

You Could Be Anywhere! Jonny Campolo at JEFF'S

Ashley Cook

September 13, 2021

Entering the space with a thought on the mind related to the viscosity of glass expands the potential of the read of the work like quantum physics allows you to walk through walls. It becomes a philosophical game of how far we can stretch our consideration of the materials in front of us, which is also complimented significantly by the setting. The first exhibition at JEFF'S is a series of works made by cutting, layering and melting glass to create collages of translucent and transparent layers. As the viewer navigates the space, it alters how the work can be perceived as the colors change and the shadows grow and recede. How refreshing it can be to be greeted with a text that meanders around the work like a curious conversation. "Is glass a liquid or a solid?" That is naturally a question that could come about by viewing the works as visually resembling spills of color, with their amorphous forms, rounded edges and the ability to influence each other through the mixing of the colors when lit.



JEFF'S is one of Detroit's newest exhibition spaces; an old house in the North End neighborhood. Something that I have always been interested in is the evidence of integration between art and its environment. How does art interact with spaces and the people around it outside of the traditional, modernist sterile cube that does little to animate the work besides doing its best to give it absolutely nothing to be visually challenged by? The opposite of this experience takes place when clean and fragile artworks are installed within a space that is loaded with complex color and textural combinations as it is here. The high contrast between the contexts of the gracefully dilapidated domestic space and the fragile glass works seems to invent a place where the architectural structure feels, in-fact, to be more delicate than the artworks inside.



Short-Sighted



Turn On



Table Talk



Table Talk (install)



Puff Piece (install)



Puff Piece

The character of *Scared Optimist* that dons one of the walls may be recalling forms and movements seen before in Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. *Puff Piece* twists and distorts like bodies in cubist paintings. *Short Sighted* uses bits of color surrounded by white like a melting Mondrian. *Purple Pompadour* evokes Miro, with the organic forms, muted tones and flattened picture planes drawn with clear lines. *Dancing in the Dark* hints at the use of automatic drawing that seems to have leapt from the surrealists writers and artists of history and into the homes of Americans in the 80s. The mixing of the iridescent and the colors and the varying transparencies and different textures create free flowing forms that straddle the aesthetics of decades while still definitely feeling comfortable in this contemporary post-modern era... There is something about their cartoon-like hands that helps with that...and the fact that they were made by a pianist...



Dancing in the Dark

Sustaining multiple creative practices simultaneously can feel like a sign of the times, though it's not necessarily new that artists work in various mediums, letting their voice take the form of each in its own way. Jonny Campolo does not only play piano, but also participates in curatorial projects, publications, installations and video production. It is evident that the different mediums serve to satisfy their curiosity of it's potential while providing a different facet for which their voice to rest. Like the pages found in Campolo's *Suck the Fystem*, the movement indicated by the zigging and zagging of the lines of the outer edges of the glass works raises questions whether the characters that

don these walls are dancing or shaking with anxiety. Are they comfortable or are they pacing because they have no idea what the hell is going on? Are they startled? Are they restlessly excited? It is interesting and seems like it could be quite challenging, actually, to achieve this particular effect that treads the line between comfort and fear. Of course, the way they communicate with the space they were installed in plays a part in the read too; the effect of the work of art is transmitted onto the surface of the walls or the ornamental details, raising it all to the level of a fully intentional installation that is introduced by three short paragraphs...



Scared Optimist (install)



Scared Optimist



Post Prenup



Off the Deep End



Purple Pompadour



Turn On

Is glass a liquid or a solid? It's a real question a lot of people ask, and the evidence is at first enticing. The glass of centuries old cathedrals is thicker on its lower edge, suggesting a slow drooping over the years since its construction. This has been used to argue that glass is in fact the most viscous liquid known to man.

I can't think of a slipperier thing to do with this potential information than to claim that glass (now defined as a liquid) qualifies as paint, and that what you see here are paintings. I hate that I even thought of it, and while I'm at it, what the hell was my friend talking about when he said his sculptures were drawings?

Jonny would NEVER make this case. He would never bring his artwork to the altar of painting. Probably because he's musician, a good one, and why would a skilled pianist ever go knocking on that door.

Fortunately glass is not a liquid.

You Could Be Anywhere!

by Jonny Campolo

opened on June 27, 2021

JEFF'S is open by appointment

Phone (989) 227 8663

Email jeffreytranchell@gmail.com



Turn On



Photos by Ashley Cook

runner