

ARTslant

Uncertainty Sets the Stage

by Michelle Levy

Come Through

Sikkema Jenkins & Co

530 W.22nd St., New York, NY 10011

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Come Through, with Jessica Dickinson, Emily Do, Sheila Hicks, Ree Morton, Fabienne Lasserre, Siobhan Liddell and Molly Smith, located in gallery 2 of Sikkema Jenkins, groups these seven artists together based on shared interest in exploration of uncertainty. The work is otherworldly, strange, quirky, ritualistic, elusive. There is a strong female presence without being self-righteous or overtly feminist-- the objects commune, emanating traces of myth, intuition, spirituality, and ritual craft, and are all the more compelling in their restraint and economy of approach.

We find ourselves in a staged seance- the focal point being a sculpture by Ree Morton, the one non-living artist included. The other objects in the show convene around this piece as if conjured. There is a quiet respect for the predecessor, for the artist whose voice has been taken away. Morton's is the most theatrical piece in the show, exhibiting a ritual flare that reappears in more subdued ways in the other artists' work. Her work vibrates with layers of mystery and innuendo. Her career lasted not much more than 10 years before she died in 1977, around the time of birth for half of the artists in the show. She was known to reference indigenous symbols and ritual practices, and now her work fully embodies that function, acting as symbol of the unknown and reference to the afterlife.



The works in the show exhibit a strong materiality. They are a result of working and re-working, making alterations and additions based on a hidden system that stems from emotion, intuition, or perception, rather than logic.

Sheila Hicks, renowned fiber artist, presents two small framed woven objects that find their beauty in their imperfection of chosen materials (for example toothpicks) and digression from an expected system, while Siobhan Liddell's wall hung assemblies demonstrate a respect for the innate characteristics of materials such as paint, paper, rope, grass. In their deliberate randomness, placing dark near light, rough near smooth, shiny near matte, the light reflects ambient color and the essence of each individual element asserts itself.

Molly Smith's work alternates between the common and unexpected, refreshing perception as familiarity emerges and recedes. In "Through," which is described simply as ink on paper, painted paper is cut in strips and the strokes meet in new directions as they are layered on the wall, left open and bare in the center, it recalls the peeling bark and hole of a tree. Providing another window to look through-- Around is a former hula-hoop that stands misshapen, opposing its original function, its base embedded in a smiling plaster-like substance that weights it to the floor.

Jessica Dickinson's works on paper depict a space both ethereal and emotional that has been created over a slow period of time, adding marks, paint, drawing materials, and sanding or erasing them away. Emily Do's small paintings also depict internal/ external or extra-sensory space. These feel immediate- the motions of the artist's hand are transparent, but what drives the hand is a mystery, as each painting describes such a vastly different environment.

Fabienne Lasserre's work is anthropomorphically humble and strange. *Around Here and Down*, salmon colored felt extending onto the floor, hangs lovingly wrinkled and hole-y off of the bottom of a suspended skinny squiggly hoop. This is the aunt to *Cradled Drawing #3*, the small stripey paper sculpture dangling from squiggly arms on the wall-- a cousin to *Love of Illusion*, the exposed, self-conscious standing loopy legged form in the next room.

As the artists commune with unknown elements both internal and external, the resulting objects make up a mesmerizing anthropological find. For these artists, "uncertainty is productive, an intuitive self-discipline."