

BEVERLY FISHMAN: PAIN MANAGEMENT
DECEMBER 10 - JANUARY 28
LIBRARY STREET COLLECTIVE
DETROIT

PAIN MANAGEMENT is the latest presentation of research by Detroit-based artist Beverly Fishman into the science, imagery, and advertising of the pharmaceutical industry, an investigation that has been evolving for more than 20 years. Fishman is fascinated by our tendency as a culture to aestheticize the symptoms of disease as well the substances that cure it. From painkillers to antidepressants, pills for erectile dysfunction, obsession, anxiety, weight loss, and mood disorders, modern day medications have become the solution to every ill. The promise of cheap, quick, and easy fixes by big drug companies has elevated the image of the pill to that of a miracle cure-all. Meanwhile, over 2 million Americans are fighting addictions to pharmaceuticals derived from opium, the chemical cousin of heroin: OxyContin, Vicodin, and Percocet, to name only a few. It is in recognition of this tremendous issue that Fishman appropriates the iconography of pills and tablets, considering them from every angle in ***PAIN MANAGEMENT***. She supersedes their forms, alters their coloring, and gives them a glossy finish in order to demonstrate the potency of medicine and the advertising industry that supports it, as well as the compulsion and control that pharmaceuticals impose on the lives of their dependents.



Beverly Fishman, *Untitled (Opioid Addiction)*, 2016, Urethane paint on wood, 36 x 36 x 2.25 in.

Our eagerness to solve all our problems with a prescription points to a global dilemma that resonates on an ethical, social and emotional level. When we consider medications designed to treat personality disorders, we are left wondering if Big Pharma hasn't fabricated this global identity crisis in order to market themselves as the only solution. When considering the parts of ourselves that we most dislike, is it really possible to reprogram our bodies and minds for social and personal acceptance through the simple ingestion of a pill? It's a loaded question, and if the answer is "yes," then what does this mean for the future of advanced chemical science? Fishman's pills and tablets convey a visual vocabulary that is both modern and postmodern, simultaneously linking them to the era of direct consumer marketing and to a vision of what is still to come. The artist here scrutinizes the resemblances between candy, prescription medications, and even vitamins - just ask a child to point out which is which. And by exploring color and form throughout, she recognizes the power of abstract qualities to function like placebos, affecting the viewer both mentally and physically.



Beverly Fishman, *Untitled (Anxiety)*, 2016, Urethane paint on wood, 39 x 126 x 2 inches.

Fishman, a celebrated figure at the prestigious Cranbrook Academy of Art, studied color theory at Yale and has explored its infinite implications alongside her decades of research into Big Pharma. Color and surface are calibrated for maximum effect. The artist uses hue and texture to destabilize the viewer, with bright contrasts and slight variations that cause optic confusion and palpable disorientation. She paints the edges of her works in bright fluorescents that leave a hovering glow on the gallery wall, a symptomatic and circumstantial buzz that radiates from each specimen. It is by transforming the iconography of medicine and translating it onto the gallery walls that Fishman emphasizes the importance of the pharmaceutical industry in our lives, forcing us to consider our own attraction, revulsion, and dependence.