

'Galeria Half Moon' presents the work of two artists, both of whom offer up bits of their life, without direct commitment to the traditional narrative strictness of autobiography.

The short single-channel videos of Phung-Tien Phan are specifically focused on the act of looking and the exploration of detail. In *Pilot* (2018) a gun is pointed at the viewer – the gun perhaps a mirror for the camera, a nod to *Virilio* – and *Half Moon* (2019) opens with the hair of the artist falling towards us, through railings, onto the lens, our screen. In all the works we accompany the artist through the process of filming, there are unfussy cuts, diaristic scraps of material, intimate personal games.

In *Half Moon* the artist talks with Simon about the loss of his trench coat; seen close-up men are delicate objects sometimes. With no obvious narrative form revealed, the act of looking leads one only to the understanding of the absurdity of trying to read life as a story. Romance becomes idiotic, inconsequential. The presence of people is fleeting, they remain somewhat abstract and casual as we consume them (and all looking is consumption).

*Pilot* has the more evident structure out of the two works by Phan. Dean Martin's *Ain't That a Kick in the Head* plays out intermittently, with all its idle, cool, charm. We are voyeurs, watching two individuals playing their roles within an architecture of isolation. There is an aim of a gun and a fall to the floor (in the video the two scenes are not sequential) and an outtake of Phan's hand onto the male character at the end of the film, these are the only moments where the characters in a sense meet. The comic death of the man explains the earlier green text over the screen, Phan's target practice, "Offer: 3.600 Credits / time left: 27 Min" maybe she hit the wrong target, "male, european aristocrat, speaking one language mid 50 years old HANDSOME, grey suit, Vintage, classic hip psycho look classic glasses - ray ban gets hair done in the morning and in the evening after his exercise aka sex".

The awareness of the camera in the works by Phung-Tien Phan shows an attentiveness to the process of making as a part of life, and how snippets of life can become material for the work. This embodied commitment to the production of one's art is also a driving force behind the work of Whitney Claflin, and it is here, in their processes, that the practices of the two artists intersect.

Applied with a 99 cent store eyebrow brush, the word "LAZY" sits across the surface of an almost-seascape painting by Whitney Claflin, entitled *top ten beaches dot poppers dot com* (2018). For a practice that requires an almost unending labour – of layering and removal and living with the work – "LAZY" initially appears as an easy in-joke. 'Lazy' abstract art, or us, the viewer, lazy, in our

appreciation and understanding? We can't really see Claflin's paintings. They are all made at home, under domestic lighting, an environment of care for the paintings themselves. The gallery lighting obscures and obliterates, rather than reveals, these works' subtleties and details.

There is so much underneath these paintings' surfaces that aren't visible, but which is still very much part of the fabric of the work – it is not lost, it just can't be seen. We only see the skin of top ten beaches dot poppers dot com, it's guts are sewn up, only partially spilling out on the sides.

The “laziness” of the painting works in a productive way, as a demand outwards, to become lazy as productive state, to take your time. Paul Lafarge's best known work, *The Right to be Lazy*, outlines the problem of a struggle that demands a right to work, suggesting that the working class was “compelled, like the capitalist class, to do violence to its taste for abstinence and to develop indefinitely its consuming capacities.” To maintain the capitalist system the worker must also be a consumer. So this painting is the result of continuation, repetition, ‘laziness’ – the slowing down of production – taking pleasure from unhurried formation.

If the works in this exhibition show the work, or labour, as one's life, then in their forms they sway between entrapment and refusal, or release. Like *S. Garden* (2019), a red polyester work made from an old curtain the artist owned, collaged with vintage decorative packaging tape and an almost-hidden star. The canvas stretcher has been wrapped up, contained by the fabric, which is protecting what it hides. The work reads as an act of love towards the materials, the gesture becomes one of deliverance – the painting permitted to be a collection of relations between the artist and the objects she has touched.

For Claflin painting is always an open ended; the artist knows this and seizes it wholeheartedly. Why accept completion if completion is to willingly accept the demands of production and consumption? Claflin's works all embody their own mood, so much so that the mood becomes a being itself. *Charger* (2019) has pink flesh, visible in places, and the marks of objects that have scarred it leave their traces on its grey skin. The additional (non-oil paint) materials of Claflin's work are collected from her everyday, and the paintings are a part of and a witness to that life. They are lived with in order to be made, and that leaves them capable of occupying a sense of being, because maybe that's what their unending process is, a lifespan.

*Half Moon*, the most recent work by Phan, is the piece in the exhibition that moves the most towards the autobiographical – her father walks as a fashion model in a restaurant, her baby plays on a laptop. Yet the nature of rough assemblage in Phan's editing resists the simplicity of a life

story, and like Claflin's paintings, leave us with a mood, her mood specifically, one nevertheless built from a collection of moments.

With both artists, the pleasure in making, and that making being synonymous with living, proposes something along the lines of 'find space outside of dominant expectations.' It seems a hopeful critique, yet a welcome one. At the start of Half Moon we hear a snippet from Frank's Track (Kanye West and Frank Ocean), "Life is precious / We found out, we found out". It is.

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