



Then is New

October 30–December 20, 2020

This presentation is online only. *Touching from a Distance* is on view at 915 Spring Garden Street through Nov 7.

It's been nearly nine months since the art world rushed one final weekend of in-person ya-yas out during New York's art fairs, tapping elbows but still un-masked, sending an unknown many home to spread the virus a bit further. We were set to move the gallery at the end of March, but after another week of packing, quarantine brought us to a standstill. I reached out to several Philadelphia-area artists to inquire about work for a virtual quarantine-themed show. After a two-month delay, we moved at the end of May. A week later George Floyd was murdered, shifting the collective conversation to a place that required its own space and time, bringing many of us out of our heads and back into the streets. Artworks selected in April have taken on a new patina during the months that have passed, whether they were made three years ago or during quarantine.

Peter Allen Hoffmann's painting practice shifts between subtle abstraction and realism, and this winter he turned his easel inward, capturing quiet settings inside his home. Sophie White's work finds similar quiet both inside and outside of the domestic space, with the bulk of her recent work focusing on the quick and dirty demolition and redevelopment of Philadelphia's Fishtown neighborhood; devoid of figures, these gouaches also capture a city on pause. Queen Nancy Bell sees the brightly colored organic forms of her *Jesus'es* (2020) series as a vehicle for her savior's message, and her output has increased through the pandemic, despite a period of housing instability at its outset. In title, Patrick Maguire's *Pearly Gates of Nothingness* paintings resonate with a certain melancholy that hit many this year, but in form might also serve as mandalas to be used during moments of reflection. Over the past few years Leah Bailis has been creating abstract portraits of, and

monuments to, her heroes, often in the form of masks made from reclaimed jeans and various garments—collaged, beaded, or simply reconfigured. These masks offer a different sort of protection than our daily wear, by way of a performative armor. Anna Neighbor's sculptural assemblages of found construction detritus from in and around Penn Treaty Park eulogize the virile bodies that left it behind, and now also bring to mind the urban encampments that sprung up in Philadelphia in the wake of the Black Lives Matter and affordable housing protests here and nationwide. Adam Lovitz's *Again, Tomorrow* (2018) reads now as commentary on our hamster wheel year, while the small, abstracted baseball diamond in his *Opening Day* (2020) is a tribute to the stilted return of a national pastime, without any fans or players in sight. Knicoma Frederick's 2018 series *James Parkway Apartments* (2018) depict an idealized housing experience, including a rooftop studio with a view, and his *Untitled (TP Pentagram)* from the Series 'Long Ride,' (2018) is a witty prophesy from an oracle with a dark sense of humor.

Covid cases are once again on the rise, Philadelphia's protests have regained steam in response to the recent killing of Walter Wallace Jr. at the hands of the police, and the election is days away. Another virtual exhibition is either the last thing anyone needs right now, or a welcome moment of respite.