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Darkly Iridescent: Vivienne Griffin at Bureau

by Emmalea Russo

Vivienne Griffin: She Said at Bureau

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178 Norfolk Street (between Houston and Stanton)

New York, 212 227 2783

Comprised of ink drawings, a soundtrack, and several stone sculptures, Vivienne Griffin's second solo show at Bureau, "She Said," exists effectively in the space linking intimacy with indifference. Griffin's past works include austere, darkly humorous text drawings, found photographs of female celebrities, and an alabaster-and-fluorescent-light floor installation. She often employs starkly gritty commentary, using simple means and careful arrangements of objects and images. "She Said" expands out from there, creating a nacreous space wherein gold chains and alabaster highlight unlikely, effective convergences.



Vivienne Griffin, *Gold Bracelet*, 2014. India ink on paper, 27.5 x 19.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York.

The soundtrack — its playback devices quite present in the main gallery — is the show's most immediately perceptible aspect. A female voice announces herself amid heavy drones and trance-like, beckoning lulls. Once in the main room, there are stones and alabaster sculptures at varying heights on steel pedestals and on the floor. India ink drawings of shiny but common objects line the walls: *Standard Tap* (2014), *Coffee Table* (2015), *Gold Bracelet* (2014), *Bin* (2015), and *Pyrite Healing Crystal* (2014).

The show escapes nostalgia and kitsch through Griffin's sensitivity to the placement of materials and an air of skepticism and complication. In *The Glamour of Ornament* (2015), a stone rests atop a steel pedestal, punctured and strung with a gold chain. Empty pedestals are placed around the object, evoking a kind of sad gathering place. The gold chain through the rock is a humorous, jaded gesture that nods to the end of '60s-era political optimism, underscored by an adjacent India ink drawing that reads "PEACE AND LOVE MOTHER FUCKERS."

The dark iridescence of "She Said" recalls Joan Didion's *The White Album* (1979), in which she discusses the Manson Family murders, paranoia, and the end of the '60s. Griffin's work is heavy with ways in which the collective consciousness perceives a time/place, and the objects and buzz phrases that hang around after it has passed. The show is made more interesting by what appears to be the dissonance of the artist in relation to her subjects. There are three instances of doubled titles. The soundtrack, *The Only Way Out is Out* (2015) is a drowsy, drone-heavy shimmer punctuated by



Vivienne Griffin, *The Nostalgia of an Object*, 2014-2015. Alabaster, memory foam, limestone, lacquered steel, 46.75 x 10.5 x 10.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York.

gorgeous female voices. Beside the speakers, a stone piece sits on the floor, penetrated by a silver microphone and aptly titled *The Only Way Out is Through* (2015). This is a slogan that seems to have been adopted by pop psychology — an urge to confront one's feelings. Together, they raise questions about escapism, intimacy, and '60s leftovers. Where are we going and how are we going to get there? How do we get out of repetitious historical cycles? The titles and the pieces themselves make assertions about enclosure. The closed loop of the audio and the trapped-in-stone microphone suggest multiple viable options for moving through time and space. *Intimacy* (2015) and *Intimacy (again)* (2015), two backlit, cylindrical alabaster-and-watercolor sculptures with exposed electrical wiring, appear successively. Lastly, *The Glamour of Ornament* (2015) and *The Glamour of Ornament 2* (2015) sit close to one other in the main gallery, both stone pieces with awkward gold adornments. They are presented monumentally and made slightly forlorn — again with a kind of dark humor — by the addition of the gold ornamentation that hangs in a way that is suggestive of the figure.

In *The Nostalgia of an Object* (2014-2015), alabaster sinks into a similarly sized slice of memory foam. Griffin creates an effective frustration, as I was left with the desire to see the impression of the object. A material resting on memory foam, once removed, will leave a momentary imprint. The foam returns to its original shape,

no matter the duration of the object's rest. Similarly, the works in "She Said" perform in their time and place smartly, addressing the historical frameworks of objects while pointing back to the present, where the only way out is through *and* the only way out is out.