

TURLEY GALLERY

Jean Blackburn

Jay Stern

Placing

August 5–August 27, 2023

Opening reception Saturday, August 5, 3–5 PM



Jay Stern, *Brenda's Bathroom (Mother)*, 2023, oil on canvas, 48 x 48 x 1.75 inches

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Placing presents the work of Jean Blackburn and Jay Stern. Both Jean and Jay investigate where we live our lives. The public and private spaces along with the things that inhabit them, both real and idealized. Some of these spaces are personal and intimate, created from memory, while others are pulled from the glossy pages of the “how we should live” catalogs found in all of our mailboxes. Balancing abstraction and more representational imagery, this exhibition draws the viewer in on seemingly familiar objects and spaces while also flipping us on our heads, inviting us to see them in a very new way.



Jean Blackburn, *Woven Echo*, 2022, gouache on rag photo paper, 15 x 16.5 inches

Jean Blackburn

The home fascinates me because it is where we start. As we grow up, the things we surround ourselves with in our homes are deeply ingrained in us. Entwined in our everyday experiences, these objects and their surfaces, textures, and smells become rich with layered associations. Our early experiences act as templates that substantially shape future interactions and understandings. But this structure of understanding that we build as children is constantly tested and adjusted in dialogue with experience.

As a sculptor, and as a painter, my work examines the negotiation of cultural models and individual experiences in the domestic setting. I cull domestic objects and images that are commonplace but loaded with assumptions or desires. I manipulate them to suggest that they, like we, are in a process of redefinition. These objects have strong domestic associations suggesting familial relationships and situations. Materials grow into each other; new structures emerge at the cost of older ones.

I am intrigued by the carefully constructed, highly marketable models and domestic facades presented by home furnishing catalogs such as Pottery Barn, Crate & Barrel, Williams Sonoma, etc. Recently I have been scanning and blurring imagery taken from these catalogs. The images, though generic, are blurred to the point of only the simplest definition. To these, I add spare gouache brush strokes as possible interpretations or suggestions. Both blurred photo and painted line dance together on the edge of recognition, fragility, and doubt. The meeting of the

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line as figure and the photo as ground is dynamic and unstable. It is a kind of perceptual casting for apprehension of our experience in light of the models that are given to us. The boundaries of definitions interest me the most. I push my pieces until they are on the verge of a multitude of other possibilities.

As a sculptor and a painter, Jean Blackburn addresses the domestic setting and its power to shape or reflect our understanding of the world. She has exhibited her work throughout the US and abroad, including the DeCordova Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, the Aldrich Museum, the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, the Neuberger Museum, and the Ierimoti Gallery in Milan. Her work is in collections of the Mint Museum, the RISD Museum, the Tang Museum, and many private collections. Her recent solo exhibitions have been at the Pierogi Gallery in New York in January–February 2018 and at the Rafius Fane Gallery in Boston in March 2017. Jean has been teaching at RISD since 1982. In 2014 she was awarded the RISD's John R. Frazier Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Blackburn has a strong interest in ancient civilizations and our processes of interpreting them. She has worked as an archaeological illustrator on excavations in New England, New Mexico, Petra, Jordan, and most recently in Tuscany on a 6th century B.C.E. Etruscan dig.

Jay Stern

Trying to encapsulate a memory is not a linear composition or effort. The collaging of several images hints at the accuracy of the muddled past as we look back into the layers of our life. Locations, objects, light and shadow, windows in and out, and perspective shifts come together to create a somewhat mundane relationship, but one that is steeped in experience. Through stacking and collaging, Stern finds a freedom of abstraction that is used to combine, contrast, and mold together pictures through several means of imagery from his past. Big swathes of space are created through meticulous details that offer a compositional moment of play. There's a power in the quotidian nature of Stern's subject matter that is crucially at play. Stern hopes the work will form a similar function to that of portraiture, in that, the evidence of a human life or experience is clearly present.

Jay Stern (b. 1991, Columbus, OH) received a BFA in Painting from the University of Cincinnati and an MFA in Arts Leadership from Seattle University. Stern's work was recently featured in *Middle Bay*, a solo exhibition at NOON Projects (Los Angeles, CA), and a group museum exhibition, *Interior*, at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art (Rockland, ME). Previous solo and group exhibitions include Sears Peyton Gallery (New York, NY), Specialist Gallery (Seattle, WA), Studio e Gallery (Seattle, WA), Able Baker Contemporary (Portland, Maine), and Koplín Del Rio (Seattle, WA). Stern's work has been featured in publications such as *Booooooom* and *Aeqai*. Upcoming shows include a two-person show in August 2023 at Turley Gallery (Hudson, NY) and a group show in Fall 2023 with Caldbeck Gallery (Rockland, ME). Stern lives and works in Midcoast, Maine.

Turley Gallery is open Friday–Sunday, 12–5 PM, and by appointment.

For press and sales inquiries, please email info@turley.gallery.

Please visit www.turley.gallery for more information.