

Anne Speier and Lucie Stahl

House Set Sun

April 8, 2023 May 27, 2023

Anne Speier
Crusty Sun, 2023
Oil and acrylic on canvas
4. x 26. in.

What Pipeline presents *House Set Sun*, a two-person exhibition of new works by Anne Speier and Lucie Stahl. This show marks the return of both artists to Detroit. Speier presented the solo show *Work Hive Balance* in 2014, and Stahl was part of *Holes*, 2013, with Tom Humphreys (What Pipeline's first show). As of April 2023, What Pipeline has been open for ten years.

"The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none."
Jean Baudrillard, *America* (1986)

The cinematic trope of the dystopian road trip can serve as a metaphor for the journey of self-reflection and the struggle to survive. It offers a commentary on contemporary society and its potential for collapse. One can begin by imagining you are cruising along the stereotypical American road. In Stahl's *Rear View* photographic compositions, it is dusk (or post-apocalypse or either way, *after*) and the long auburn rays of the sun refract in the dirt and defects of the windshield, obscuring the landscape. Hot-cool gradients of color are all that's visible beyond the tempered glass. In the rear-view mirror is a simultaneous display superimposed on the "forward-facing" image (think of the car chase scene in Hitchcock's *Psycho*: the "mirror" is a photograph crudely cut into a rounded-rectangle shape, pasted on top of the landscape seen from the "windshield," in actuality a rear-screen projection.) Future, present and past contained in a single image, safely viewed from within the car's metal cage. Stahl's work jumps between an acted-out fantasy (the heavy cliché of driving as a motor for personal freedom) and the element of reflection, both personal and societal, on this idea of individualism, infinite possibilities, and extreme selfishness associated with it all.

Speier's paintings perform as a series of decaying ads, their bold half-words and out-of-context products caught in peripheral glances from within the moving vehicle. Works like *Fridays* and *Mega* advertise businesses that have been reduced to two-syllable utterings and emptied of all merchandise. Overconsumption has involuntarily ended and all that is left is its rotted and dusty infrastructure. Speier envisions these ruins as three-dimensional impasto paintings—the shapes and structures becoming texture and experience itself. Meanwhile, two sculptural figures rendered in bent metal and locally-sourced furniture are stationary as the globe their heads resemble turns. In contrast to the ambiguity of the trip, they are rooted in place and clear about where they stand. While the environment is obscured, they are open and transparent, out of the cabinet as it were. Their shingled hats call back to structures of domesticity, wherein the cabinets reside. But now these structures, which were once bodies, are vacant and ready for cultish nomads to move in. Speier's paintings and sculptures portray the helpful if mildly annoying leftover avatars of commerce, as if Clippy's empty frame is reborn as the warm hearth awaiting the weary traveler.