

PRESS RELEASE

BORNA SAMMAK

*NO HANGING OUT*

15 October – 17 November 2016

Preview: 14 October, 6-9pm

Tanya Leighton is pleased to present *No Hanging Out*, an exhibition of new works by the American artist Borna Sammak. This is the artist's first exhibition in Germany.

Sammak's unique approach to mining contemporary culture – translated into video, sculpture and painting – often amounts to an overwhelming, nearly illegible accumulation of the stuff that surrounds us. Everyday life is an increasingly manic and junk-littered thing, accompanied by an incessant stream of everyone else's half-thoughts and fleeting photos. Sammak's works fold the fabric of life in on itself, revealing the absurdity of what surrounds us and refocusing our attention on the humorous, foreboding or revealing threads that can otherwise become lost in the white noise.

Four video loops – compiled by layering fragmented footage and digital drawing – are partially framed by baroque arrangements of flora that mirror the overabundance on screen. These 'Video Paintings', as the artist calls them, are built with technologically-aided gestures, drawn and mediated to the point they seem to paint themselves. The kitschy subjects hover in front of a mesh of abstracted clips lifted from YouTube, movie trailers and footage shot by the artist. As the videos undulate and loop, recognizable imagery becomes clear in what at first glance seems like a chaotic array of pure color and form.

The architecture of the gallery is likewise skewed and fractured in the exhibition's largest work, a gray painted sculpture that twists the gallery's two staircases into geometric abstraction. Like the prismatic architectural paintings of Lyonel Feininger made physical, or if MC Escher had a laptop and Google SketchUp at his disposal, these 'stairs' depicts real space made functionless. The sculpture is installed directly in front of the stairs that inspired it, and what would normally be ignored in a visit to the gallery becomes an essential point of reference.

Upstairs, in a painting consisting of hundreds of heat transferred t-shirt graphics on canvas, a litany of countercultures are represented: vaping enthusiasts, bikers, gun lovers and war hawks, armchair politicians and even nihilists. Their slogans of self-definition are reconfigured into something resembling a hyper-contemporary Dadaist poem. The messages in these graphics are familiar – we've seen them in cheap tourist shops or memes – but collapsed into one space, their sentiments combine into a wryly antithetical soup that co-opts meaning through recombination. What exactly could an Obamacare-loving, libertarian stoner look like?

If contemporary life feels cluttered, Sammak asks just how much overstimulation we are willing to slog through to find meaning that makes sense to us. In *No Hanging Out* the accumulation of visual and textual information illustrates the elusive and unfixed meaning of much of what we interact with daily. As the show's title suggests, we are all too used to the fleeting, itinerant motion of contemporary life. Sammak's works, in their resolute mania, compel their audience to slow down and look with renewed focus.