

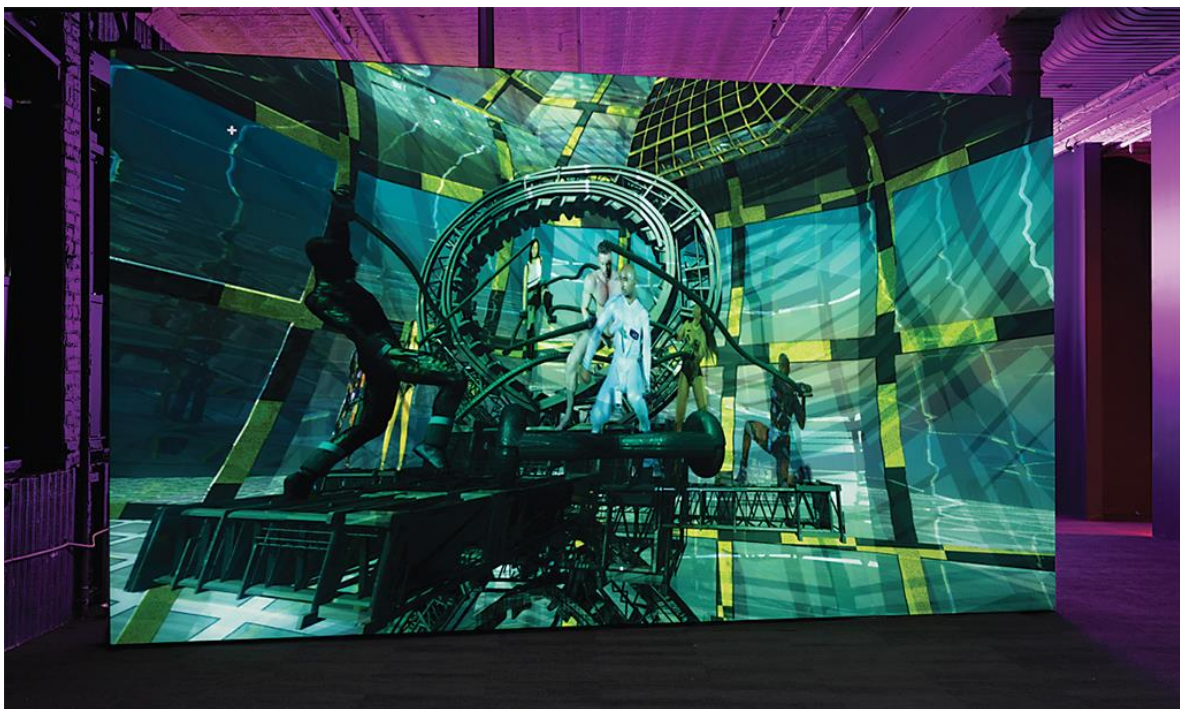
# ARTFORUM

## Jacolby Satterwhite

GAVIN BROWN'S ENTERPRISE | DOWNTOWN

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**Jacolby Satterwhite, *Blessed Avenue*, 2018**, 3-D video, color, sound, 19 minutes 20 seconds. Installation view. Photo: Lance Brewer.

Leather queens, club kids, and bare-breasted femmes writhe and vogue in crystalline enclosures overlooking churning purple galaxies. Bound to one another and to sinister machines by a network of multicolored intestinal tubing, pliable virtual bodies pleasure and punish each other in acrobatic scenarios, their mechanical gyrations powered by a sovereign libidinal clockwork. The factory and the dance floor, Fordism and fetishism, play and werk, collapse into undifferentiated opalescence. Across a torpid twenty minutes, titillation yields to monotony, anhedonia, alienation. In a rapacious feedback loop, alienation transubstantiates to kink.

Projected on a giant double-sided screen in the darkened gallery, Jacolby Satterwhite's baroque digital fuckscape supplements his already substantial body of work drawing on

an archive of artwork and music made by his mother, Patricia, who struggled with mental illness from Jacolby's childhood until her death in 2016. Captured on green screen and metamorphosed into digital avatars via computer animation software, Satterwhite's digital Dionysiacs submit, dominate, and disco to a crepuscular electronic soundscape remixed from a cappella vocal compositions that Patricia recorded on cassette in the 1990s. The video takes its title, *Blessed Avenue*, 2018, from one of these songs, and the fractal architectures of its galactic pleasure palaces are composites of digitized renderings of her designs for products meant to be sold on QVC. Ten of the approximately ten thousand annotated drawings the artist's mother created are displayed in an adjoining room. All untitled and made between 2004 and 2008, these spidery sketches present reticulated, Eiffel Tower-like skeletons of the variously utilitarian objects ("a boxing glove," "a perfume bottle") and eccentric items ("a jacket in a pencil box," "a push buggy ride for a puppy") she hoped to mass-produce and sell as a means of self-sufficiency.

Satterwhite's use of his mother's drawings courts delicate problematics of authorship and asymmetrical power as much as it critiques condescending genres of "naive" or "outsider" art. As Eva Díaz noted in a 2013 *Artforum* review, Satterwhite, "in his role as artist, is able to organize and reenergize [Patricia's] rituals of therapeutic imagemaking . . . while simultaneously inviting the wider public to engage, possibly empathetically, with the moments of eccentric creativity in her obsessions." At Gavin Brown's Enterprise, Satterwhite takes this gesture a step further, using his authorial voice, not only to reframe his mother's designs in a fine-art context, but also—in an approximation of her retail ambitions—to actualize them as merchandise. Beneath a pink neon sign reading PAT'S a gift shop is installed at the front of the gallery, stocked with items (produced with the stylist David Casavant) such as lunch boxes, pencils, phone cases, lighters, and dishware branded with Patricia's drawings.

In his essay written for the exhibition, art historian Jack McGrath interprets the store as a gesture of recompense. Pat's gift shop, he writes, "leverages a son's cultural capital to drive the economic circuits from which his parent was systematically excluded." But the store also suggests a second, more fraught reading. Satterwhite's mid-priced editions honor his mother's creations while they anticipate and lean into the commodification of alterity that conditions the reception of her art and, in a different way, his own. "No matter what I do, I'm aware of metonymy and the codes associated with bodies, genders, races, mental illness, outsider, insider," Satterwhite has said. "I'm aware of what queerness really is. Queerness for race, queerness for everything." Despite superficial appearances, the queerness of Satterwhite's art isn't heterotopic or carnivalesque. Like that of its cyborg libertines, *Blessed Avenue's* power flows in a feedback loop between reification and subjectivity, alienation and jouissance.