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Microcosm: A Review of “Dialogues” at Patron

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Installation view of “Dialogues,” 2023, at Patron/Photo: Courtesy Patron Gallery

“Dialogues,” on view at Patron Gallery, serves as a microenvironment displaying not only individual works but also the symbiotic call-and-response relationships that build Chicago’s rich art world. The five featured artists invited one or multiple artists with whom they turned on a faucet within their respective practices. Collectively, the paired works display the hidden dialogues these artists have shared.

The dynamic artists featured are Alex Chitty with Richard Rezac, Diane Simpson and Gordon Hall; Samuel Levi Jones with Amanda Williams; Caroline Kent with Nate Young; Alice Tippit with Barbara Rossi; and Soo Shin with Sungjae Lee and AiRos Sung-En medill.

Alice Tippit's "Peril" offers an oil painting of deep, pooling black on top of a flat, school-bus yellow. The dance between light and dark introduces flickering images of a candlestick, a plant and two profiles magnetizing toward a kiss. The painting is in conversation with the late Barbara Rossi's "Untitled" silver gelatin prints. From a flat black background emerges a piece of driftwood. The marbling of the surface becomes a form of mark-making while each hole in the wood becomes a beckoning portal. Tippit and Rossi's works speak a reciprocal language of treating negative space as an object that toys with the malleable relationship between foreground and background. Flickering between the pieces, the viewer experiences the illusive nature of perception that is challenging to remain the same between each take.

Made of powder-coated steel, grape stones, blackened steel, cast bronze, twine, altered ceramic mug and a huraches sandal, Alex Chitty's "the sun-drenched neutral that goes with everything (unit 3)" introduces suspension into the space. Each element, balanced as if by an invisible spinal cord, allows the unseen equilibrium to become the piece itself. Richard Rezac's "Untitled (16-09)" floats above the viewer's head with a similar quiet suspension. Heavy materials of aluminum, painted maple wood, and cast bronze are treated with the lighness of cotton candy. Chitty and Rezac's pieces let the viewer in on the secret their work shares that causes their sculptures to pause mid-sentence, tension living as a balled-up breath in the back of their throats.

Text is introduced as a magnet in Caroline Kent's "Scene Act 41" and Nate Young's "First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," as each artist's use of text plants the viewer in place, demanding time and attention. Viewers witness the middle of a private conversation between Samuel Levi Jones' "Land Back" and Amanda Williams' "What black is this you say?—"Fair warning, I'm not nice and I don't seek to be respectable"—black (10.29.2020), v2," as each piece remains in unison in scale, textural qualities, and treatment of black. Soo Shin's "Holding Distance" and Sungjae Lee's "Ripples (after holding)" treat ceramic as a vessel containing imperceivable space, memory and documentation. Through each artist-relationship, "Dialogues" offers the viewer a rare opportunity to witness the direct connections that flow through the electric nervous system that both infiltrates and generates Chicago's art world.

"Dialogues" is on view at Patron, 1612 West Chicago through January 24, 2024.