



JULIA ROONEY
@SomeHighTide

Opening January 16th, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Comprising a series of two by two-inch paintings, Julia Rooney's exhibition **@SomeHighTide** queries our intimate relationships with our smartphones and their attendant social networks, with particular regard to the ways such platforms shape our habits of visual consumption and comprehension. By adopting the harsh dimensional constraints of Instagram and similar photo-sharing applications, Rooney acknowledges the ubiquity of the smartphone screen, while her decidedly traditional mediums of oil paint and linen disturbs their veneer of manufactured precision and homogeneity. As hand-wrought effigies of the Instagram photo-square, Rooney's paintings call attention to the inherent incongruities in superimposing a digital framework over the organic experiences of life and expression.

While the visual arts and society as a whole have had a long dalliance with social media, the marked social isolation and diffuse tragedy of the past year has greatly amplified the role it plays in our lives, with digital interaction and social interfacing gaining currency over concrete, "IRL" relationships. In the breakdown of physical collaboration and the disruption of conventional gallery protocol, digital surrogates have taken on an especially helpful and urgent position, becoming a bulwark against isolation while allowing artists to disseminate their work. However, in the face of Rooney's imperfect squares—their edges distended and stretched from the weight of thick, impasto paint—one becomes aware of the *lack* native to digital representation, the absence of the unique material presence that **@SomeHighTide** throws into sharp focus.

Referencing the mechanics of the digital cloud, each painting is named with the prefix "IMG", and their series-like nature places them further into the context of digital photo-sharing, like an individual's image morphing over consecutive "selfies". The nested "frames" in *IMG_0410*, *IMG_0411* and *IMG_0412* directly reference the geometry of screens, while circuit-like motifs proliferate in *IMG_0320* and *IMG_0323*, forming disembodied, painterly portraits of the imagined insides of social media. In *IMG_1224*, *IMG_0326*, and *IMG_0325*, grids of colored squares offer a rough-hewn, expressive take on pixelated screens, while the jagged angles and sharp hues *IMG_0703* and *IMG_0704* recall the artificial geometries of broken screens and digital glitches.

A variety of other abstract modes appear, incorporating organic, biomorphic, and technological forms in a striking fusion intensified by Rooney's heavily textured surfaces. In *IMG_0503*, *IMG_0504* and *IMG_0505*, these elements converge in a series of erotic abstractions evocative of a displaced and anonymous desire. A more objectified eroticism appears in *IMG_0402* or *IMG_0508*, wherein suggestions of body parts project the rawness of pornography or surreptitiously shared "nudes".

@SomeHighTides's engagement with digital media and social networks functions most immediately on a formal level. But equally important are the works' small physical scale, their visual signifier and their channeling of the *pathos* and extremes of human emotion, so often located on such platforms. Refracting these human traces through layers of abstraction, Rooney lends them an expressive materiality accentuated by their remarkably small scale. The eponymous *@SomeHighTide*, which depicts a QR code and stands apart at two by two-foot square, grounds the exhibition in the realm of social media, transforming the barcode device into a Mondrian-esque composition and providing a three-dimensional simulacra of the otherwise intangible code, further blurring the bounds between the physical and the digital.

Julia Rooney (b. 1989, New York, NY) is a visual artist and arts educator. Though rooted in painting, her studio work often bridges other disciplines, including writing and collaborative, community-based projects. Julia has an M.F.A. in Painting/Printmaking from Yale School of Art (2018), and a B.A. in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard College (2011). She has exhibited her work at spaces including Arts +Leisure, Kopeikin Gallery, The Painting Center, Zeit Contemporary Art, Diane Rosenstein Gallery and Booklyn, amidst others. She has received teaching and research grants/fellowships through LMCC's SU-CASA residency, the Yale Prison Education Initiative, an "Engaging Artists" Project Grant (MORE ART), an Artist Development Fellowship (The Office for the Arts, Harvard College) and a David Rockefeller International Experience Grant (Harvard College) for research in Italy. Residencies include The Joan Mitchell Center (upcoming, 2022), MASS MoCA (upcoming, 2021), DNA Residency (Provincetown, MA, 2020), Brush Creek Foundation for the Arts (Saratoga, WY, 2019), The League Residency at Vyt (Sparkill, NY, 2016), The Vermont Studio Center (Johnson, VT, 2014), and Engaging Artists (New York, NY, 2014).