MIDWAY CONTEMPORARY ART

527 SECOND AVENUE SE
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55414
TELEPHONE (612) 605-4504
FACSIMILE (612) 605-4538
WWW.MIDWAYART.ORG

click click, space space
Megan Francis Sullivan
November 7th – December 20th

In 1856, the British shipping magnate Frederick R. Leyland hired the American artist James Whistler as an advisor for the redecoration of his dining room. What was to be a slight toning down of the color palette of his London house ended in dispute six months later, by which time Whistler had trimmed the rugs and painted over Spanish leather that had previously been owned by Catherine of Aragon. Leyland refused to pay the full amount. Whistler completed this commission with a painted panel featuring two posturing peacocks in a flurry of feathers and coins. Leyland was depicted as a squawking bird clutching his shillings in the face of a noble, yet poor, peacock – a defiant Whistler. Eventually the artist was compensated, but in the currency of pounds rather than guineas – an added insult to a gentleman of that day.

Megan Francis Sullivan's wall work *Untitled (Cartoon of Rich and Poor Peacocks)*, is based on sketches made by Whistler in preparation for the Peacock Room. Animal and human posturing, showing, and cruising have been a central component of Sullivan's work – from her use of 1970's gay men's magazines to her recent re-enactment of the French painter Rose Bonheur's *The Horse Fair.* Whereas her earlier work often involved selecting carefully choreographed poses, the five panel series of flashe paintings on view at Midway, based on photographs that were styled by the artist, show images of black jackets casually discarded or thrown off. They appear as symbols for leather culture, but in their coolness also reference the melodrama of Robert Longo's *Men in the Cities* – a series of charcoal drawings considered the quintessential reflection of an era of high finance and excess in New York.

In *Apparition*, nine Formica tables are placed in a grid in the middle of the exhibition space. A subtle extension of Midway's library into the gallery, they are also a restaging of New York's Cooper Union library tables, whose original design is attributed to John Hedjuk, architect and Dean of the School of Architecture at Cooper. Though the school was explicitly founded in 1859 with a free tuition policy, it drew international attention and months of student protest with the 2013 decision to institute tuition fees. The quiet reclamation of these objects is countered by a painted wall work depicting a series of online responses to this announcement, including a Noam Chomsky quote framing school debt as a tool for the internalization of disciplinarian culture.

Some of Sullivan's works find their forms within different areas of publishing. These include her *Hunterklasse* book on horseback riding (on view in the library) and her latest publication, a small appointment calendar entitled *Zipperkeeper 2015*. Its cover shows images of coins from various currencies and symbols of full and new moons passing under a grid. Inside, the pages portray images of a protest from the 1960's, the young artist Kim Gordon in 1980, floor tiles from Cooper Union's foundation building and an image of an institutional clock, which is doubled within the physical space of the gallery. Through her use of repetition, dislocation and an overriding muted palette, Sullivan creates a distancing within the objects and images, striking an elegiac tone.

Accompanying the exhibition is a screening of films by the American film-maker Storm de Hirsch selected in cooperation with Silke Nowak.

Megan Francis Sullivan is a US-born artist who currently lives in Berlin. She is represented by Mathew Gallery, Berlin and Freymond-Guth Fine Arts, Zurich. She has had solo exhibitions at Mathew, Berlin; Freymond-Guth Fine Arts, Zurich; Broadway 1602, NYC; and After the Butcher Contemporary Art, Berlin. Her artist books and publications include: *For Phil Andros* (2011); *Die Hunterklasse* (2008) published by FNVerlag and the Jan van Eck Academie, Maastricht, NL; and *HBL – Hedgebrook Lane* (2004) Revolver Verlag, Frankfurt.

Copies of *Zipperkeeper 2015* are available for purchase at the front desk.