

BROOKLYN RAIL

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE



MAILINGLIST

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Daydream from 2013

by Mira Dayal

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In a daydream, a mixture of fact and fiction, concrete realities and speculative extrapolations, become indistinguishable. Truth exceeds the frame, and the familiar must be relied upon to understand foreign textures.

Daydream from 2013 opens with Alissa McKendrick's *Untitled*, 2016. In it, a red-eyed girl extends an ambiguous arm gesture to the viewer, either a half-hearted wave or a hostile push. The hand is disconnected; it can be envisioned as a five-pointed object. The ocean behind her is a rich blue with waves that rise like thumbs into mountain peaks. Books fly like back-to-school insecurities.

Near that rich blue ocean, on a pink tiled pedestal, sits a basket of potatoes, part of Libby Rothfeld's *Option #1*, 2016. Misshapen, weathered, dry, they pucker to let through green shoots, soft like moss. Shot glasses drift into the scene. They are filled not with alcohol but with a clear goop more viscous than water, punctuated by cherry-red stir sticks. The basket, also pink, is of a dull and dusty plastic. Somehow it manages to appear soft, as if it could melt into the floor or jiggle with a touch. In a dream, the potatoes might climb out of the basket, don that porcelain crown, and ooze onto the sidewalk.

The red-eyed girl's companions live in another painting, also *Untitled*, by McKendrick, but matte on a panel. Mostly black with small amounts of red, pink, and green paint, the composition is spread out over a Tetris-block form. Alien schoolgirls with ghoulish skin draw in a classroom while their classmate changes a light bulb, as if embodying a permanent punchline. The scene feels like an illustration of a tunnel, illuminated to reveal the activity inside. This painting comes closest to addressing the subject matter of the press release: *Solaris*, a 1972 Soviet film in which a mission to space causes the astronauts to become psychotic. Past dreams and feverish hallucinations weave into the present reality. The dead are once again embodied. At CANADA such lucid consciousness is encouraged.



Installation view: *Daydream from 2013*, CANADA, July 22 – August 26, 2016. Courtesy Canada Gallery.

An image of the Metropolitan Museum, Rose Marcus's *Met (Flight with II)*, 2016, takes up this dialogue. Modern paintings hang in the distance of the image. One depicts a woman dancing. Her arm, a black squiggle, reaches over her entire body and ends in five lumpy fingers. She waves like the red-eyed girl. (This network of associations relates well to the structure of a dream.) But the museum is out of order. Its skewed ceiling and blurry wall labels recede in the presence of a strange white form that cuts across the frame and dangles from the ceiling like a mobile. This mobile is an illusion. It is in fact an unprinted area of the image. When the perceived disorder fades away, it is difficult to retrieve.

Most perplexing are the two indeterminate pieces by Olivia Erlanger whose material ambiguities are spoiled by the checklist. The works' coherence relies on their welded metal frames, each several inches deep. In one, a material between crushed pistachios and kitty litter (bee pollen) encrusts the bottom edge. A thick wedge of shea butter encases some geometric forms. In the middle of this composition is a grey-brown semi-transparent spill of resin. As if solidifying the surface of a lake, this spill suffocates whatever might have emerged from below. Though the metal frame seems to encase the jostling elements, a pleated fabric bubbles out from the side to exceed it.

Coagulating on the floor like asphalt or tar, nearby sculptures of sand and resin by Marlie Mul encase familiar sidewalk detritus: cigarettes, pebbles, a gum wrapper and a toothpick. The materials could still be wet; an oily sheen reveals dark ribbons of embedded color. Though the floor is concrete, these patches indicate depth: a tar pit, an endless pool, or a black hole.

Another black hole: a dirty suede patch cut to resemble an animal hide. Centered on its back is a frog skeleton, nearly crushed by the huge head of a dried sunflower. The number 09 seems to have been printed on the suede in the color of the petals. Though the connection between the numbers and objects is not clear, it somehow escapes significance. The sculpture feels complete, its presence like that of a memorial (Sam Anderson's title, *The Loved Ones* (2015), solidifies this impression).

Indeed, there is a bit of necessary disjunction in each piece. To yield to the dream, the works suggest—allow for slippage. Slippage also happens over time. All works in this show were made after 2013 and therefore look back to a shared moment. The thread of memory loops together unidentifiable forms into a manifestation of shared imagination.

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