

Contemporary Art Writing Daily

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Friday, March 29, 2019

Ghislaine Leung at Chisenhale & Essex Street



(Essex, Chisenhale)

(Right before *The Stepford Wives* he wrote *Rosemary's Baby*, a guy with obvious anxieties over the maternal.) *The Stepford Wives*, a novel about "frighteningly submissive housewives in [a] new idyllic Connecticut neighborhood," the housewives feared to, but unknown whether, have been replaced with robots. The novel's continuous adaption into variously successful television and film striking some type of cultural consciousness chord. Having been written in an era (1970s) of increasing modern "miracle" conveniences and the then latest "smart objects" is hard not to read as a fear of these conveniences, submissiveness, actually infiltrating us, our subjects, robots, of convenience and object submission until we became, if not kitchen appliances ourselves, at least frighteningly subservient molded to kitchen surrounding us. The fear of our kitchen as a mold. Molded on a production line, molding ourselves to its convenience. Such that options for expression become limited by the cultural detritus available in stores. Which shouldn't be read as a fear of loss of individualism (a reactionary fear spawning Hippies dressing Ayn Rand in flowers calling it a movement awaking twenty years later in corporate board rooms doing to the earth what they did to that field in upstate New York) but some sort of fear of virtuality and the world rendered in some sort of Reichstagian cartoon, an imperial diet of commodity, perfection we all see ourselves attempting to reflect, scary cultural ideas of blonde heads beaming in striking black suits. These lights are untethered. You join in union, with a multitude, a choir, signing "THE BOSS." Whether or not highlighting these cultural walls with a gloss is helpful, it does make for good scary. We fear that one guy who is so painfully *nice*, not because we fear him snapping, but because we fear his so perfect reflection of cultural ideal turning into himself a commodity, one that we might have to reflect.