



Judith Bernstein,
*GASLIGHTING (Blue
Ground)*, 2021,
acrylic on canvas,
90½ × 87"

nature (her trademark), the works bore a range of texts, both familiar and new, such as *GASLIGHTING* (purposefully misspelled and sometimes appearing as *GASLITING*), *TRUMPENSCHLONG*, and *WE DON'T OWE U A TOMORROW*, which was also the show's title. The phrase looked as though it was inhabiting a deflated spiral—a brain-like fold articulating a ghastly cranial boundary. The statement's nihilistic charge, combined with a maddening tonal informality, begs a number of questions: Whose tomorrow are we talking about here? And what, exactly, is expected or owed?

In the run-up to the US election in 2016, Bernstein created her *Trumpenschlong* character, a kind of reincarnation of the artist's Cockman from the 1960s. Her version of the titular faux mogul is rendered as a limp-dicked dictator, whose face resembles a wilted, overtanned scrotum. While he appears with less frequency in Bernstein's work today, his presence lingers like a noxious "hamberder" fart. *Gaslighting (We Don't Owe U a Tomorrow)*, 2023, depicted two *Trumpenschlongs*—each with a swastika cheek tattoo, red lips, and Hitler mustache—that anchor the composition's lower-left and upper-right corners. In another part of the picture, a "cuntface" (another creature from Bernstein's menagerie) holds court and is dressed in the same patriarchal, fascist accessories as the *Trumpenschlongs*. A second and more abstractly chthonic cuntface, its eyeholes blotted out with flat orange and purple shapes, radiates rageful lines of color from its center and seems closer to the artist's original intentions for the figure, which she described in a *Brooklyn Rail* interview as "a black hole [with a] celestial inside." The cuntfaces, one complicit with authoritarianism and the other seemingly ready to obliterate it, articulate two different responses to living in a poisonously misogynistic country, which is becoming more polarized—and certainly more terrifying—by the minute.

Also notable here were Bernstein's subtle material innovations in *Pink Gaslighting*, 2022, and *GASLIGHTING (Blue Ground)*, 2021, which were made on dyed, not painted, canvas grounds. The shard-like patterns produced by the dyeing process made manifest the psychological violence of the paintings' ostensible subjects. *GASLIGHTING (Green Ground)*, 2021, was perhaps the most airy, even bucolic, of the works on display. In it, skull-like faces shout at and slime one another with a bile-like ooze. The heads have open voids for eyes, recalling the manner in which Joyce Pensato (1941–2019), a contemporary of Bernstein's, would sometimes draw upon the blank existential horror embedded in American pop-culture characters (such as Bart Simpson or *South Park*'s Kenny McCormick) for her own art. Yet Bernstein's

ever-devolving politics. Bernstein's enduring art serves to highlight misogyny's metastatic persistence and influence on the daily lives of those navigating its effects and deprivations within the cacophonous morass that is America. Humor and gestural rigor are at the heart of Bernstein's approach, which she has only sharpened through decades of practice, deploying hardy strategies for fragile times.

The artist's most recent mis- sive to the masses arrived in an exhibition of recent paintings at the Box, curated by her pal, Paul McCarthy (the show marked Bernstein's sixth solo outing with the gallery). In addition to the artist's comically large sig-

figures are aggressively, unequivocally splenetic; and, because they are rendered with a limited number of brushstrokes, they often appear deathly, skeletal. These beings speak from the beyond and, apparently, could give a flying fuck about our future. Understanding the toughest parts of Bernstein's work makes you realize that if you think the present we currently inhabit is at all normal or acceptable, you do not deserve a better tomorrow.

—Andy Campbell

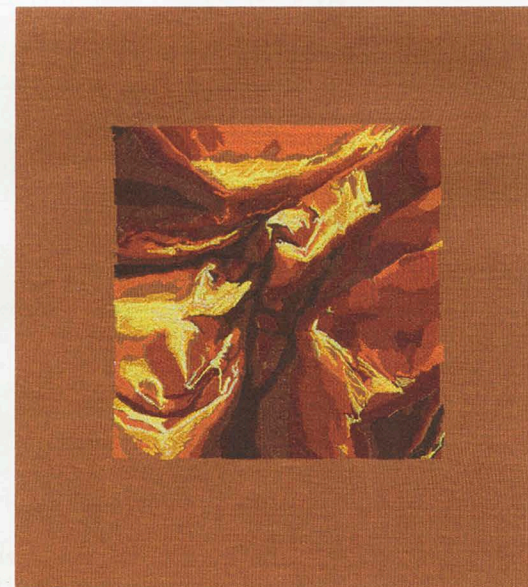
Elaine Reichek

SHOSHANA WAYNE GALLERY

Elaine Reichek's "Frock-Conscious" further developed "Material Girl," her 2022 show at New York's Marinaro gallery. The mini survey in Los Angeles—featuring some fifty works, the majority of which were made over the past five years—emphasized her long-standing interest in the history of textiles and the presumptive gendering of their makers and wearers alike. For this outing, Reichek took a cue from *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* (1915–41), citing this passage from the work in the accompanying checklist: "My present reflection is that people have any number of states of consciousness: & I should like to investigate the party consciousness, the frock consciousness, &c." The installation here cohered around twenty-four linen panels centering on richly colored digital or hand-embroidered sections of garments taken from paintings, drawings, and sundry designs, including a drapery study by Michelangelo; the deep golden folds of the dress worn by Artemisia Gentileschi's subject in *Conversion of the Magdalene*, ca. 1620; the winsome rainbow bands covering the chemise of Henri Rousseau's supine protagonist in *The Sleeping Gypsy*, 1897; and the pulsating pinstripes of a pair of skintight pants sported by a leather man in Ed Paschke's *Sunburn*, 1970. Kerry James Marshall's *Untitled (Gallery)*, 2016, was the most recent citation. Its depiction of a woman before a white wall of framed images was recapitulated by Reichek as a vertical diptych of pattern atop pattern: The subject's tessellated shirt wryly quotes Jasper Johns's crosshatches, and her verdant, leaf-printed skirt comes courtesy of Rousseau's unreal phyto-logy.

The recursive gathering honored what Reichek has named her propensity for "translation"—fabric into paint into fabric—but more so evidences an "aesthetic politics." Hers is a sustained interference within male-dominated painting, or what she drolly describes as "the center of a cult"—legible in relation to her BFA studies at Yale University in the 1960s, but remarkably unchanged since. (Like Gentileschi, Sonia Delaunay and Méret Oppenheim are artists who've received the Reichek treatment here—women who were exceptions to the masculinist canon despite its nearly inescapable pervasiveness.) The artist's methodology of distantiating extant models stresses the interval between would-be pattern and current means of and circumstances for recalling it. Still, Reichek made sure that viewers would follow this referential regression by supplying a multi-page guide redolent of art-historical

Elaine Reichek,
*Artemisia Gentileschi
Robe*, 2020, digital
embroidery on linen,
13½ × 12"



slideshows that catalogued her comparative approach and likewise forthrightly named her sources, which were touched upon in each of the works' titles. Reichek's strategy forces a kind of blackmail comparable to Sherrie Levine's exposed borrowings that rely on a more than casual familiarity with art history. Reichek's process also and differently accords with more recent trends privileging transparency and traceability in sectors, such as food and clothing, beyond the institutions of art.

The artist also included a few of her needlework samplers, which represent a genre of domestic craftwork she has been examining through a deeply feminist lens since the early 1990s. These works recall earlier technologies of appropriation predicated upon (as well as demonstrative of) skill and here functioned as corrective pedagogic objects. Like some pre-Victorian examples that move beyond the alphabet and arithmetic (many are reference works in mode and theme), these pieces include texts by the likes of Susan Howe and Barbara Pym. Allegorical more than aphoristic, *Darning Sampler: Lewitt's Color Grids*, 2018, offered—unlike her titular subject's gallery-swallowing art—a pointedly petite, nine-inch-square matrix of crossed pastel threads. Differently domesticated were two pieces parroting Jackson Pollock (*JP Textile/Text 1* and *JP Textile/Text 2*, both 2021), which take as their supports ready-made Spatter fabric distributed by home-furnishing company Kravet Inc., in different colorways of scrupulously rendered drips. Each is embroidered with bibliographic mentions from the vast literature on the artist (Reichek also provides a full reading list). One hung near a triptych of scarves printed with Cecil Beaton's now-infamous 1950s photographs of couture-clad models posing in front of Pollock's all-over compositions as stylish if anemic backdrops. These segued into a final gallery, chock-full of works about the commercial ubiquity of Henri Matisse's forms (emblemized by a Wayfair rug with a Monstera plant design), in addition to a more explicit critique of his own inspirations—African artifacts and textiles, unclothed women—pinned to a folding screen to form an aspirational mood board. Two vintage-style dresses, absent corsets, rounded out the ensemble. Fabricated with material sketched by Vanessa Bell for the Omega Workshops, they suggested the possibilities of other productive genealogies, of affiliations both uncovered and necessarily invented.

—Suzanne Hudson

"This Is My Community!"

CANEPA SELLING

"This is My Community!," a group exhibition curated by Michael Rashkow, a Southern California-born artist and Canepa Selling's new director, featured works by four intergenerational Los Angeles-based artists who, to paraphrase Rashkow, are skilled in creating atypical surrogate objects imbued with private subjectivity. Entering the space, one immediately felt a sense of equilibrium in the pale-hued ensemble and its meticulous installation. Each of the nine equivalently pristine pieces on view transmitted their personal idiosyncrasies in service to a heavenly, paradisiacal whole.

Two strong works by Swedish artist Torbjörn Vejvi offered dynamic yet controlled access points for entry. Affixed to the back wall was *Untitled (Portal)*, 2022, a hollow, wall-mounted architectural model that radiated elegance and rigor through its precisely measured, minimal design. Built from wood adumbrated by thin washes of aqua oil paint, the sculpture featured a short upward stairway foregrounding a fortified gateway to a seemingly idyllic yet unidentifiable place. *Untitled (Curtain)*, 2023, was a shaped acrylic-on-canvas painting that cleverly depicted volumetric form through a narrative lens. This stunning

trompe l'oeil, skillfully crafted to resemble a billowing ocher curtain, seemed to extend a sealed portal to what lay beyond.

Jennifer Boysen's trio of curvaceously symmetrical wall-based objects comprised diaphanous swaths of linen stretched over metal and wood supports. Their undulating forms swelled outward, and the fineness of the linen, which functioned like soft, fitted screens, afforded one ghostly views of their interior structures. What mysteries are kept in these curious haunted objects, which are at once simultaneously evanescent and oddly corporeal?



More of this otherworldly terrain could be located in Allen Hung-Lun Chen's sculpture *Pillar Ornament for the Living and the Dead*, 2022, which sat at the heart of the exhibition. Carved out of smooth black walnut, the work incorporated two planks laid parallel to one another and fitted with wild winglike appendages embellished with scrawls in blue ballpoint pen. These delicate, directional markings—evoking feathers and scales—felt fundamental, supplying dynamic movement and an additional sense of body to the work. United in phenomenological measure, Chen's *Pilaster I (Stone Bird Sanctuary)* and *Pilaster II (Stone Bird Sanctuary)*, both 2023, hung nearby. Each of the two convex aluminum pillars, nearly identical in appearance, held framed photographic iPhone images of carved stone friezes from a temple in Taipei, seen by the artist during a stay there. The monochromatic aspects of the pictures seemed to accentuate the spatial recessions of the wall designs, which presented herons blissfully at peace in nature. The birds typically symbolize harmony and stability—their presence charged the connections between Chen's objects here with a boundless energy.

This communion with nature was also carried over in Victor Estrada's gorgeous oil painting *Reflex / It Feels Right to Me*, 2017. Built up with thick impasto brushstrokes in a sunlit autumnal palette, the work depicted a kind of Gustonesque human/animal hybrid in profile: a beautiful synthesis of numinous visceral forms that called to mind a mythical phantasm or a portrayal of an expanded interior self.

Transmission relies on shared exchange and the attunement of the receiver. To build an environment for such sensitive transactions—to build *this* community—was Rashkow's intention for this presentation, and the outcome couldn't have been more fulfilling.

—Rebekah Weikel

View of "This is My Community!". Foreground: Allen Hung-Lun Chen, *Pillar Ornament for the Living and the Dead*, 2022. Background, from left: Jennifer Boysen, *Untitled*, 2020; Torbjörn Vejvi, *Untitled (Curtain)*, 2023; Jennifer Boysen, *Untitled*, 2020. Photo: Sylvia Hardy.