ARTFORUM

Sara Greenberger Rafferty
RACHEL UFFNER GALLERY
170 Suffolk Street
October 26–December 21

The area on the outskirts of painting, photography, and graphic design is a rocky place to set up camp, but Sara Greenberger Rafferty does just that, deftly, with the multivalent works in her latest show. On view are largely ink-jet prints on acetate—the product of variations on a technique that the artist has explored since 2012. Upon certain pieces, the artist has poured paint and solvents, and then mounted the cracked, shiny results onto Plexiglas.

The elements of each artwork oscillate between order and entropy, as if salvaged from a postapocalyptic world and then preserved in their sorry states. Some of their Plexiglas surfaces are punctuated by a constellation of screws: violent moments of humor. Frequently, a single representational element—usually boldly graphic, often implying a human presence—appears amid an abstract environment of drips and swaths of paint. Untitled, 2014, for instance, features the “woman” Isotype (found on bathroom doors) floating about shades of mauve. Curtain, 2014, depicts a drooping microphone at waist height: Against a silk background that’s entirely white, the instrument could be a prop held by an invisible comedian acting out a dick joke.

There are both finish fetish echoes and Pictures generation concerns trickling through the show—a fascination with the materials that make up surface, and a tongue-in-cheek treatment of mass-market imagery. But in the end, the works are wholly contemporary: Rafferty carves new ground, taking a wry, sideways look at portrait-making traditions widely embraced to this day.

— Dawn Chan