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Christopher Aque *Growth*

April 20 – May 27, 2023

In *Growth*, Christopher Aque's first solo show in New York, tender beauty is suffused with the tension of desire. The latent power structures of the city, photographic surveillance, and urban sanitation campaigns are all central themes in his work, which is equally attuned to the simultaneous personal experiences of physical intimacy, growth and care.

Eight photographs oscillate in and out of proximity – the city and skyline, without people, doubled on itself; flowers and fruit grown by his partner; and strangers at close crop. The latter depict folded hands, an ass in jeans, a bare upper arm, at the distance typical of planes, trains and other transit sites; erotically charged but anonymous.

Heavily handled and printed using a labor intensive gum-bichromate process, layers of photosensitized watercolor pigment build soft and rich tonal qualities through multiple exposures under germicidal UV-C light. Hand washed and line dried repeatedly, the photographs are held in acrylic frames with linen passe-partout, both precious and guarded. UV-C lights, which Aque has used in installations and sculptures since 2018, are often used in water filtration and air ducts, and most recently as a way to sanitize spaces during the worst of the Covid crisis. They produce a wavelength that breaks down organic matter and kills viruses and bacteria, but is also a potential carcinogen with excessive exposure, much like the sun.

A glass sculpture installed in front of the windows, *An Echo*, is a fountain in stasis; an aqueous cladding. Catching the light, it blurs the obscured skyline of the city beyond. Cast in pâte de verre—a mixture of glass and gum arabic—the transparent blue ripples resemble both water and the very material of the ever-changing skyline, of the growing city, and its state as an “amorphous solid,” somehow never settled.

This sculpture, and maybe art-making in general, is herein a reverberation or an echo of action, but also something returning as the same, a likeness delivered again and again.

Christopher Aque (*1987, Chicago) lives and works in New York. Recent solo projects include *Civic*, Regards, Chicago (2022); and *A void*, Sweetwater, Berlin (2021). His work has recently been included in group shows at International Objects, Brooklyn (2023); Romance, Pittsburgh (2023); Vleeshal, Middelburg (2021); Super Dakota, Brussels (2020); Kate Werble Gallery, New York (2019); OCD Chinatown, New York (2018); Abrons Arts Center, New York (2018); SculptureCenter, New York (2016); and Motel, New York (2016). Aque was a participant at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2012 and received an MFA from Hunter College in 2016.

Please contact the gallery for further information or images, office@laurelgitlen.com.

*The entrance to the gallery is on East Broadway at the rear door of the Apple Bank Building. Gallery hours are Wednesday – Saturday, 12–6, and other times by appointment. The gallery is wheelchair accessible and has a gender neutral accessible restroom; please contact the gallery for ramp access. Masks are encouraged.