

## Cait Porter

*Circle the Drain*

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“But no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however limited it may be, is still too wide not to be unstable; and so the sick mind continues to infinity, creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up diverse similarities, destroying those that seem clearest, splitting up things that are identical, superimposing different criteria, frenziedly beginning all over again, becoming more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety.”

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, 1966<sup>1</sup>

Cait Porter’s paintings depict familiar objects and the binding architectures that contain them. Banal forms—a dish-drying rack, floral bed sheets, a windowpane, shelf brackets; to name a few—are painted from her Queens apartment with a careful likeness. Porter’s canvases appear to be a window into her existence; each edited view is marked with relational specificity. By capturing and redistributing her apartment-as-subject, Porter imparts the psychological affect of the objects she represents. Although her paintings depict what is ordinary and recurrent, each work reflects the symbolic potential embedded within each subject.

The kitchen, bedroom and bathroom are organized environments. Each room, in accordance with its respective utility, is recognized by its familiar appearance. Domestic spaces are predictable; their invariable purpose is attached to the unchanging functions of everyday life. Being contained within domestic interiors, inhabitants are confronted with the signification of the things that surround them.

Porter’s painting entitled *Drain III* depicts a discharge of bubbles from a circular drain in a common sink or tub. As seen from above, the drain is flush against the white-enamel void of the basin. This self-evident composition becomes increasingly expressive because of its similitude. Seeing a sink from this perspective implies a vantage of staring downwards into the depths of its depression. The strainer, with its gridded network of holes, is an architectural signifier, but one without a fixed meaning.

The home is a common structure that, in its own organization, gives criteria for the organization of the landscape that contains it. The architectural limitations of any home are attached to a repeating sense of being in something, or of locating something else within another thing. Endlessly traveling within a three-dimensional enclosure, the body experiences its spatial boundedness. Lodged in the interstices of lived experience, these relations overlay and interfere with the part of the mind that is not fully aware but which influences feelings and actions.

<sup>1</sup> Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge, 1992. Originally published as *Les Mots et les choses*. France: Editions Gallimard, 1966.

With psychological elasticity, Porter's paintings reverberate the existential conditions that are transposed onto the home and its contents. The painting "Two Pillows" positions the viewer in a crevice above a bed and below a shelf. The painting's resemblance to a common interior relates it to a common dialectics of psychic interiority. The represented bedroom, without causality, is organized through a system of relations that can only be resolved by the viewer's belief in the combined elements. Each element is cropped on the canvas edge, leaving the space between the two pillows centered in the image along with the radiant, artificial light above.

The corporeal elements of the home are constantly being reimagined and recombined. Porter's paintings synthesize the contents of her home with a veritable state of consciousness. Her possessions and surroundings, as both physical and nonphysical manifestations, momentarily fulfill a role within a symbolic reality. This transformation, however unstable, calls attention to a discursive, mediating process. The subject, contained in the moment of Porter's representation, is not itself.

– Matt Taber

**Cait Porter** (b. 1985, Austin, TX) lives and works in Queens, NY. She received her MFA in painting from Virginia Commonwealth University and her BA in art from Vassar College. Porter's work has been included in exhibitions at JDJ (New York, NY), Moskowitz Bayse (Los Angeles, CA), International Objects (Brooklyn, NY), Marinaro in Montana at Brackett Creek Exhibitions (Bozeman, MT), Stella Elkins Gallery at Tyler School of Art (Philadelphia, PA), and numerous other venues. Porter is a 2018 recipient of the David Wurtzel Travel Fellowship and has participated in residencies at the Catwalk Institute and the Vermont Studio Center.