

Can't Reach Me There

curated by Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer

Kelly Akashi
Diti Almog
Christina Forrer
Simone Forti
Jeff Ono
Laura Owens
Mark Roeder
Jay Tucker
with Isamu Noguchi

Can't Reach Me There is a split headspace, an asymmetry of activity and repose, tumult and calm. It is an elusive quiet, a clearing, a bed with a view. It is full of dreams of a languid climate, a slow season, and vast mental space—always a struggle for open vistas. The show, fully estival in spirit, is a postcard from elsewhere. It desires landscapes and perspectives that express vital abstractions like distance, aging, death, and escape. It claims an attention to scale that prioritizes the physically small and shrinking, while valuing the temporally long and lasting. Contained in my *there* that can't be reached is a fantasy of withdrawal and inaccessibility, the internal and the remote—of a private, obsessive art that can be the medium of involution. Curling up in a shell, this is also a writer's fantasy of being non-verbal, non-professional, and non-productive—seeking long-term immersion in private research compelled by pleasure and risking irrelevance. Because I want to be a medium of my time, too.

It is devoted to duration and certain subjectively-clocked experiences of time: the time of observing, the time of painting, the time of weaving, the time of reading and book-making, the time of burning a candle possibly at both ends, the time of bathing, daydream time, calendar time, battery-life time, beach time, afternoon pool time, summer time, slow-burn time, gestation time, and the five hundred million years of the evolution of seashells. Speaking of shells, they turn out to be crucial for their hyper-aesthetic mystery of slow, continuous self-formation that invites a rethinking of domestic architectures—because this show is also informed by a time in life, a generational and perhaps gendered period when home, home-making, and home-building demand greater attention, which comes at the same time that I feel more shell-like and cavernous, cozy in this flesh form.

A group of clock paintings by Laura Owens keeps unruly time and, in a handmade book of paintings, the artist fills and obliterates the measured, regimented pages of a calendar. Modular paintings by Diti Almog establish the flat horizon of the sea and sky as a tonal through-line, a simple but precise abstraction that appears, reappears, and ricochets throughout her hermetic and system-bound practice at different scales, framings, and times of day as a powerful, dizzying *idée fixe*. A travel box with two groups of nested paintings, meticulously miniaturizes an already terse aesthetic.

Seashells sculpted by Mark Roeder are as much about photography, books, scale, close observation, and the deep, dimensional absorption of images as they are about nature's extravagances formed deep under water or the gradual accretion of self that shells embody as a model of the domestic. Echoing the malacological elsewhere in play, a sculpture by Jeff Ono positions a baroquely twisted and convoluted carapace of paper clay over a shallow reflecting pool of water: smoke and steam, skin and shadow, shell and bone. Sharing the room's stepped California King bed with Roeder's shells, clusters of serpentine,

intestinal, and kelp-like bronzes by Kelly Akashi are kinds of psychic formations writhing and reaching in their sleep, heavy on soft cushions. Her bronze hand, severed by a blast at the wrist, is both crab-like and a haunting figure of reach—being in and falling out of reach.

A crisscrossing copper hoop, hanging from the ceiling and wound like a garland with Akashi's sinuous candles, is something quite other than a home lighting fixture. A wall densely draped with tapestries by Christina Forrer impresses in an almost devotional manner with the vast incremental accumulation of her time-consuming craft. At the same time, her images depict the emotional volatility, fluidity, anxiety, and perversity of living with a partner and in one's head. Two nudes by Jay Tucker, who began painting at age sixty-seven for private, self-taught pleasure beyond the professional sphere, evince a quality of looking that is tender and hard, the work being so much about modes of self-care, self-play, concentration, and time alone. One figure dances with her shadow. A line from a Salinger letter comes to mind: "God, how I still love private readers. It's what we all used to be."

Developed over six decades of investigation and improvisation, extreme proprioception and curiosity about the body's currents in nature are Simone Forti's great, understated virtuosités as a dancer and artist. Duration matters. Her strength is her flexibility and grace in a range of motion and a range of ages. A new video by Forti stages her body in relation to a tributary of the Mississippi River, not far from the gallery, where the artist moves in response to the force and depth of running water as well as the charged symbolic content she handles. In a live News Animation improvised at the exhibition opening, she seemed to prophesize as she entranced, always with a soft touch.

And, last but not least, installed as a satellite across town at the Walker, Isamu Noguchi's bronze *Model for Swimming Pool for von Sternberg* (1935/1980) is very much at the heart of *Can't Reach Me There*, being a rumination condensed in miniature on the poolside state of mind and a scalable form that has something to say about distance and proximity, vision and wish-fulfillment—at once evoking shell and ear and eye, oculus and orifice in its abstraction...for me, a potent sign of elsewhere.

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Lehrer-Graiwer is an art writer, curator, and teacher in Los Angeles, where she publishes *Pep Talk* and co-runs The Finley Gallery. She is the author, recently, of *Lee Lozano: Dropout Piece* (Afterall Books).

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