

# THE FOURTH QUARTER

ANNA HELM

November 7, 2021–January 8, 2022

There's that scene in *It's a Wonderful Life*, at the school dance when a Charleston competition gets going. So enthralled with one another and the energy of their dancing, George and Mary fail to notice the gym floor slowly opening up, revealing a swimming pool beneath. They continue to dance, to the very edge of the floor and back to the center. The crowd is shouting at them to watch out but they assume that the shouts are just an encouragement of their dancing. Eventually the couple falls backwards into the water but keeps dancing. Everyone else follows. What began as a civilized school dance has devolved into a pool party.

In *The Fourth Quarter*, Anna Helm's first solo exhibition at Parker Gallery, the artist presents a series of sculptures that address the malleability of space, occupying a strange liminality between events, time, and place, how objects alter the purpose of a setting. A title that indicates both a place and a time, *The Fourth Quarter* suggests a period of finality, a crossing of a threshold but it might also be a distinct place, a quarter in a city. Three mirror works, *The Fourth Quarter*, *The French Quarter*, *The Fish Quarter* (all 2021) each applied with a phrase delivering a similar sound, imply routine and mimicry, the sensation of practicing a speech in the mirror, the repetition necessary in building upon an idea.

Helm likens making sculpture to the experience of playing defense in basketball, constantly thinking about bodies in space, having to consider delineations around an object in motion. In *Half-Court Wedding Arch* (2021), a wedding arch made of aluminum foliage, reminiscent of the kind of plastic plants one might find in a Vegas chapel, hangs on the wall with basketball court delineations on the floor in front, like a shadow in reverse. The two arches mirror one another's forms, conflating the two sites, abstracting their expected function. Here, Helm creates almost an optical illusion, the kind that is inherent in two dimensionality, like Rubin's vase. Where the court markings should lead to a basketball hoop, one is met with a solid wall under a ceremonial arch. An audience of two chairs sits in the installation wrapped in a sparkly green towel, one with a ribbon repeat

ing the artist's palindromic first name. Are the chairs waiting on the sidelines for a tired player? Or for the bride and groom? Helm pushes further with a tension in the material: the towel, which should be plush, is solid, its folds hardened. Helm's work plays in the space between decoration and utility, considering the fine line between one space and another. She reminds us of the ways our eyes play tricks on us, the way the floor could open up at any moment and suddenly we'd be swimming.

- Gracie Hadland

Anna Helm (b. 1991 in Los Angeles, CA) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. The artist's debut solo exhibition, *The Fish DiMension*, was held at Real Pain, New York in 2021. Recent group exhibitions include *Speech Sounds*, Real Pain, New York; *Sculpture from a Distance (Part I)*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Tove & Melton & Lisa & Gareth & Charles & &c.*, Jonathan Hopson, Houston, TX; *No-"Q"-No*, Real Pain, Los Angeles, CA (2019); *Pile the Wood High!*, Moody Center for the Arts, Houston, TX (2018); *Some Ruins*, SCRANCH, Twentynine Palms, CA (2018); and *Anna Helm, Lisa Lapinski, Hirsch Perlman*, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, MN (2017).