



September 7 - October 12, 2019

DIANA COOPER

Sightings



DIANA COOPER, *Scrim (detail)*, 2019

Whenever we open our eyes, we see. But we don't always observe. Observation is a form of attentiveness, a way of focusing on objects and parsing out their permutations, in or out of the present context. *Sightings*, Diana Cooper's new show at Postmasters and her first in six years, is an adventure in observation, an invitation to attentiveness.

Admired for her playful drawings and mixed media installations that riff off of technological and information systems, in this show Cooper explores the subtle interplay of observer and observed. In constructions, painting and photographs she disorients the viewer by combining and recombining images in uncanny ways that render them both abstract and expressive. It seems she is drawing with fragments of our own unexplored or repressed visual experience. Stacks of chairs become ocean waves; security cameras stare at us, pleading; enormous folding rulers burst from the wall, threatening; an elevator ride is transformed into a trippy reverie of the beyond; mirrors bring us into the maelstrom of these images, exposing our gaze. The viewer emerges into a world suddenly reenchanting.

In an interview in *Art News* the artist Oliver Herring, who once participated in an exhibition with her in Shenzhen, China, made this remark about Cooper's powers of observation:

I learned to love how Diana sees scrappy detail and opportunity in everything and everywhere. If you ever have a chance to take a stroll with her through an urban landscape, do it. You won't look at that blighted lot or that rusty street curb quite the same afterwards.

Cooper puts it this way:

What I make is a byproduct of how I experience the world. I have no sense of direction so any object can potentially become a landmark, a point of interest. They are markers, without which I am lost. Once I'm in my studio images of these markers suddenly fall into patterns or structures, or become wonderfully abstract. The ordinary becomes unrecognizable, wonder filled, mysterious. Stop and look and then look again could be the subtext of this show. So much art making is about framing the world in ways that enable you to see what escaped your attention. But in my work a frame can be both a way of focusing, or one of obfuscating. I am repeatedly struck by the difficulty of pinning down anything visual. Things are always more than they first appear to be.

Commenting on *Astral Lift*, a new, kaleidoscope-like piece in the show that began with an elevator ride in Shanghai, she adds:

*An elevator is a potentially claustrophobic space but it is also an opportunity for transformation.! I try to be attentive to the times when someone decides to embrace that opportunity. To fill an elevator with so many lights and mirrors that you feel like you are in the final scene in the funhouse from Orson Welles's film *Lady from Shanghai*. In situations like these, the more you look the more you see, but seeing does not bring clarity. Quite the contrary.*

But the pieces in *Sightings* also seem to point to a half-hidden world where everything coheres. The French poet Yves Bonnefoy spoke of his poetry as attempts to access, if only for an instant, what he called *l'arrière pays*, the land that is always just over the horizon, receding as we approach it. At times Diana Cooper's assemblages seem to be just that, peeks into a world that draws us ever on.

Diana Cooper (born 1964) is Brooklyn-based artist. This is her seventh solo show at the gallery. Recent solo shows include *Highwire* at the Moss Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech, *Gleanings* (1997-2018) at the New York Studio School in NYC. *Double Take*, a new permanent outdoor installation commissioned by the MTA is to be installed on Roosevelt Island in 2020. Cooper is a recipient of the Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, a Pollock-Krasner Grant, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant and Anonymous Was A Woman. She currently teaches at Columbia University.

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