

Being There Again and Again: Joy Garnett at Platform Gallery

—Erin Langner, Seattle contributor - October 29, 2014



Most of the time, as soon as I am awake, I begin scrolling through the layers of news on my phone, while still laying in bed. The ISIS updates, the new Ebola cases, and the pithy comments on the latest art world drama barely stick during this first round of skimming headlines and images, my awareness of the day coming into focus as I work through the tweets and the “Likes.” This activity would seem to have little to do with the meticulous, studied ways we usually interact with paintings. However, Brooklyn artist [Joy Garnett](#) proves otherwise, as evidenced by her new show, *Being There*, which opened at Seattle’s [Platform Gallery](#) last week. Pulling images from the media—including photographs of conflicts in the Middle East and screen grabs of leaked US military videos—Garnett’s new paintings bleed and blur their scenes into places that seem as familiar as the widely-disseminated photographs they reference. However, the artist also brings out the distant, fleeting way we absorb these images, turning their subjects into things we can never fully know.

When confronted with Garnett’s more direct *Fire Breathers*, however, little room is left for interpretation. The brash, orange cloud that engulfs the scene stems from an ambiguous set of antagonists, who stand with their weapons raised. This bright, spotlight of anonymous violence, pinned against dark patches of shadows, flashes back to the *mise-en-scène* of Francisco Goya’s iconic, *The Third of May, 1808*, a memorial to the Spanish citizens massacred during the French occupation. The sense of politically motivated tragedy common to both paintings, hundreds of years apart, implies the timeless tale of history’s repetition. *Being There* imparts the sense that its images—in both their painted and photographed forms—command a longer, harder look, if we are to ever to break this cycle of returning to the same postures, and the same poses, over and over again.

Being There is on view at [Platform Gallery](#) in Seattle, WA through November 29. Joy Garnett is a multidisciplinary artist and writer. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally, at venues that include the Milwaukee Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Craft Portland, MoMA PS1, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Her work is also included in the permanent collections of the National Academy of Sciences, Philip Morris, and The West Collection. She has received grants from Anonymous Was a Woman, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and The Chipstone Foundation.

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