes, we want to eat food without roach-eggs and we want to love people.

- Kathy Acker, Algeria

In this place, every image is a painted still-life of yesterday's banquet. As oil on canvas, this boiled and cured food won't rot to soil, but to sand, bloodless. Still, these imported delicacies were manufactured to cause salivation. Images that compel such fruitless desire deserve the consideration of a master chef who must taste their own creations, who may regurgitate to look at what they have eaten, to learn to more readily feed the cravings for increasingly illicit flavors. Like spice, desire is a currency all its own, the essential ingredient. I crave its heat.

The transition from analog to digital media coincided with my teenage transitional years. Now, these images' simultaneous familiarity and out-of-date incongruity has weakened their once almost-magical influence. Now they are only a little sad, a little senile. Nevertheless, I am seeped with them, marinated and fundamentally modified. I cannot un-bond. I cower uselessly away from what I am already inside of and what is already inside of me. Images float to the surface like oil's technicolor skim on water, suffocating what it covers. Their dirty mirror reflects back an unmistakable likeness. I am one of many.

Together we window-shop in this trompe-l'oeil painting, on a stage of painted shadows. We take pride in all our little forgeries – the things we bought, the things we're good at, the things we (are) like. These performances and representations, these counterfeits, are each haunted by the spectral original, the phantom of the opera, the specter of the spectacle. But in this place where all is reduced to fantasy, there is no difference between ghosts and actors. Like food that's been over-processed and sterilized, filled with fillers, preservatives, artificial flavors, chemical thickeners and thinners and dyes, nothing is left that can be called original.

Nothing new is happening here. Digitally outsourced to the labor of another, the copy (of a copy of a copy) is repainted, restaged, and haloed by the white aura of art. From paint to print to jpg

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and back to paint, it slips like beads of oil from one economy to the next. Whole cities are given to this type of thing. Production peels away from need, gravitating eagerly towards desire, and fantasy becomes the only reality, the only product. Consumption and destruction implode into the endlessly draining, rhythmless static SSHHHHHHHH of an off-channel TV or un-tuned radio.

My evolution inches like a slow deep river, while the twinned spraying waterfalls of images endlessly fill the hungry little pupils, mouths dilating. Humanity is drawn along, tiny boats in a heavy downward current. What sort of aliens will we become? Could these archaic scenes, once their magic has dried up completely, be used instead as maps, to chart our desire's progress? To see the edge where this world finally ends? This place is a desert planet, horizon long and straight as the top of a wall. Thirsty and famished, if faced by a mirage, I'd rather see water than sand. On the slick of reflected sky a feast is laid out. I coil away as I chew, and hurry to swallow. Consumption is of course the goal. But the fruit is painted, and cloned meat is already dead. Only sand and cadmium hit the mouth. My eyes are silver platters, empty and shining. Desire floods me, embalming. I check for food stuck in my teeth with a polished table knife, and coins rattle down the drain to who-knows-where.

Jesse Harris (b. 1981, Toronto, Canada) graduated with a BFA from the University of Guelph in 2007. Harris' body of work as a whole makes reference to his interests in media studies, subliminal messages found in advertising, brand icons and Pop Art; and makes use of humor and double meanings. He has recently exhibited at COOPER COLE, Art Metropole, Roberta Pelan, Toronto, Canada; Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Halsey McKay, East Hampton; and The Journal Gallery, Brooklyn, USA. Harris lives and works in Toronto, Canada.

For more information please contact the gallery:

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