

Lisa Holzer

HESTER

“To be a funny mom was what I wanted above all to be when I became a mom a few years ago. And ‘Be a funny mom’ seemed to be an ideally inept title for this show, my first one in New York. Hey there!” The cheerily self-conscious tone of Lisa Holzer’s statement about her recent exhibition at this small space, squirreled away in a maze of small offices, hews courageously near to the embarrassing; one can imagine her offspring finding it all mortifying in a scant few years, and they wouldn’t be entirely in the wrong. Yet on the evidence of this tight grouping of photographs (with textual and other additions), Holzer has the smarts to convert uncomfortable self-awareness into something much wilder and wittier.

“Be a funny mom” makes reference to Hester’s Chinatown location by picturing, in a series of eight large prints titled “Inducement” (all works 2016), a sequence of pig’s ears, which can be found for sale in that neighborhood. Shown against backdrops of pastel and saturated color, they appear as curled as orchid petals, as gnarled as bits of popcorn. Each is also accompanied by a rambling text, printed in a small font across its top section, that begins *CF. HONEY EARS. PIG’S EARS. DOG TREATS. GOODIES. GOOD FOR THEIR TEETH. TEARS?? YOU BRUSHED YOUR TEETH? FRIEZE?? FRUSTRATE (SUCH AN 80IES VERB). DRINK TEA. BE NEEDY. OR BLAND. OWN A TEAPOT. MY HANDS SHAKE. I AM. I CANNOT. SOMETHING’S DYING. IT’S BAD. DAD??* and continues in much the same stream-of-consciousness vein for another couple hundred words.

While they may share a subject and incorporate the same commentary, the “Inducement” prints are otherwise extremely varied, and are further distinguished from one another by splatterings of clear polyurethane on the exterior surface of the glass in its frame, which suggest an awkward leakage of fat or sweat, spit or tears. In the context of the set’s repeated run-on screed and its subjects’ sensory associations (hearing and being heard, but perhaps not listened to), the solidified fluid takes on a peculiar and affecting resonance halfway between the physical and the emotional—the distilled essence of communication, miscommunication, and oversharing. *THANK YOU AND FUCK YOU SOUND ALL ALIKE*, writes Holzer in another part of the work’s slab of out-loud

rumination; she asks for our ears only to either scream or mutter into them, refusing to enunciate but instead testing our hearing.

Two additional works, *Asparagus (1)* and *(2)*, repeat the format of “Inducement” but picture single spears of the titular vegetable. Many viewers will be reminded of Manet’s paintings of the same subject from 1880; the artist herself alludes to Gerhard Richter’s *Candle* from a little over a century later. Either way, the pallid green stalks look phallic but distinctly unhealthy, as if recently hauled out of the river. There’s a painterly quality to all of Holzer’s output, and that the precedents from which this pair is arguably derived are both iconic images by masters of the medium is no accident (this in spite of Holzer’s confession that the washed-out quality of the color was the result of her having used a flash, something she is usually disinclined to do). Yet while clearly aware of the aestheticized aura with which she imparts her subjects, Holzer also persists in seeing this project in teasing psychological terms; the ears in “Inducement” are, she proposes, tasty “goodies” “for” men, those hungry, primitive creatures with whom she, a funny mom, must share the stage.

—Michael Wilson



Lisa Holzer,
Inducement (2),
2016, ink-jet print
on cotton paper,
polyurethane on
glass, 36 × 28".
From the series
“Inducement,” 2016.