

HYPERALLERGIC

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Poking Holes in the Veneer of Our Social Media Selves

At Essex Street, Torey Thornton broaches the broader issues of our image-saturated age, considering who (and what) our self-styling ultimately serves.

by Adina Glickstein



The slippage between self-expression and commodification, familiar to anyone who has spent a few too many hours gazing dead-eyed and alienated at their own Instagram profile (couldn't be me!) is one salient subject of exploration in Torey Thornton's *Does productivity know what it's named, maybe it calls itself identity?*, on view at Essex Street through January 9, 2021

The show frames a broader problem for artistic production in an image-saturated age: transparency, legibility, and even sincerity are fetishized, but whom does this self-styling serve? The signifiers that we adopt to actualize creative intentions are just as readily hoovered up by the platforms where we share them, collapsed into capital as our ostensible leisure is rendered an extractible form of labor.

There's a tension between the mundane or even obvious quality of certain materials that Thornton employs — mattresses, wooden doors, rocks — and their abstracted deployment, an implicit humor in their refusal to function as expected. Scrambling familiar visual references, works like "Every Good Body Does Fine (Membrane between granular pearl dive access)" and "What Is Sexuality, Is The Scale Infinite Similar To A Line (new modes of press and chromakey) (TT-ES-00022)," both 2020, attempt to jam the circuit of value-extraction with their calculated obscurity, playfully posing a point of exit from the nightmare of perpetual entrepreneurship of the self.