

Anna Plesset, “A Still Life”



Courtesy Untitled
Installation view of Anna Plesset, "Still Life"

Time Out rating: ★★★★★☆

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In her impressive, intelligent debut, Anna Plesset pairs remarkable trompe l’oeil skills with an implied narrative about artistic obsessions. A series of drawings painstakingly reproduces photocopied pages including empty ones—from an exhibition catalog for the American Impressionist Lilla Cabot Perry (1848–1933). These lead into a large gallery, which seems to evoke the studio Plesset occupied during a 2011 residency in Giverny, France. Three large panels of painted Sheetrock appear to have been ripped from that space and hung here. Two of these perfectly duplicated, paint-smudged walls have photos of flowers taped or tacked to them; a third, surrealistically, bears only the faint shadows cast by wan light coming through a barred window wreathed in Virginia creeper, details we can deduce from a framed floor plan mounted nearby.

The artist suggests her discovery of Perry as an artistic, if not stylistic, foremother with three stacks of whitewashed wooden pieces resembling piles of ghostly books. Each has a single volume painted exactly to replicate an art-related tome—an American Art textbook, a volume about Monet at Giverny and the Perry catalog—as if only these subjects had come to life from the undifferentiated mass of art history. The tiniest of self-portraits of Plesset, reflected in the head of a shiny thumbtack, is modestly painted directly on the wall, near a framed photo of Perry at work (another small painting). Like Patricia Cronin’s watercolors resurrecting the sculptures of American expat Harriet Hosmer, Plesset diligently and counterintuitively revives a 19th-century woman artist in order to assert her own place in contemporary art.

—Joseph R. Wolin