

HYPERALLERGIC

The Arcs, Lines, and Body of Sheree Hovsepian's Studio Photography

In the artist's work, flagrant playfulness reigns supreme, and the human body points at an unresolved sense of geometry.



Seph Rodney June 21, 2019



Sheree Hovsepian, "Leaning In (3)" (2019) silver gelatin print, 24 x 16 inches (all images courtesy Higher Pictures)

A figure is concealed behind a curious, white geometric shape that might be a studio prop or might be a work of art itself. The board, which looks like a quadrilateral that has had a crescent shape incised on two sides, is all planar white surface behind which hides a human figure. The board's angles, curves, and points echo the figure's own arcs and lines — her own hip a less pronounced crescent peeking out one side. The image suggests a collaboration between the body and the clean, manufactured form, as if the body is the inspiration for it. Or, the body might be acting as the ground for experiments in moving in other directions.

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Sheree Hovsepian, “Empath” (2019) silver gelatin print, velvet, ceramic, string, nails, artist made frame, walnut, optium museum acrylic, 17 1/2 x 13 x 3 inches

This photograph “Leaning In (3),” like all the works in Sheree Hovsepian’s exhibition at Higher Pictures gallery (all works 2019) depicts some section of the body in conversation with angular forms that ride a fine line between art object, design element, and utilitarian tool. The work all has the subtle feel of high Modernist composition, but demonstrates greater self-awareness of the politics that surround and inhabit our bodies. Here there are several skin tones, so what the viewer gets as representations of “the body” is really a range of bodies, so the work thankfully doesn’t reprise a version of whiteness (it isn’t clear whether there is a range of genders). The key feature of Hovsepian’s work is its focus on how (within a carefully composed picture plane) shapes inspired by bodies suggest relations, suggest purpose, hint at architecture. In “Empath,” for example, thin ropes made taut against carefully placed nails create a tent like canopy under which the image of the curve of a back like a distant hill seen in morning light plays off three other objects underneath the image. The scene is set up against the serenely dramatic surface of black velvet. It’s the compositional flair within the images that makes them seductive — despite having none of the objects sync up in a way that is visually symmetrical or fully resolved. Instead the flagrant playfulness is the point.

Here the human body is a template, a roadmap, a set of cues, for how to approach our making.



Sheree Hovsepian, “Giver” (2019) silver gelatin prints, velvet, ceramic, string, artist made frame, walnut, optium museum acrylic, 17 1/2 x 13 x 3 inches

Sheree Hovsepian *continues at Higher Pictures gallery (980 Madison Avenue, Upper East Side, Manhattan) through June 22.*