



INTERIORS

"There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and there is nothing secret that will not become known and come to light." Luke 8:17

A white mesh curtain separates Aaron Flint Jamison's exhibition from Artspeak's office. A more hermetic effect could have been achieved with a bolt of heavier or darker fabric, but instead, this mutable layer conveys lightness and permits a partial view. The thoughtful specificity of this border sets the tone for an exhibition concerned with interiors.

Near the gallery's front window, a piece of black material hangs from a wall-mounted bar. Closer inspection reveals that it is two sheets of fabric sewn together: one opaque, the other transparent. Even less detectable: a silver emergency blanket hidden between the two outer layers. It makes a satisfying crinkly sound when you touch it. A subtle white fluorescent light illuminates the underside of this cloth "pillowcase" and its contents to those who get close and look carefully. This intimate level of engagement seems key.

Repurposed interiors also have a role in the exhibition. According to the website of sunglasses manufacturer Oakley, their products are made for "world-class athletes," and their goal is to "elevate physics to the level of art."¹ By relocating an Oakley-brand display case from a retail environment to an art context, Jamison adheres to the corporate mandate in a cheeky sense. But he also subverts the object's commercial status by surrounding it with a semi-transparent fabric "curtain" affixed with black zippers and filling it with a coiled pool noodle. Although the inexpensive flotation device is illuminated both by the natural light coming in from Carrall Street and a light inside the case itself, the curtain prevents a clear view, thus slowing down the process of recognition. Unzipping the zippers seems a logical way to get a better look

at this interior, though I didn't witness anyone follow through on this impulse during my visits to the gallery.

Interiors are also conveyed by symbolic means: music fills the space in the form of a repeated vocal loop accompanied by chimes that seem suited for a yoga studio or naturopath's waiting room. The speakers emitting the sound are installed in a brightly lit corner of the gallery, and the combined aural and visual affect is quite tender and hypnotic. Does it matter that the voice is that of Whitney Houston? Perhaps not, but upon realizing this I did begin to think of the work in a different way, particularly how the deconstruction of the vocal line serves to disguise the singer's identity. In doing this, Jamison has given a bit of precious anonymity to a cultural icon whose life and death were often grotesquely public. It seems a kind and generous gesture of interiority.

News of the day: discovery of the biggest black holes yet into which billions of suns have disappeared. One, no, two graduate students from the University of California, Berkeley have gone on record. Oh, and their advisor too. This will make a great thesis for someone, don't you think? Yes, they juxtapose the opinions of physicists with astronomers. Yes, Stephen Hawking's name was mentioned. It's quite comprehensive, really. Not only that, they're saying these holes might be gravitational anchors, plates on which blankets of planets and stars came into being, the sites of dormant quasars! They named one of them NGC 4889 and called it an egg-shaped swirl, whipped meringue in a white mixing bowl.

Laura Matwichuk on Aaron Flint Jamison

Yes, yes, they anthropomorphize them as sleeping and ready to awaken. Is that how the Coma Constellation got her name? Tomorrow I will tell you something new. Something new is happening all the time.

If the exhibition space is an obvious interior, Jamison fills it with objects that speak to more subtle forms of interiority. A small crystal block for example, contains a meticulously detailed 3D diagram of what looks almost (but not quite) like a computer mouse. Perhaps these delicate components could fit together to serve some function, but this possibility remains trapped within the object in a liminal rather than actualized state.

Another interior is hidden beneath a white plastic sculpture set on a plinth. From a distance the material recalls fine porcelain or delicate paper, while up close, the shape resembles both a mask and the protective cup portion of a jockstrap, minus the elastic waistband, drawing the viewer into engagement with the object via an associative leap that suggests the artist's playful sensibility.

The seemingly innocuous plinth on which the mask-cup rests contains a hidden treasure: a small, spinning rotary motor that looks as though it has been salvaged from another object (a mini disco ball, perhaps?). Hidden from view, this interior component is revealed at the discretion of the gallery staff, which in turn necessitates the repeated displacement of the mask-cup from its position of centrality.

Stacks of letterpress carbon prints are displayed in two locations in the gallery, encased in plastic sleeves. The prints, which include faint images of a paisley-like pattern, wavy lines and geometric shapes, are rotated

Aaron Flint Jamison, Plastikman's Sternum (detail), 2012. Photo: Blaine Campbell

to reveal different "cover" sheets. The same symbols are displayed on the website of Veneer, an 18-issue publication project which Jamison has also used as a vehicle for exploring the theme of interiors.² Much like the zippers on the fabric curtain or the transparency of the crystal block, there is, in these generous stacks of prints, the suggestion of interior access that is neither explicitly offered nor discouraged. Rather, the objects are available to be picked up and leafed through, even if the viewer doesn't act on the impulse to engage with them in this way.

It has been said that Jamison's work requires labour to untangle it, but the heightened level of engagement expected of the viewer correlates directly to gestures of generosity made by the artist. Jamison's work is filled with a kinetic energy that attempts to coax the viewer's interior, childlike curiosities to a more visible position. The work serves as a sincere invitation to follow-through on impulses, to peek behind curtains, to gaze inside.

NOTES

¹ <http://ca.oakley.com/about>

² I'm thinking particularly of issue 5 of *Veneer* that was sealed with spray foam. Prying the pages apart to access the interior content here becomes a semi-destructive act, one that Jamison correlates with the perversely satisfying feeling of peeling of a sunburn. (See Jamison, Aaron Flint, as told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler. "500 Words," *Artforum International*, November 10, 2010. <http://artforum.com/words/id=26804>)

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