

Sofia Sinibaldi

Half of Me

June 2 – August 18 2024

Press Release

I.

There's half of me and half of you, but let's begin with me, the conversational narcissist, and how I spent the first weekend of summer, on vacation. Because writing about one's holiday is often like talking about one's dreams, we won't dwell too much, other than to propose that the sort of trip I took, the New York art professional sojourn, has by now hardened into a recognizable form, one characterized by some townie cosplay and grasping conviviality, reliably transmitted back to those sad-sack city stragglers, through images, in real-time. How much of these little excursions are put back to work, or spent swapping leisure-time optimization strategies, before the long weekend begins to resemble a teetering carousel of shop talk and social media management? And how might this familiar scenario of the hardly-working vacation exacerbate or throw itself into a sort of comic relief? To this admittedly self-engineered problem, one solution was to rent a historic home on the Cape, surround ourselves with the paintings, drawings, and furniture of dead modernists, and spend several nights, figuratively, at the museum. At the late architect Serge Chermayeff's house in Truro, stock images of the good life were always nearby, art was always on our minds, and art always leads us back to a preferable, semi-productive mode of communication – office gossip. Beneath the beach, pavement!

The Chermayeff residence, however, initially seemed like a strange place to begin considering the work of Sofia Sinibaldi, until I realized that she, too, is engaged in a project of exacerbating immersion, although one more durable and less flippant than the self-conscious gallerina getaway. Aggregating the ambient temperature of Manhattan and the dissociative potential of the street through vernacular photographs, cultural detritus, and other esoteric source materials, Sinibaldi wrests us into a position of total mediation, disorienting at first in its upended-ness, its lack of ground. Some of the images with which she asks us to contend are so now, too now, that they initially appear either completely banal or a little immature. "Shouldn't she show us something other than a series of bongs," the office gossip ponders. "At this point in her career?" Absolutely not, I might respond, because what could constitute a more incisive depiction of contemporary life than a photographic scan, taken on-the-go, of that newly invasive species, the shop window bong? It was useful, as well, that, concurrent to my vacation, Sinibaldi was busy installing an exhibition in Nassau County, where her primary audience would later travel by railway or rental car to see it. The image machine would whir once more, this time with feeling.

II.

Sinibaldi belongs to a generation that has largely returned to the studio in the wake of all the remote, itinerant, fabricate-on-demand modes of production staged by the preceding one. Yet even as the freneticism of the studio animates her practice, everything here seems to come together in post: rearranging, scanning, printing, editing until the work's point of origin is effectively obscured. She also performs a rather idiosyncratic task, I think, which is to insist on the construction or reconstruction of something like the Rauschenbergian image at a moment of its eclipse by other, more superficial forms of photomontage and collage. The materialized image of Rauschenberg – the embedded image treated as material, made "to make a representation read as though it were a corporeal thing," as Rosalind Krauss once wrote – rather than any specific aesthetic sensibility drawn from the earlier artist, seems to form this body of work's particular gestalt.

Somewhat paradoxically, this notion is most evident in the most painterly work on view, *Hinge (Hot and Cold)*, 2024, which comprises a scan of a window suction cup, reduced to an abstract gesture, posited against another circular, abstract gesture generated by another device, an analog chart recorder. The skin-like tactility of the surface, common to the other collaged works, remains, but is accompanied by a more complete conflation of surface and object. The frame and its visible, painted spacers become structuring elements of the composition, and in this visual play, the embedded images are rendered dimensional, too.

Elsewhere at inge, the artist has applied an advertisement for a bygone New York to the gallery's signature sunroom windows. On first glance, an alternate cover for the early-aughts Gossip Girl novels. On second, a conceptual installation attaining the complexity of Michael Snow's *Powers of Two*, also produced, like Cecily von Ziegesar's teen series, near the start of this century, in 2003. And like Snow's Manet-evoking photo-installation – a sort of yuppy Olympia splitting the gallery – Sinibaldi's work here deals in spatial intervention as much as it grapples with pictorial representation. Ostensibly presenting a school-aged girl departing the apartment complex or private academy for an expectant taxi, the image is complicated by its partial, bay-window installation. Half has been excised, symmetrically, enabling the lush, decidedly non-urban backyard of the gallery to commingle, blend, and merge with a preset image of affluent urbanity. Visual splendor set against formal order: there's pavement, yes, but also beach, and in classic Sinibaldi fashion, such categories are always confused, placed alongside one another, overlaid, or otherwise reconfigured. The figure of the young girl grants us a generous point of entry, or rather a point of departure; she is, much like us, either leaving the city or carrying it, helplessly, along.

– Jeremy Gloster