

Toronto Exhibition

Jen Mann

OTHER SISTER

Curated by David Liss

Jun 23 – Sept 3, 2022

Opening:

Thurs, Jun 23, 6 – 9 p.m.



Jen Mann, *Other Sister - Pop Cover*, Oil on Canvas, 2022

From the self-portrait to the selfie, we are inherently driven by the need or desire to represent ourselves in images. We knowingly accept and perpetuate fabricated illusions and manipulations of truth, seduced by our desires to consume and be consumed.

For her project *Other Sister*, Toronto-based artist Jen Mann has constructed an elaborate, fictional narrative that enticingly engages, as it simultaneously critiques, our contemporary culture of self-representation. 'Other Sister' is the persona and name of the girl-pop group that consists of the artist and two of her friends. On display are ambitious series of works in a range of media that include painting, sculpture, sound, video, performance, merchandise and social media components, all convincingly designed to represent the band. The exhibition playfully mixes vocabularies of art and marketing, and confuses boundaries between fact and fiction. Enter and exit through the gift shop where a vinyl record produced by the band, and other related merchandise is available for purchase. Within the gallery spaces the alluring made up faces and costumes of the band members are lusciously rendered in billboard-scale paintings resembling luxury ads and glossy magazine covers. A viewing room presents several of the band's self-produced music videos. All of it real, all of it for sale, all of it produced by the artist – and at the same time, as viewers eventually discover, 'Other Sister', the band, is not a real entity. All is not as it seems in the world of marketing and promotion. Yet, astonishingly, these days we fully accept that there is no truth in advertising.

However, this display, this project, is not really about the band, 'Other Sister'. While we may allow ourselves to be caught up in the fantasy, the items on display reside within the space and context of cultural critique. Beneath the convincingly seductive surfaces, other discourses are at play. 'Other Sister', the exhibition, is a conceptual experience meant to confront our, and the artist's complicity in a

culture of manipulation, false promise and illusion. The vulnerable surfaces of desire reflect more complicated emotions and fears, underlying social and economic conditions, as well as other dynamics and manipulations of power and spirit.

With the pervasiveness of technologies and entrenched consumer-driven economic systems, distinguishing fact from fiction, truth from reality, recognizing boundaries between public and private space, has become even more complex. Identity and private information are commodities to be bought, sold or stolen. Our value to society is determined by our ability to produce and consume. Reflecting the dominant paradigm of her culture, 'Other Sister' constructs identity through an alluring advertising aesthetic of desirability and consumption. With the right industry marketing and promotion, it is perfectly feasible that 'Other Sister' could be the next big thing. Whether or not they even exist doesn't really matter.

The story of 'Other Sister' is a layered, narrative fiction; an ambitious cultural project that challenges us to question our role and our agency in the evolution of our individual and collective identities. How do we represent ourselves when every aspect of our lives are monetized, monitored and transformed into product and brand? With 'Other Sister' Jen Mann treads a delicate line that, perhaps, we all do, as participants in cycles of consumption, and raises uncomfortable questions around the cultural conditions of our time that shape and define identity.

Information:

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