

ARTFORUM

LOS ANGELES

Kathryn Andrews

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

Kathryn Andrews's "Black Bars" opened at David Kordansky Gallery mere days before the US presidential election. It followed by almost exactly a year the artist's solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, titled "Run for President," in which she questioned fame parlayed in the service of politics through pieces featuring such public figures as Ronald Reagan and Bozo the Clown (aka Larry Harmon, whose rubber-nosed, yak-haired alter ego ran against Reagan in 1984). Cassandra-like, the Chicago show presaged a climate in which the aforementioned historical cases are less exceptional than one might have hoped, even as their gruesome particulars pale in relation to the phosphorescent glow of Trump orange. Organizing principles of surveillance and censorship assumed a different cast in the weeks after the opening, even as the titular black bars cuing redacted information and penal infrastructure remained physically unchanged.

At Kordansky, two cylindrical stainless-steel sculptures faced off in the center of the gallery as if in a duel, each shiny monolith the support for a stormtrooper replica (both titled *Stormtrooper*, all works 2016) commissioned by the artist and made to the measurements of Andrews's studio assistant; each figure levitated a few inches above the floor thanks to chunky metal rods extending from plinth to chin. These anonymous soldiers—clones in an ever-replicating army brought once again to the big screen in *Rogue One*, the newest *Star Wars* franchise, during the exhibition's run—serve as surrogates for the constituents of an unidentified dystopian collective. The mirrors shielded the ciphers from each other even as they redoubled everyone else who entered their vicinity. Like Tony Smith's *Die*, 1962—a six-foot steel cube based on the proportions of the Vitruvian Man—which blocks one's sight line even as it solicits the intimacy of phenomenological response, the stormtroopers presented an allegory of participation. Only by standing with one's nose to the column did one experience a less than totally warped view, even as it remained an incomplete one, obstructed by the height of the plinth and the distortions of its surface. From farther back, one could take in the totality of the room, but the cylindrical, edgeless expanses destabilized their surroundings and further confused the viewer's registration of space.

Encircled by a selection of large-scale paintings from Andrews's "Black Bars" series that were reproduced as infinite dark lines in their polished shells, the twin sculptures reciprocally imbricated themselves in works that thus contributed to the sense of an unrelieved hall of mirrors. Each of the "Black Bars" pieces consists of a wall-mounted aluminum box whose interior Andrews has painted and silk-screened with photographic imagery. The boxes are fronted by Plexiglas panes on whose versos two opaque black rectangles have been screened. The works repurpose photographs of American Apparel-esque models (outtakes from her earlier "Door Girls" series of 2013–16) together with printed images of flora and saccharine foodstuffs. In a tactic distinct from the commissioned stormtrooper replicas, some "Black Bars" works additionally include certified Hollywood props Andrews collected at auctions, as in *Black Bars: Jaws*, in which the flipper worn by Richard Dreyfuss in the 1975 film is pinned to the background like a prized specimen. Others still, like *Black Bars: Déjeuner No. 7 (Girl with Maracas, Lemons, Gummy Bears, Ice Cream Sandwich, Candy Cane and Ice Cube Tray)*, import the differently auratic history of painting since Manet.

In all cases, one craned to see what lay in the four-inch gaps between the Plexiglas and the painted back plane, access to which was stymied by the impassive black forms as well as by the reflection in the glass. The works made the point that we are all consumers of images and information, and position is everything. No faceless legion but individuated visages seen in however skewed a likeness, caught in a situation where you are in the frame or not.

—Suzanne Hudson

View of "Kathryn Andrews," 2016.
Photo: Fredrik Nielsen.



FEBRUARY 2017 221