

CHAPTER NY

Wendy Vogel, *Willa Nasatir*. Artforum Critic's Pick, April 8, 2016

ARTFORUM

Willa Nasatir

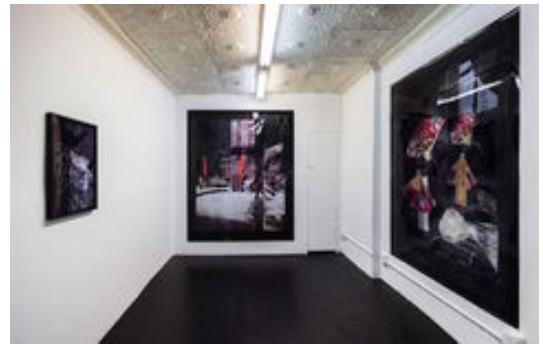
CHAPTER NY

127 Henry Street

March 20–April 24

Over the past two decades, photography, like film, has suffered an identity crisis in the face of proliferating digital technologies. The situation has led to a rise in self-reflexive practices—photography about darkroom processing, for instance. This impulse, however, is waning, and photography seems ripe for experiments with narrative that fly in the face of objectivity and indexicality. Willa Nasatir is a young artist who steers away from the strictness of medium-specificity and embraces psychological subject matter in her work.

Nasatir's four glossy C-prints feel as though they've come out of an earlier group of works about crime photography—a "neutral" genre that is, at its core, anything but. Nasatir's characters here are *things*, not bodies: a singed fan, bloodred candles, a pair of open shears, and a crown made of wire. They function as items plucked from some violent, satanic rite, symbols we project all manner of visceral horror upon. Nasatir photographs her objects in front of disorienting mirrors and subjects her shadowy prints to various manipulations, including burning. To add a sense of temporal disjuncture, she rephotographs her original prints through cobwebby skeins of Plexiglas and acrylic. Her moody aesthetic seems indebted to the theatrical, prop-centric performance art of the 1970s seen in the 2013–14 Whitney Museum exhibition "Rituals of Rented Island," featuring artists such as Jack Smith, Stuart Sherman, and Sylvia Palacios Whitman. The images also recall the quasi-Surrealistic scenarios of Jan Groover and, of course, Goth music videos of the 1980s and '90s.



View of "Willa Nasatir," 2016.

— Wendy Vogel

All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York, NY