

“Parasitic Gaps”

TEAM GALLERY | GRAND STREET

83 Grand St.

September 5–October 20

That the press release for this show appears in compressed black type, barely contained to the page’s bounds, is fitting. Deftly curated by Team’s director, Miriam Katzeff, “Parasitic Gaps” tasks itself with plumbing language’s ability to at once shore and suspend visual meanings through the work of four artists: Matthew Higgs, James Hoff, Margaret Lee, and Georgia Sagri. While movements among image, text, and object are surely central to the twenty-odd works on view, perhaps more interesting are the ways in which each artist inflects avant-garde strategies—the monochrome, the modular sculpture, the found object, and the wall-bound proposition—with novel concerns, revealing their continued relevance, if only as the frames that contemporary art must inhabit in order to be legible. Through form, language thus emerges as vision’s subterranean ground, the act of seeing inseparable from that of reading.

Hoff’s glitchy abstractions, “WM. Concept,” 2013, which he generates by corrupting photographs of primed canvases with a mid-1990s computer virus, are a strong showing. Yet Lee and Higgs’s collaborative installation, an aping of an upscale domestic interior, is the show’s standout. Two selections from Higgs’s series “Reading Paintings,” 2013, hang on opposing walls, each composed of a worn book joined (in Tuttle-esque fashion) by wire and staples to the edge of a circular canvas, its surface flush with either black or peach acrylic. If the monochrome functions for Higgs as a sort of blank, a once-radical gesture now stretched to the status of a type, Minimal sculpture acts similarly for Lee. In Lee’s *Watermelon (That You Have Been Saving For)*, 2013, a cast replica of the fruit casually occupies a cowhide-and-steel chair, De Stijl by way of Design Within Reach. Nearby, another two of her signature handmade readymades—a suggestive banana and two shapely limes—pass for real atop pedestals that recall the faux-wood Formica of early Richard Artschwager. Artificial fruit commands its own genres of both painting and home décor, and there’s a perversity to faking objects that are so abundantly faked. Performing an absurd sort of competence, Lee’s work, like Higgs’s, shuttles between significance and triviality, toeing the line that modern art always feared it would overshoot. If discourse, as Katzeff suggests, increasingly colonizes art (what’s a show without a press release?), perhaps it’s due, in part, to the anxiety that attends meaning’s void.



Margaret Lee, *Watermelon (that you have been saving for)*, 2013, cowhide sling chair, plaster, and acrylic paint, 25 x 20 x 25 1/2".

— Courtney Fiske