Art in America

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David Hammons: *In the Hood*, 1993, athletic sweatshirt hood with wire, 23 by 10 by 5 inches; at Mnuchin.

exhibition, viewers were met with *Which Mike do you want to be like . . . ?* (2001), a work comprising three microphones on stands of varying heights. The title riffs on the jingle from a Gatorade commercial that was ubiquitous in the early '90s, a period during which Michael Jordan pioneered the phenomenon of black athletes securing astronomical commercial endorsements, which helped affirm the myth that the best way out of the inner city was through one's athletic prowess. With its simultaneous invocations of Mike Tyson and Michael Jackson, the more infamous Mikes of the period, the work reflects on the narrow sphere of mass-media representation afforded to African-American men.

This theme was continued in the adjoining gallery with *Champ* (1989). Comprising two boxing gloves attached to a flaccid section of inner tube hanging from a nail and suggestive of flayed skin, the work is a sorrowful homage to the black athlete-martyr. *Untitled (Man with Flag)*, part of a celebrated series of "body-prints" from the late 1960s and 1970s, is another unsettling meditation on what the American Dream has meant to the racially marginalized. Hammons created this series by pressing his margarine-coated body against sheets of paper, which he then dusted with pigment and embellished with various images. In the work in question a man solemnly displays an American flag that appears to be twisted around his neck in a subtle allusion to a noose. A 1993 work titled *In the Hood* likewise conjures the specter of lynching. It features the severed hood of a sweatshirt held open by a wire frame and hung high on the wall. A devastating prescience has come to be associated with this work following Trayvon Martin's murder and the ensuing transformation of the hoodie into a widely recognizable symbol of the perils faced by young black men.

Exhibited on the second floor, *Fur Coat* (2007) evokes the more benign violence occasionally visited upon those flaunting a very different sartorial symbol: displayed on a dressmaker's dummy is a full-length fur splashed with paint from a seeming run-in with an animal rights activist. At the center of the same room a massive, ornately framed mirror was hung, its glass covered over with two rough-hewn sheets of galvanized steel. Within the context of the show, the gallery, and the zip code, this untitled 2014 work seemed a blunt reminder of the upper class's inability to recognize its privilege or account for the broken bodies that have sustained it for centuries.

—David Markus

MAGGIE LEE
Real Fine Arts

In "Fufu's Dreamhouse," her first New York solo exhibition, Maggie Lee (b. 1987) continued to elaborate her diaristic exploration of adolescent girlhood, Millennial subcultures, and style. Rooted in blogging, honed in zines, and realized in *Mommy*, her acclaimed 2015 film about the death of her mother and their life together, Lee's approach here turned to sculpture, the artist presenting a series of dioramas set on wooden tables. Staged mostly within glass terraria and performed through Jenny dolls—a Japanese Barbie corollary established in the 1980s—the scenes depicted are from an adolescence based roughly on Lee's own. With custom outfits and hair styled by Lee, the Jennys appear alone in their chambers, sedately preoccupied: one plays with a synthesizer on her bed; another models a thrift-store outfit; another waits out a bad acid trip. One is dancing, but most simply sit, rigid, among the posters, stickers, and other items that Lee has concatenated around them. They seem spaced-out, bored and waiting.

More than the dolls themselves, it is the scrap heaps of Lee's interiors that animate these scenes and grant them their peculiar tenor. They play and replay the crucial role that consumption holds in American teenage identity, where the stakes of affiliation with brands, bands, and movies feel dire. Lee disperses signs of

Maggie Lee: *2009* (detail), 2016, Jenny doll, glass tank, wood table, and mixed mediums, 12⅝ by 20 by 10¼ inches (tank); at Real Fine Arts.

everyday girlhood in the '90s—an *Ever After* VHS tape figured as a mattress, a glittery Jellies makeup organizer as a pool, and hearts and stars throughout—among materials representing "alternative" artifacts like Dario Argento movies and "Liquid Television" cartoons. On top of narrating the pursuit of subculture from a suburban remove, Lee's references prod and make a mess of the shifting and often contradictory roles that young women are expected to play—daughter and bride, creative and muse, thoughtful subject and scopic object.

While the dolls serve as armature for their accessories, they don't seem hollow. All the care behind Lee's materials adds up to the idea of wearing a thing deeply. Her papers and plastics recall just how much something like a poster can matter to a young person; they also point to the dense negotiations of race, class, and gender that can undergird a person's visibility and expression. Lee's taste for the edgy compounds this knot, reveling in the joys and pains of deviance from standard scripts. For her generation, the internet turned such teenage experiments of affiliation and disidentification into a public ritual: the bedroom became not just a stage but a broadcasting booth for identity formation. In their glass cages, the Jennys seem to wonder: how best to unleash the freak?

Those familiar with *Mommy*, or the conversations around it, are likely to associate Lee's name with sincerity and gut-punching confessionalism. The film's narration and editing teem with media tropes turned achingly personal; Lee demonstrates how, within our digital remix culture, an image or phrase need not be unique to ring true as one's own. While intimate citation was also the force behind "Fufu's Dreamhouse," such emotive heights are more difficult to reach in the white cube, with its habits of distanced observation, than in the more immersive space of cinema. In the gallery, sincerity has a higher hurdle; there, Lee seemed comparatively remote, even wry. But whether her insights came across clearly for viewers might be beside the point. As any diarist knows, secrecy is liberating—and as an Adidas ad blanketing one Jenny's wall reads: "SUPERSTAR DOES NOT CARE WHAT THE OUTSIDE WORLD THINKS / SUPERSTAR DOES NOT LIVE LIFE INSIDE THE BOX."

—Nick Irvin

WILLIAM WEGMAN

Sperone Westwater and Magenta Plains

Although William Wegman made his reputation as a photographer who combined wry humor and conceptualism, his two recent exhibitions showed him to be an accomplished painter with a sophisticated, highly individual style. The concurrent presentations at Sperone Westwater and Magenta Plains focused on, respectively, his recent "postcard paintings" and his early works on paper. Wegman made his first paintings based on postcards in the early 1990s, and his method has remained consistent ever since: he selects postcards from a large collection he keeps in his studio, glues them on top of wood panels, and fills in the empty spaces around the images with painted marks, shapes, and figures. Despite this narrowly defined set of procedures, the resulting paintings differ greatly from one another in composition and mood.

Among the biggest of the paintings at Sperone Westwater was the sixteen-foot-wide triptych *The great indoors* (2013), which shows a panoramic view of a vast interior—a strange mix of an airport terminal and an international art fair. Several alcoves in the sides of the great hall contain different landscapes—a desert, a lake, snow-covered mountains—and the floor and ceiling of the space are packed with colorful semitransparent blocks, their rapid foreshortening emphasizing the magnitude of the place. Peering closely at the vanishing point of the painted interior, viewers will discover that the entire construction expands out from a single postcard floating around the middle of the central panel, depicting a cozy room decorated in green. Similarly, the landscape imagery springs from several different postcards, the photograph at the core of each scene elaborated on in loose, confident brushwork. Avoiding literal depiction or detail, the artist relies on compositional logic and precisely matched colors to make the hybrid images fully believable.

William Wegman: *Lobby Abstract*, 2015, oil and postcards on wood panel, 30 by 40 inches; at Sperone Westwater.

The spatial and visual acrobatics of paintings like *The great indoors* are anticipated in earlier canvases on view, such as *Aerial* (2008). Although measuring only fifteen by twenty inches, it contains three different postcards—bird's-eye views of a medieval town and a rural landscape, and a photograph of a market with a few buyers wandering between fruit and vegetable stalls. With fluid brushstrokes and a superb sense of color, Wegman has blended the three incongruent images into a single bleak landscape, the painted green and orange background wrapping around the postcards like a clump of moss. *Licensed vendor* (2011), meanwhile, strangely distorts and stretches out a colorful image of a European town before dissolving the scene in a periphery of mud-colored paint. The most fantastic of Wegman's postcard paintings appear oddly convincing: they have the logic and persuasiveness of dreams. In the paintings, as in dreams, a few vivid details stand out from a foggy, ambiguous,