

moniquemeloche

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GARAGE

The Musings of Sheree Hovsepian

GARAGE chats with the Iranian-American artist ahead of shows at Half Gallery and Halsey McKay Gallery.



Leaning In (1) (detail), 2019, Silver gelatin print. Courtesy of the artist

Sheree Hovsepian works with film-based cameras, light-sensitive paper, objects, and the body to produce her acclaimed assemblage. Iranian-born, Midwest (Toledo, Ohio) raised Hovsepian lives and works in New York, where the first photograph was taken in the United States, a 1839 daguerreotype in Lower Manhattan. Her work reflects the history of photography, emphasizing materiality, form, shadow and the presence of the photographer and the subject (often her sister, who functions as a stand in for the artist). The studio locates a place for her to interact with the materiality of silver gelatin photographic paper and to push the boundaries of photography in sculptural and material ways. Her work often depicts the body in conversation with angular forms, echoing awareness of the politics that surround and inhabit our bodies and how framing effects our personal constitutions. Hovsepian opens the door to GARAGE for a virtual conversation prior to a group show, entitled “Inertial Dynamics” with [Half Gallery](#) opening August 20, 2020 in New York City, and a solo show with [Halsey McKay Gallery](#), entitled “Musing,” opening August 25 in East Hampton, New York.

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"Medium," 2018, Silver gelatin photograph and photogram, nylon, artist frame. Courtesy of the artist

What have you been preparing for your fall 2020 shows?

I have been making modestly scaled assemblage works using silver gelatin photographs, ceramic, string and other ephemera. I am interested in exploring my own subjectivity through a vocabulary of various objects, photographs and associations made between these items. I am working with politics of embodiment and looking, which are at the core of my work. For me, photography is rich in its association with desire. Desire initiates self-consciousness as one views oneself from a position of another.

Was there a quote that led you to make this body of work?

I have been reading Hélène Cixous, so this quote is fresh. It is from the Laugh of the Medusa, written in 1976, in which Cixous stated a need for *écriture féminine* (feminine writing). She wrote, "Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard." I have been reading theory and books written by women artists. Reading becomes very meditative for me. It is a source of ideation and inspiration within my practice. I am trying to take in media that is considered and is rich with thought. Because of Covid, my studio workflow has slowed down and I am taking time to do research. Currently, I am living in Long Island, but I have been going to my studio in Brooklyn every few weeks. It has been nice to have the time to do this reflection and reading.

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"First and Last," 2020, Silver gelatin photograph, velvet, string, nails ceramic, artist frame. Courtesy of the artist
Clay crops up as a medium in these works. What are your thoughts on how clay/materiality may counteract with your work with light/immateriality?

I was drawn to the immediacy and haptic qualities of ceramics. There is also something of an aura of working with a material that is rich in a primal reference... Solid, tangible, touched, earthly. It has been used functionally and artistically by humans for thousands of years. When I became more familiar with the process of working with clay, I realized that there is a similarity to photography that I was keen on. They both take an impression, go through a chemical process and contain a threat of failure within their process. The vulnerability of the materials and the visual dichotomies of permanent/tentative and opaque/light-sensitive are things I like to think about when constructing the pieces.