

‘suzannegeiss.net’ at Suzanne Geiss Company, Suzannegeiss.net and Petrellasimports.net

BY ANDREW RUSSETH 8/20/13 6:22PM



Detail of ‘Study in Contemporary Gesture II,’ 2012, by Joshua Citarella. (Courtesy the artist and Suzanne Geiss Company)

As numerous companies, including the behemoth Amazon, try and—from the looks of it—mostly fail to move art online, young artists are looking at the topsy-turvy digital terrain and rethinking the distribution and dispersion of their work. Three individual artists—Anne Libby, Elise McMahon and Sophie Stone—who operate under the name Petrella’s Imports, are at the forefront of the action. Earlier this year they went strictly old school, setting up shop at a storied old newsstand, once called Petrella’s Point, by the Manhattan Bridge’s mouth in Chinatown, and sold artist’s books, zines and knickknacks. Now they are in the midst of an on- and off-line hybrid show, organized by Emily Ludwig Shaffer, which encompasses the Suzanne Geiss Company gallery in Soho and two websites.

Unless you’re a completist, there’s no real reason to visit the Geiss storefront, which is pretty bland and flat—intentionally, I think (take a look online). The group has installed three large sheets of glass that are shaped like iPhones and printed with images of water and grids above cement blocks so that they resemble doorsteps. There are umbrellas along the walls, also printed with the water motif (there’s no hiding from torrential downpours of data?), and two wooden newsstands that resemble the digital magazine shelf app on the iPhone. Scattered about are plastic newspaper bags filled with printouts of various projects on white paper by about 30 artists, many related to works that were sold at the brick-and-mortar Petrella’s. You can pull them out and look through them, but the curled up black-and-white pages don’t offer much to savor.

Each newspaper bag—the whole show, really—could be what artist Robert Rauschenberg termed a nonsite: a work of art in a gallery museum that refers to a related, typically more substantial work

out in the world, beyond the confines of the white box. For Smithson, that meant his epic Land Art pieces in deserts and forests. For these artists, it's online.

So fire up your smartphone and head to petrellasimports.net. There you will find a goofily tall version of that classic iPhone bookshelf (downloadable to your iPhone), stocked with the 29 digital copies, PDFs, of the papers you were looking at in the gallery—in glorious color, so you can actually enjoy the work from the superb roster of artists, many young and from New York.

Melissa Brown contributes an action-packed set of photomontages of tabloid pages and playing cards; Brian Belott has a selection of his wildly inventive work in a seemingly endless variety of mediums (paintings on glass, gloves adorned with rocks, etc.); Maggie Lee and Tamara Gonzales offer snapshots of their manic *Pink Purple* publication, which features (mostly pink and purple) snippets of pop-culture trinkets; Alisa Baremboym and Gregory Edwards present a dystopian-flavored photographic tour of hard-boiled New York; Rachel Lord has deadpan photographic instructions on how to stretch a canvas; and Jamian Juliano-Villani offers improbably beautiful photos of details of her effervescently colored paintings onto which she's projected various photos. Joshua Abelow has playfully contributed page-by-page photos of a newsprint zine he made called "Art Blog Art Blog," which is based on his blog of the same name, which itself includes photos of other people's artworks. (This improbable chain of reproduction continues the moment you decide to click print and make your own copy of a copy of a copy containing copies.)

Meanwhile, on suzannegeiss.net, also accessible via mobile device, artists and other creative types are taking turns sharing projects for a week at a time. At press time, the artist Mariah Dekkenga was offering up four droolingly attractive screensavers, blinking, digital versions of her pleasing, bright-colored paintings.

Like all of the online PDFs, Ms. Dekkenga's screensavers were free for the taking. For the art lover, that's a joy. But it also highlights the uncomfortable fact that art markets remain largely object-based—it's a rough environment for artists working in more ephemeral forms, like video and especially online. (Unlike their musician colleagues, they don't have the option to cash in their online buzz for ticket sales.) Much in art feels unstable at the moment: mediums, the line between the digital and the analog, and even the relationship between artists and their galleries. Resolutions to these questions will no doubt take some time, but Suzannegeiss.net, playfully, pleurably, throws out some intriguing proposals for ways to move forward. (*Through Aug. 24, 2013, at the gallery, through Sept. 1, 2013 online*)