

RESURFACE - Avisheh Mohsenin at Vaughan Mason Fine Arts, August 4-September 1, 2018

FOREWORD by Rabéa Ballin

Avisheh and I connected several months ago after meeting at the Houston Center for Photography. At that time, I was discussing a recent project that involved the reclaiming of my own personal memorabilia that had been lost due to the flooding of my garage. Little did I know then, that her work would so directly resonate with me.

Our initial meeting eventually led to a studio visit in her newly-renovated home. It was hard to even imagine such a lovely space submerged in murky flood waters. The high ceilings and windows opened up to a view that can only be described as tranquil and serene. How ironic since the very definition of serenity is to be “clear and free of storms of unpleasant change”, and yet, here we were connecting over that very thing. My loss was not a direct result of Hurricane Harvey, but hers was, and it was recent. So recent in fact, that much of her home, I would later find out, had yet to be completed.

We spent the next few hours looking at her significant records of self-initiated salvage operations and close examinations of personal artifacts. I realized then, that both of our lives had been archived so meticulously in hopes of documenting our personal identifications. What I then began to witness was her ability to depart from her previous general focus to one that she calls a “silver lining”. That is, witnessing her entrance into a new creative endeavor of making something new out of the old. Like myself, she began appropriating her own work. What an interesting space to be in, and what a powerful way to push past personal loss to ask new questions about oneself.

The optimal place for her to begin this investigation was within her own home. *Resurface* is the perfect echo of that investigation. It not only examines an intriguing and unbounded scope of work that was created by photographing her salvaged photos (the excavation), but it gives birth to something bigger (the reinterpretation). She uses soiled photographs whose narratives have been erased to communicate a renewed experience. The “*reinterpretation*” part of this series includes collages formed from these damaged images, but more importantly, new images taken post Harvey to document the aftermath. It doesn’t even matter, these images are so clean and beautiful it is hard to even see them as derivative pieces of the flood. They turn into the most interesting, self-contained, beautifully crafted, closed compositions that I have seen in a while.

This exhibition provides a glimpse into the process of her recovery. The core elements of attachment, materialism, and consumption encourage further exploration. Avisheh focuses on both lost narratives and the re-appropriation of her own images to combine these into a new focus and experience. Therefore, Avisheh’s work has now become specific to our location and thus serves as a critical contribution to the art of our time.

~ Rabéa Ballin

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