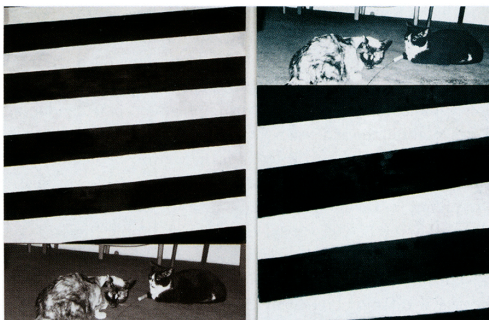


Art in America

Rochelle Feinstein:
Today in History,
2012-13, oil on
canvas and digital
prints on vinyl,
91 by 144 inches
overall; at On
Stellar Rays.



ROCHELLE FEINSTEIN On Stellar Rays and Higher Pictures

Rochelle Feinstein isn't one to wait around for the academy to get a bead on her. With not a single major museum exhibition, nor anything resembling a substantive catalogue to document her prolific output and significant influence on young painters, she practices a kind of self-cannibalization, mining and physically repurposing her past works as though writing her own art's history. Feinstein has a spot-on sense for some of the weirder narratives of popular culture (Michael Jackson's tabloid mishaps; white-guy covers of songs by R&B soul master Barry White), and is something of a cross-trainer in mediums (painting, silkscreen, assemblage, photography), which she wields in innovative ways. Her work could easily be mistaken for that of an artist less than half her age. (She is now 65.)

This was a strong two-venue exhibition full of lively solipsisms and formal puns. Downtown, at On Stellar Rays, were four large mixed-medium paintings completed in 2013 and a slide show featuring nearly all the art Feinstein made between 1998 and 2008. The slides were projected continuously from an old-school carousel, and many of them had been graffitied by the artist in Magic Marker, with the effect of an art-class lecture gone over the edge. Particularly mordant is a bucolic landscape almost completely scrawled over by the word "RETROSP-ECTIVE" [*sic*].

One of the finest paintings was *Today in History*, a single work comprising four panels in black and white, two presenting photographic blowups on vinyl, the others abstract compositions on canvas. The photographs are of Feinstein's two late house cats curled up on a living-room carpet, a mundane scene reproduced twice, but with subtle differences: one of the images was culled from a negative, and the other from a Xerox. In the striped abstraction, Feinstein draws out the slightly warmer middle-range tones of the

photograph and the cooler, more acrid halftones of the photocopy. (Think Daniel Buren collaborating with a Kinko's employee.) Just visible above the cats' heads are some table legs, adding further linear play.

Uptown, at Higher Pictures, the offerings seemed even more startling for their nearly synesthetic osmosis of painting and photography. Three were large Cibachromes the artist made in 2000 using an early version of Photoshop. (The rest of the 58 works in this series could be viewed in the office.) For these, Feinstein appropriated pictures (mostly landscapes and urban panoramas) made by anonymous amateurs using DIY Kodak darkroom kits from the '60s and '70s. She then added black-and-white speech bubbles and rephotographed the scenes, so that trees, mountains or buildings seem to be ejaculating words like "Now," "Here" or "More." The old Photoshop lettering looks "warm" to contemporary eyes, and the paper's graininess rather tactile and pleasing. Not content simply to allow these altered images to age, however, Feinstein sliced some of them up, reconstituting them as paintings (dated 2002). Slathering on highly viscous blue-green acrylic and coating them with an imperceptibly thin layer of varnish, the paintings (part gestural abstraction, part landscape) shine with a Finish Fetish-like polish too subtle to see in reproduction.

One thinks of the adage "Everything old is new again," only turned on its side. Somebody had better hurry up and give Feinstein the retrospective she so clearly deserves. Writing her art's history is going to be a tougher task: this oeuvre won't hold still long enough to get old.

—Sarah Schmerler