

Artist Statement

Alessandra Sulpy

I am concurrently working on two connected series called *Store Facades* and *Non-Memories of the Deuce*. Both series express my interest in an anachronistic and concocted reality, and explore my perception of a zeitgeist I will never experience firsthand. I'm intrigued by certain banalities of a glorified past (fashion / commerce / sex industry), like decayed signage for a sex shop, or a dusty, potted fern in a department store. In general, I am more interested in the facades and remains than the contents of bygone stores.

In *Store Facades*, I'm reimagining small-town American business districts, focusing on the dust, decay and dereliction found in the suburban rust-belt towns where I've often lived. Many of these ex-downtowns are forgotten but charismatic by the residual evidence of their past; time has fused the new with the old with repurposed stores, mismatched signage, and chips of paint several layers thick. Individual stores in a block have been built, destroyed, and given new facades; now we are left with ghost towns of incongruous buildings and vacant lots. The past may be visible and tangible, yet it is inescapably gone.

With *Non-Memories of the Deuce* I'm exploring my interested in, though not nostalgic for, the seedy Times Square of the 70s and 80s. Because my earliest visitation occurred after the Disnification of the mid-90s, I've never experienced the grime and candid hedonism which made it infamous. As I began researching the 42nd's prior life, I was fascinated to learn that through sociological texts, memoirs, photography, and home movies, I could begin to understand the zeitgeist and spirit of the area. However, documentation of the mundane is rarely thorough - there are many gaps for me to fill in. Despite my research, I remain somewhat in the dark about the everyday aspects of peep shows, sex clubs, the goings-on inside theatres, what it felt like to walk down the street at night, etc. I'm approaching this series (named for one of TS's many nicknames, the Deuce) with this pseudo-knowledge of a skeezy past. I'm not worried about my (likely wrong) interpretations misrepresenting the past - this is the past as it has been represented to me, though the filter of an unavoidable ignorance.

With my paintings, I try to reintroduce vitality back into these places by introducing larger-than-life elements such as collage, fluorescence, and glowing signage. I allude to the superimposed elements of time through vintage ephemera, transient space, and layered paint. In reimagining the towns' decay into places of overstated glitz, I have added gold, fluorescence, and a flash of life back into the rack and ruin. My paintings will fade over time - my faux gold leaf will tarnish and my fluorescent paint will lose its luster. Time will make the work become the same unvisitable semblance as the places I portray.