

Press Release for

ADRIANA FARMIGA

**VERSUS**

LaMamaGallery

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What is a site? Is it material configurations that demarcate a site? Is it color, smell or temperature that demarcates a site? Is it the contour of the land and the sightlines it generates that demarcate a site? Is it the chronological scribbles of history upon its surfaces that demarcate a site? Or are the criteria of this demarcation left entirely up to the subjectivity of the viewer at the moment of their ascertainment? Therefore, is the semblance of criterion abandoned to the throws of subjectivity and the abstractions that ensue? This demarcation of site from viewer and its subjectivist qualities is an unsurprising product from a centuries old project to separate mind from body. Such binary, dualistic thinking is so engrained in the American psyche that it seems almost trite or irrelevant to even considerate its ramifications - or better put, for our task at hand - its reverberations.

For her second solo project with La Mama Gallery, Adriana Farmiga presents a range of media that articulates these very reverberations, and emphasizes their relevance. In ways minuscule and writ large, the works in "VERSUS" look uncomfortably close at these dualistic phenomena that engage the subjectivist site, and construct seemingly routine perceptions.

For Farmiga, all of the above mentioned quandaries find a nexus point in an unsuspecting location: the Accord Rural Cemetery in Accord, New York. Splitting her time between New York City and upstate New York, Farmiga's daily surroundings oscillate between the textural particularities of the built environment to the rural landscape's sylvan whole. The Accord Cemetery, a plot dating back to the Revolutionary War, is a site starkly emblematic of how these oscillations make themselves legible on various perceptual levels. Abstaining from a literal verisimilitude of the cemetery, Farmiga instead relies on the subjectivist site of interpretation. Pitted stone textures, engraved lettering and imagery smoothed-over by centuries of the tombstones' subjection to the elements, layers of muted lichens and gradations of molded spots that cling stoically to the tombstones' granular surface are all photographed within an intimately magnified range. What may appear to an unwitting passerby as commonplace markings that naturally come with the passage of time, in Farmiga's photographs become sites of their own magnitude - resembling expanding cosmos, the terra firma of Dante's Inferno, or encrusted

landscapes of Bruegel the Elder. In the end they do not function like photographic records, but rather as drawings that interpolate the space between the subjective mind and that of the actual cemetery.

Using the photographic drawings as waypoints, Farmiga then translates each photographic pattern onto the hand-painted surface of three-dimensional cubes. The cubes become analogous to blocks of cold marble, Cartesian labyrinths or even cubes of ice in a summer cocktail. The tombstones' markings, having gestated in the Accord landscape for more than two centuries, become rendered as abstracted galaxies, contours of microscopic transmutations, the instantaneousness of a drip, and the stillness of a forgotten cemetery. The cubes oscillate between painting and sculpture; simultaneously the images oscillate between photographs and drawings. Subsequently, it is the viewer that triangulates this imbroglio, oscillating his or her own thoughts from the gallery presentation back to the actual cemetery. As the title of the exhibition suggests, it is only through the viewer's engagement with this perceptual kaleidoscope that the nuances of the actual cemetery can be compared with the gallery representations of it, and that either can be known to exist at all. They exist, but only in opposition, with the viewer acting as the conductive synapse between them.

Synaptic synergy of oppositional elements is exemplified in a video work titled *Suite for Pong* - a collaborative project Farmiga made with her confidant, close friend and cousin, the acclaimed actress Vera Farmiga. Vera Farmiga, who is applauded in the film industry for her uncanny capacity towards nuance - employs her talents in *Suite for Pong* by nuancing nothing more than the gestures of her eyes, eyelids, brow and cheeks. With a jovial nod to the caricatured monologues of Bruce Nauman's detached head in his videos "Lip Sync" and "Anthro-Socio", dueling video monitors here frame only the other Farmiga's head and sit opposite from one another on a folding table. Her facial gestures mime the audible ricochets of a ping-pong ball in action. The twitches and tics of Vera's morphing expression become hypnotic with every volley of the invisible ball, creating premonitory urges in the viewer himself. This parodic expression is vaudevillian in spirit, but delicate and precise in its staging. As Vera's eyes and brow enact the idiosyncratic life of a ping-pong ball moving through space, the slightest of gestures reverberate out to command the full table. The ball is displaced from sight, but made present through the viewer's firm concentration on the dueling heads and their convulsing gestures.

This act of comparative displacement is graphically displayed in the suite of video titled *NYNY*. Consisting of ten monitors installed in a horizon line across the gallery's back wall, *NYNY* is a series of rolling credits that one typically sees at the end of a feature film. However, it is only the credits that play over and over, looped and blurred to illegible puddles of words. Often referred to as America's royalty, the Hollywood industry functions much like a caste system - relegating many talented, hardworking souls to simply a list of letters in the rolling credits, who rarely receive acknowledgement beyond this. Those whose diligence is normally sacrificed for headliner names here become the specters of language. In an egalitarian manner, celebrities and grips alike are dissolved into pure graphic design and blocks of text, where the ragged

text edges of the rolling credits become the subjectmatter over that of the listed subjects. They become pure moving form in a scroll-like manner, in which the whole cannot be ascertained in a single glance. Scrolling like the 1924 film symphonies of Viking Eggeling or the Rhythmus film studies of Hans Richter, they are enrapt in visual music. The comparative mechanism - the versus - acts as a catalyst between the personages of those listed (and the hierarchical baggage that accompanies them) and that of a pure rhythmic form.

As if through their linguistic silence, those that have long been silenced emerge as contending forms in an ongoing parade of oppositional forces, be it the hierarchical and democratic, the formal and the didactic, the personal and geographic, and that of the art historical and ideological. The preposition of all the works in *VERSUS* posits a dualistic structure to collapse their differences and behold the nuanced particularities between.