

# JENNY'S

Maggie Lee  
Vintage Paintings  
November 6 – December 18, 2021

Maggie Lee emailed my friend who emailed me yesterday to ask if I would write the press release for her art show that opens in 2 days. Without hesitation, I immediately said no. Art? Writing? Press release? Maggie Lee? This strange string of words floated above me in an anxiety-fueled sound cloud. That initial “no” was then followed by a “hell no,” which was then followed by a Google search. After that, I emailed Maggie directly and said, “hell YES.” (Maybe I didn’t exactly type those words, but I thought them—I had to play it cool hello.)

When Maggie sent me the images for Vintage Paintings, I was like, ah. Okay. I can do this. Not because I have any clue how to write a press release for an art show or even enjoy the idea of trying to solve that problem, never mind the fact that I’ve never met Maggie Lee, so I’m not doing this “for a friend as a favor.” No. None of the above. I said yes to this assignment because when I looked at each piece, I saw Maggie. And then I realized that not only did I know Maggie Lee, but that her and I are actually related. Maggie Lee is my sister. Surprise!

This is what I have to say about Vintage Paintings: it’s a ride. It’s not a journey or even a trip. It’s definitely not a holiday. It’s a ride. With each piece I was dropped off at a new location at a place I’d been before. Places close to home, pedestrian spots sure, but also life changing places in the way that all events, be them major or minor, are only ever important in the minutia. The nuance-y thing that makes this 7-11 a dick, and that other 7-11 scary. The way the wind smells while this one song plays. The way I can’t remember street names but I know every dandelion by heart on that one dead end we walked to that night those Dead Heads sold us “No Doze.”

Short rides, yes, but also transformative.

“I’m from NJ” is that one time I wanted corduroy pants so my mom took me to the Gap but they all fit weird. But I mean, corduroy, so... not no. Another ride dropped me off at my kitchen counter in Long Island at 6:30 am, watching that New Order video for “Regret” and thinking God I fucking hate this song. Then it ends and now it’s Sister Havana. I put whipped cream in my coffee.

Another ride: The backseat of this one kid Corey’s moms car. It’s winter and raining and it’s night. Inside the car feels damp and sweaty. Corey’s mom is yelling at him and while it’s not as loud as I think he deserves, it’s still awkward. Steve is sitting next to the window and writes her name in the fogged-up glass. “Barb.” I am trying so hard not to laugh. And then I’m dropped off again, in the stationary store that smells like pencil shavings and plastic. I touch all the Russ stuffed animals. I stare at the cards with obese women, nearly naked, they’re meant to be funny but they weirdly turn me on.

Maggie Lee is in the driver’s seat and you’re sitting shotgun (if you’re lucky enough to call it first, and only when we get outside is the rule). So just get in the car and see where it drops you off. Don’t write about it. Don’t talk about it. Don’t feel sad about it. Don’t wear the t shirt of the band to their concert. Don’t forget to bring money for gas.

- Lesley Arfin