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## **UGHT**

Alicia Nauta, Anna May Henry, Meg Remy, geetha thurairajah, Natalie Logan and Madelene Veber

Curated by Joële Walinga

November 21 – December 13, 2014

The exhibition *UGHT* compiles the variety of suggestions posed by parents to their artist children in misguided attempts to support, encourage, or simply understand what it means to be an artist. *UGHT* exhibits the materialization of these sometimes ridiculous ideas, as artists actually attempt to create or fulfill what was suggested of them. With works by Alicia Nauta, Anna May Henry, Meg Remy, geetha thurairajah, Natalie Logan, and Madelene Veber, the show illustrates examples of non art-world or art-educated ideas about the function and aesthetic of art, while simultaneously illuminating the underlying encouragements and discouragements that exist at the foundation of the artist.

Emphasis is placed on attitudes towards art as a career, as most suggestions seem to strive for monetary or financial gain. Born of either sympathetic terror at the possibility of their child's potential financial struggles, or, more to my experience, the fear of being one day asked to support said child, parents do not hesitate to intervene in the life and work of an artist child.

*Thro Pillows on Clearance*, by Alicia Nauta, rings painfully true, as Nauta investigates what it's like to be an artist in a family who tries to be supportive, but doesn't always succeed. Working from the suggestion that she might make pillows for HomeSense, since "people would definitely buy them," Nauta's classic black and white prints of perfectly arranged shapes and objects are reassigned to a set of throw pillows on a HomeSense clearance rack. The red-tag reduced price that her pillows share with the lime, also on clearance, brings her print-works up against a seemingly displeased jury of consumers,

whose primary concern is ornament. The scene initially draws on satire, as the viewer locates the irony in sacrificing the integrity of one's work only to end up on a clearance rack, a kind of selling-out-but-on-sale, but it quickly becomes about an imposing attitude of misunderstanding-completely-but-telling-you-what-to- do-anyway, a truth shared by many artists.

Working from a similar suggestion, Anna May Henry tries to navigate supporting herself on the production and sales of an artist-made calendar. Henry's mother's advice was solicited and, not unlike most advice, well intended, when she suggested that Henry use her childhood painting skills to make a calendar for money. Henry's *My Calendar* is fully inked with the struggles of finding the time to paint, something she no longer really does, and is measured against the time required for printing the calendar, for self deprecation, for working her paying-job as a bartender, finding time for friends and family, and finally trying to figure out how to sell a calendar whose construction took so long that it is now outdated.

Meg Remy's mother's suggestion that she become a *Women's Advocate*, a career where she could both "make a difference in and make money," materializes in a 6-minute video that, unlike Nauta's and Henry's works, does not disguise feelings of futility with satirical irony. Remy's video shows her as a women's advocate, trying to help a woman whose situation is such that bureaucracy does not recognize it. Having experienced abuse herself and the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic intervention on behalf of women, her suggestions to the unseen subject, played by LuLu Hazel Turnbull, range from slightly illegal to very illegal before she breaks down and cries, illustrating for the viewer, as Remy puts it, that "passion is folly in the face of pragmatism."

geetha thurairajah, working from the suggestion that she "paint George Bush painting Putin," struggled to imagine what kind of studio a man like George W. Bush might have found appropriate for his creative ventures. Narcissism prevails as his space sends the viewer on a journey through religious fanfare, self-portraits and Barney-the-dog memorabilia. *Curious George* approaches the re-creation of the Bush studio conceptually, suggesting that a space or studio is little more than a place for self reflection.

Natalie Logan's *Dialogue With The Family* presents a similar distortion of reality. Using recording technology, Logan's videos offer the illusion of dialogue between a duplicated single subject, creating the opportunity for family members to converse with themselves in an unscripted interview. Originally, Logan's videos contained subjects who were not her relatives, and who were criticized by her mother at a recent exhibition as being "too boring." By indulging her mother's advice to focus the project on her own family members, the videos, now featuring her grandmother, her mother and her younger sister, become about a different type of mirroring, one between three generations.

*The Curio Cabinet*, Madelene Veber's series of works made for her parents' home, mark a perfect juxtaposition of ornament and function, as Veber actually creates the things her mother, inspired by home decorating magazines, requests for her home. These contemporary works are - for a modest and lived in home - completely otherworldly. Veber emphasizes this through a series of photographs balancing contemporary ornament against real-life clutter, couch sitting, and utility, as her sculpture is converted into a key holder.

Each of these works, a delicate balance between the original suggestion and the actual work and style of the artist, present a perfect irony where the suggestion inherently fails. Drawing attention first to the suggestion at hand, and then averting the attention to the actual work of the artist, the viewer witnesses the circular process that is everyday lived by the artist child.

- Joële Walinga