

LAUREL GITLEN

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Anissa Mack *Deep Deep Pepsi*

SEPTEMBER 7–OCTOBER 19, 2014

OPENING RECEPTION SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 6–8PM

Laurel Gitlen is pleased to open the 2014 Fall Season with *Deep Deep Pepsi*, Anissa Mack's third solo exhibition with the gallery, and her first in the gallery's new larger location.

Known for her ongoing investigation of the psychological and cognitive processes of registering and remembering, Mack deftly engages the uncanny and camp, enacting irrational desires or futile hope. Often taking the form of altered and hand-made readymades, Mack's works are realized with an exquisite attention to detail that pushes against the mundane and banal qualities of vernacular objects. Mack's unfaithful copies and repetitions reveal spaces of personal and psychological dramas where the beauty, depravity and simplicity of believing in the impossible may be read as both absurd and yet distinctly American.

The exhibition takes its title from one such irrational ambition: to deep fry a liquid substance. On 80 gleaming mirrored panels, the words "DEEP FRIED PEPSI" are screenprinted and repeated ad infinitum. This work underscores a central focus of Mack's practice: an uncompromising resistance to the literalness of language, or the flattening that happens in categorizing, identifying or naming of objects. Like Robert Gober, Mack might agree that "What is, for the first time a discovery of putting something into words, loses meaning the second time." Instead, the act of naming and its repetition generates its own set of meanings as things are recalled and distorted, their boundaries beginning to shift and open. Stuttering and folding in on itself, the printed text mutates into non-sensical and seductive fragments such as "FRIED DEEP FRIED," or "DEEP DEEP DEEP."

Overt references in this and other works to the county fair—where fried Pepsi does exist, and printed mirrors are given away as prizes—also fold back in Mack's own history, most notably referencing works made in 1996 and 2006, *The Durham Fair* and *The Durham Fair (10th Anniversary Edition)*, in which Mack entered every craft category of a Connecticut county fair, and then repeated the gesture ten years later. Moreover, the objects and processes of casting and recasting that are at the heart of Mack's practice articulate a remarkably consistent yet eccentric language that Mack has developed in the work, much of which was first established in these two seminal pieces.

In this new group of sculptures, cast glow-in-the-dark corndogs and fragments of cast silver jack-o-lanterns dangle as bait in articulated hoops that hang from the walls of the gallery, and pods of helium-filled, Mylar dolphins chatter as they float overhead. A video narrates the tragicomic story of a young man who loses his life savings to a midway game known as "Tubs of Fun" in order to win an Xbox, only to end up with a human-sized Rastafarian banana. In these and other works, Mack makes a case for the subtle and less subtle ways that people, animals and maybe also viewers are conditioned or trained to speak, to play, or to believe. Repetition can thus be read as a more coercive strategy, and yet the desire to "win" seems beautiful in its simple idealism. Conflating the rarified conditions of art-making with the common or even vulgar spectacle of the county fair, her work also undermines tacit assumptions about culture, competition and the tenacious ways that meaning clings to concrete things.

With both humor and sobriety, Mack imbues this narrative with an abject complexity considering the confounding notions of need, lust, and failure that fuel one's illogical ambitions to acquire what is most alluring: to win a game that has been fixed, to communicate with another species, or to deep fry any consumable substance.