



Diana Kingsley
Kyndle yr Awne ffyre

November 30, 2018 – January 25, 2019
18 E 77

Castelli Gallery is pleased to present *Kyndle yr Awne ffyre*, featuring still life photography and sculpture by Diana Kingsley. Through her work in both mediums, Kingsley continues to refine the distinctive style of her earlier photographs, defined by its synthesis of minimalist form, titillating color, and evocative subject matter. Equally essential to Kingsley’s aesthetic is the sensibility it elicits: what she describes as “low-level despair, resignation, thwarted desire, overwrought sensuality, utter futility”—sentiments that cling to the mundane details of everyday life, imbuing them with a sense of ineffability. Kingsley conjures this psychic atmosphere by carefully juxtaposing objects, textures, and colors. Through these relationships, the latent semantics of each element slyly undercut and mirror one another, producing an effusion of double entendres, ironic twists, and Freudian slips. The effect is at once humorous and unsettling.

In the photographic works on display, each image presents a vignette—an assemblage of objects (cacti, rocks, a poodle, marshmallows, a foam-enhanced bra, etc.), whose purposeful arrangement produces a sense of dramatic tension, yet avoids resolving into a clear narrative. As a result, these photographs deny viewers the comfort of a logical explanation, instead obliging them to linger in a state of mental uncertainty. For example, in the black and white photograph, *Loose Peanut* (2018) a winsome rabbit (the

eponymous Peanut) rests with apparent tranquility on a flat-topped rock, which itself floats on an ooze of semi-liquified marshmallows and gumdrops. The textural dissonance of softest fur, rough stone, and lacquer-like melted candy evokes a visceral sense of things being “off,” a feeling punctuated by the unnatural position of Peanut’s paw, which splays across the rock rather than being tucked safely under her. The poignant absurdity of the image conveys a significance understood on a gut-level, evading the sanitizing effect of rationalization.

In 2017, Kingsley began to translate this sensibility of daffy existential angst from photography into the medium of sculpture. This exhibition is the first time these works have been shown. Like her photographs, Kingsley’s sculptures create charged relationships between objects and in so doing produce meaning that is felt, but lies just beyond the reach of intellectual understanding. For instance, *Single Dad*, 2018, consists of a wooden mantel topped by two elongated miniature candlesticks which flank a ceramic orb (resembling a huge jawbreaker); a small ceramic flame, meanwhile, pretends to burn in the fireplace. In this piece, the title and shifts in scale derail a “straight” interpretation of the work as representing a mantel supporting odds and ends. The phrase “single dad” provides the context of a frayed family dynamic and encourages viewers to anthropomorphize the objects, while the singularity of these items frustrates attempts to read them simply as conventional signs. Instead they constantly reaffirm their connection to the imperfect, often bizarre, realm of lived reality.

In confronting viewers with the psychic values that suffuse the everyday items she uses in her work, Kingsley allows us to become aware of these qualities in the things that make up the scenery of our own lives. This awareness in turn counteracts the attitude of complacency generally adopted as the more socially acceptable means of coping with the multitude of mild to acutely bewildering experiences that mark everyday life.

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