

TIGER STRIKES ASTEROID MEETS THE SMITHSONIAN IN "ON LOAN"

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If something seems a bit different than usual at the Tiger Strikes Asteroid collective right now, it's because they've shifted gears for this month's exhibit "On Loan." The show's title is, of course, a reference to the ubiquitous museum phrase that denotes a work of art or artifact that has been loaned to an institution for a specific amount of time or for a particular exhibition. Curated by Nora Salzman, "On Loan" dashes the typical DIY feel of Tiger Strikes Asteroid in favor of the precise, Plexiglas-encased appearance of a high-budget museum, without losing sight of its experimental spirit.

Most noticeable about the exhibit at first is the attention to detail. Salzman has arranged and displayed the works in a way that transports the viewer from a building full of artist-run galleries to the stringent halls of a world class museum. The right-angled white pedestals and transparent cases speak to a sharply specific vision and a hefty amount of planning and preparation. While it is no Smithsonian, the small gallery does its part to suggest a sterile environment, and if it were any less thorough, it could easily be a full-on parody.

Anna Elise Johnson, "We Cannot Accept Your Position." Photo courtesy Tiger Strikes Asteroid

Stretching along the wall to the left of the entrance is a downward slanted case containing the out-of-focus photo of a figurine and seven accompanying drawings. The series of drawings by Anna Elise Johnson examines the perceived details of the original blurry image of a statue. Like some faux historical sleuth, Johnson analyzes the statue sitting between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Regan in a photo of their meeting during the Reykjavik Summit in Iceland. Since the little figure is a minor background detail of the political gathering, her dissection of its appearance is quite amusing, as are many of her observations like its lack of "national socialist" abs and the placement of its nearly imperceptible hands. She treats it almost like an archaeological examination, if not for her quips about the size of its genitals and the fact that every observation is entirely conjecture.

Jamie Horgan, "Paper Crown." Photo courtesy Tiger Strikes Asteroid

Speaking of imperceptible, Jamie Horgan's contribution to the show is very easy to miss without an intimate knowledge of the space or a little outside direction. It is entitled "Paper Crown" and consists of the molding where the room's ceiling meets the walls. The architectural addition is made of pressed wood pulp, yet blends almost seamlessly with the original textured, metal ceiling. In a way it demonstrates that in an actual museum, the less noticeable and more natural the fixtures, the better. While the displays and the components of the room are necessary, they are meant to focus attention on the art, not themselves.

Foreground: Meghan Gordon, "Trey Anastasio's Grandmother's Chair (my Vermont studio chair)", wall: Jessica Smith, "Evil Swan." Photo courtesy Tiger Strikes Asteroid

Jessica Smith has a wall of hand-printed "Evil Swan" wallpaper which, along with ceramic works by Lucia Thome (self-portraits as Benjamin Franklin) and Elizabeth Hamilton (broken and mended bone China) come together to distantly recall James McNeill Whistler's "Peacock Room." With the addition of prints by Serena Perrone and artifact-like objects made of paper by Meghan Gordon, the room does take on the appearance of a collection of period pieces, minus the fact that they are actually camouflaged, contemporary tropes.

Tiger Strikes Asteroid will have the "On Loan" work on loan until August 26. Come with an open mind and your tongue firmly in your cheek. Don't expect any portraits of Whistler's mother, although Meghan

Gordon does graciously provide a replica of Trey Anastasio's grandmother's chair for any Phish fans that happen to pay the gallery a visit.

Tiger Strikes Asteroid is located at 319 N. 11th Street (suite 2H on the second floor), Philadelphia; 484-469-0319 or tigerstrikesasteroid@gmail.com; www.tigerstrikesasteroid.com.

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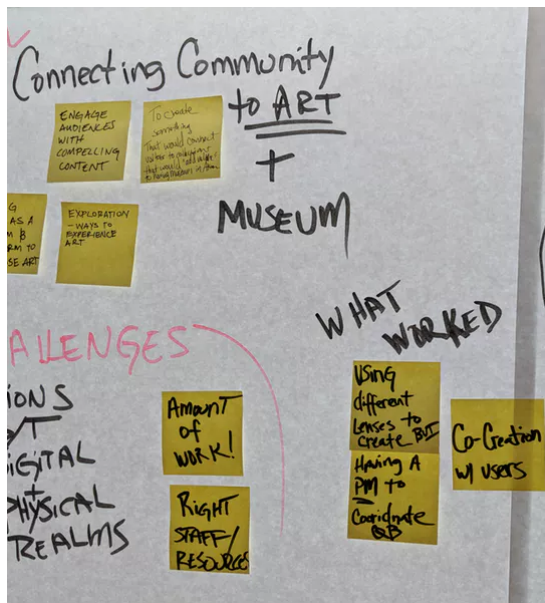
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