



THE SUB-MISSION

Interview with Kelly Lloyd

GIFT BASKETS BY OCCASION

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by Makenzi Fricker

MF: Most of your work seems to eschew traditional media, i.e. drawing or painting on canvas, instead relying on found objects, assemblages, and modifications of your environment. Yet you studied painting and drawing for your MFA at SAIC. When did you begin to move away from those media, and why is that?

KL: I was exclusively a figure painter until about midway through my Post-Bacc degree at SAIC. It was the first time in my life where every decision I made was questioned and I didn't have as many satisfying answers for why I was making what I was making as I would have liked. I thought I could figure out what I cared most about, formally and topically, by sorting through my stuff. Also I became less interested in representation and more interested in presentation and I felt that needed to move outside of figure painting to explore that. This process of moving away from everything I had just done by default made me realize that I had never prioritized the act or material of painting, but rather I was using painting to work with signs. I think I'm still working in this way and so I still think of what I'm doing as painting.

MF: Some of your installation work, such as the series of murals 'Accept the CHALLENGE of a mighty land', is very site-specific. To what degree are you influenced by site?

KL: I'm interested in institutional critique, in particular around issues of visibility. One way that I have been working through this is by finding places in sites that are hypervisible and therefore rendered invisible. Most of these places are spaces of transition. Each place that I find is site specific because many things about a site play into what makes a place hypervisible/invisible. Also specific sites create specific forms and I like responding to these forms in form.

MF: How much have street art and pop culture influenced your installations?

KL: I am interested in street art's ability to reclaim space. I reclaim space through creating large installations that are directly on the wall. I claim space for myself in *KELLY* at the Chicago Artists' Coalition, whereas in *Accept the CHALLENGE of a mighty land*. I'm interested in reclaiming space through mashing up multiple ways people have claimed space through visuals. I work primarily with pop culture in my lecturing and writing practice and I connect this to using everyday materials, as both are products of desire made necessary through their consistent and near universal use.

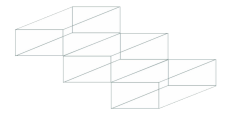
MF: Pieces such as I painted the elevator doors the color of my skin. 'C1, 21,1---E0,13,0---KX0,22,1---V0,37,0', allude to your physical body incorporated as an element of public space. How is your identity informing the creation of these works?

I think all artists make work about themselves, it's just a question of how abstracted it is or it seems. I also think it's important to factor into your work how it will be perceived through the context of its viewing and how it will be understood through this perception. Thinking about myself as a work of art, my identity is how people understand me in the context of viewing. I am a set of materials and my identity is a system of signs that I can play into or complicate at my discretion.

MF: Can you explain the role of text and words in your work?

KL: People rely on words to explain things, even when sometimes they so clearly do not. I usually use words that are taken from here and there, or I lift words directly from systems of classification or pieces of writing, to see what appeals to people and to question sense making.

MF: It seems like the gift basket series to be displayed at THE SUB-MISSION is in some ways related to your takeaways and brochure literature stands -- can you elaborate on that relationship of give and take that seems to run through your practice?



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KL: Making something and putting it in front of someone else to experience it is what artists and gift givers have in common. But for artists, in crafting an art object, something has to be withheld in order for the object to be considered, rather than immediately consumed. I like finding forms, forms like brochures, tear off flyers and gift baskets, where that gesture of “Here You Go...” is a part of the purpose of the form itself and so isn’t completely distracting from deciphering what kind of gesture it is.

MF: What is your decision process in choosing materials, themes, or subjects for the gift baskets?

KL: Many gift baskets when sold online are floating in a white void. They are cut out, divorced from their context, and put in this non-context that, at this point in my thought process, is maybe a commercial context. Maybe this non-context sells gift baskets better because the viewer/customer can project more onto the object. My decision process for this exhibition has stemmed from exploring how this pretend non-context of online gift basket sales might parallel the pretend non-context of a gallery space.

MF: How do you plan to transform THE SUB-MISSION space, and how do you see this project fitting into the narrative of your work as a whole?

KL: I’m planning to transform THE SUB-MISSION into a void-ish showroom for a handful of gift baskets. I’m excited to explore gift baskets as a form. I think they ride the line between high and low culture and can contain a lot of things in them while still reading as this particular form. I don’t know what the narrative of my work is as a whole, but it definitely includes humor and giving and taking and receiving and desire and commodification, all of which I am trying to explore by focusing on the presentation methods of both art and gift baskets.