

TOMATO HOUSE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

JESSICA CIOCCI: Self Expression
October 25 - November 23, 2013
Opening reception Friday, October 25

Tomato House is very proud to present Self Expression, a multimedia exhibition by Jessica Ciocci, from October 25 - November 23, 2013. Self Expression combines handcrafted art objects with diaristic digital works in the form of selfies and screenshots. Ciocci's new media projects occur within physical and virtual space, assimilating internet and TV culture; she searches for the mystical within the new commonplaces of technology overload, social media and mass-produced goods.

Ciocci's trademark ersatz Pig Lady personifies the female consumer of fashion as commodified, delimited personal expression. Their aerobics outfits and vapid convo reflect an 80's notion of empowerment within confines of body expectations and gender constructs. The appropriation voices anger at being over-fed, pandered to, a spectator. In Self Expression Ciocci expands upon this symbol and reconciles this earlier use of alter-ego by becoming the actor, examining tropes of "expression"; abstraction as an uncontrollable primordial mess and the "self" as creation.

In her paintings Ciocci incorporates puffy paint and plastic gems in mesmerizing arrays of pattern like a close-up LCD screen or Lite-Brite. The paintings involve an organic, repetitive, and intuitive approach to use of consumer-level inorganic materials- plastics, and craft-store materials, fake jewels and baubles marketed to kids- & women- trappings of "sweatshirt art" that recall a naive and amateur domestic craft. These products cater to the desire to create, a form of expression at once genuine and pre-packaged. They harness a sense of glamour- a personal magic or power of ornamentation from mundane materials.

Through the common format of selfies and screenshots, Ciocci examines self-presentation in the digital age. Often used by young women, the selfie activates a deep vein of self-consciousness, vanity, shame, self love and hate that is a female birthright. The screen, the network and the interface act as a mirror or a void, alienating and connecting. Fascinated by the theater and control inherent in changing one's image, face, color or wig at will, she adopts this means to explore the act of seeing and being seen in an ever more self-monitoring, exhibiting and broadcasting world. Is this self-awareness ultimately transformational or destructive? Does the soul come through in a gradual revealing? Is there anything deep to this? Possibility to connect? Is it just a mirror or looking glass?

Ciocci uses screenshots as a form of record-keeping or diary. In a projected animation she compiles these ephemeral images in a rapid-fire barrage of elapsing moments. Snapped from her computer desktop and assembled frame by frame, the video uses handmade means to process culture and technology, and her personal "desktop experience" over the past 2 or 3 years, creating in effect a diary or self-portrait of her own digital and computing experience. Demanding to take control and charge, in an age where at every moment there is a possibility to record, and show the endless array of connections, things to "behold" or consume, and simply pay attention to at any given moment, an attempt to find a personal meaning or narrative in this.

Together these works are a form of autobiography or self-portraiture. Ciocci employs a polymathic range of old and new media to explore how identity becomes incorporated in the technologies that we use. Tools of self-expression in common usage become the stuff of personal history, "memory" becomes memory. She compares the endless stream of information and of time.

Jessica Ciocci was a founding member of art collective Paper Rad and has exhibited at the New Museum, the Migros Museum, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Deitch Projects, and Foxy Production. She has spoken and/or performed at Bard College, Columbia College, SVA, and Smith College. Her work has been reviewed by Holland Cotter and Roberta Smith in the New York Times, and in many other publications. She holds a BA in psychology and art from Wellesley College.

Tomato House is an artist run space in Ocean Hill, Brooklyn that hosts exhibitions, screenings, and community events. Gallery hours are Thursday, Friday and Saturday 11:00 - 5:00 and by appointment. For more information please contact Rebecca Bird at 347-770-7813.