

LIAR
Luxembourg Institute for Artistic Research
NYC



A. RONAYNE
AGE OF AQUARIUS
41 Orchard Street, New York, NY
Th - Su, 11 - 6
www.liar-nyc.com
07 February - 14 February 2021

From left to right

Untitled (not my stamp), 2021
Charcoal and collage on paper
30x22"

Untitled (YES), 2021
Charcoal, graphite, paints and collage on paper
30x22"

Untitled (Bambi), 2021
Charcoal, graphite and colored pencil on paper
30x22"

In Age of Aquarius, three drawings hang in a window at 41 Orchard Street, between Hester and Grand Streets. The street in front of the window is piled up with dirty snowbanks, remnants of last week's winter storm. On top of the snowbanks lies a layer of dirt, upon which various layers of Manhattan's grime has built up – cigarette butts, dog urine, discarded coffee cups, disposable blue medical masks. A new layer of powdery snow falls on top of the urban detritus as another Nor'easter arrives, a reminder of Aquarius season's relentless ability to have no mercy on the weak, a reminder to either put on another layer of rugged insulation, or to go inside and stay there.

Ronayne's drawings, titled, in order from left to right, *Untitled (not my stamp)*, *Untitled (YES)*, *Untitled (Bambi)*, as viewed from the sidewalk space between the banks of sludge and the glossy gallery window, invite the viewer into the very space Ronayne's works emerge from: a peripheral view of the main event, the margins of a space where the dust builds up, engulfing in it the bits of glitter and the shards of glass, the castaway, loose ends, existing alongside of the center, yet framing it, and in doing so, deciding precisely how and where the center falls, subtly queering the narrative of wherein power lies and who, precisely, has the authority to determine such parameters.

In *Art Journal 72, no 4*, David Getsy writes that "abstraction is being used as a resource by young trans and queer artists because it allows for a less prescribed capacity for artists and viewers to see themselves in it. Such a dynamic has a historical source in the art-theoretical debates of the 1960s from which literalist abstraction emerged."¹ In a sense, queerness, existing alongside heteronormative properties, can be likened to abstraction running alongside representation. Given this, it can be understood that these qualities are not in fact at odds with one another, or even mutually exclusive. Rather, this concurrent existence suggests a flexibility and even, perhaps, an agency, to choose how and when the lines of existence, or the lines of abstraction and representation, intersect. Ronayne's drawings delicately straddle these lines, disentangling them when relevant – the pointed, angular and yet curved BAMBİ written in charcoal on the bottom right corner of *Untitled (Bambi)* – and useful, and at other times, bringing them together to conjure a moment of shared intimacy – a thin, horizontal strip of white, covered in gold foil confetti, tiled together at the bottom right corner of *Untitled (not my stamp)*.

Ronayne's works utilize recycled imagery from her own visual vocabulary, drawing on works she has seen, digested, and repurposed. In using elements of others works as symbols in her own, she plays with a queer sense of embodiment and relationality: remaking others marks as a way to move closer to them. "If I can't buy something, I can make a bootleg version." Ronayne says. "I think that's related to queerness also - seeing a mainstream language and understanding the system in which it exists, but not entirely having access to it; I use abstraction to process it for my own benefit." In this sense, both self-presentation and materiality become wholly self-determined, which becomes, ultimately, a means toward queer liberation.

The imagery Ronayne invokes in her visual vocabulary becomes a *Zeitgeist* of her own internal world; a treasure chest or caboodle of precious symbols reifying the self: fragments of an exterior world, selected, abstracted, collected into a frame. From this, a feeling of indulgence in the inner most self emerges, a captured sensation of an internal reference, brandished on paper in a forward slanted B—a cowgirl's symbol for branding her herd of cattle—, a vertical infinity loop, a single French brace, an A, an L, and a R, each adorned with curly serifs. These symbols, across the three drawings in Age of Aquarius, act in unison as a sort of secret handshake or passcode for entry into an underground club: one that is very gay, very odd, and very at home in the state of abstraction Ronayne creates.

The viewer, if able to decipher the code, is invited to lean into the meaning suggested through this abstraction. Through this, they are invited into the realm of moments that exist, buried deep inside the self, from the abstracted bits of wonder, joy, and obsession that carry us through the banality of it all. These moments, pocketed from their existence in the margins and on the peripheries, are preserved in the standstill of time and space Ronayne gives them on paper. In this, she creates the Wunderkammer to house her collection of items strung together in pursuit of meaning, an interior world of symbols and code, an ethereal space in which her abstraction becomes representation, and where the cursive Y E S, a recurring motif across Ronayne's work, sets the tone for limitless possibility.

¹ Queer Formalisms: Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy in Conversation, *Art Journal 72, no 4*, Winter 2013.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alyse Ronayne (b. 1986) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received a BFA in printmaking from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2008 and an MFA in painting from the Milton Avery School of the Arts at Bard College in 2015, where she was awarded the Elaine DeKooning Fellowship in Painting and a Teaching Fellowship in the Sculpture department. Her work has been exhibited nationally and is held in both public and private collections. Solo and two person exhibitions have been presented at the Fuller Gallery at Indiana University School of Art, Architecture and Design (Bloomington, IN), 321 Gallery (Brooklyn, NY), and Jeff Bailey Gallery (Hudson, NY). Recent group exhibitions and projects include In Limbo at the Boom Boom Room (Brooklyn, NY) and Practice Gallery (New York, NY), Soloway (Brooklyn, NY), Spencer Brownstone Gallery (New York, NY), and the Leslie Lohman Museum (New York, NY). In 2016 Ronayne founded the roving curatorial project In Limbo, and was awarded an Engagement Grant by the Rema Hort Mann Foundation for the project's continuation in 2018.