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KQED Arts

Falling Under the Spell at CAPITAL

By Sarah Hotchkiss



About a year ago, longtime friends and art-world denizens Bob Linder and Jonathan Runcio began DJing nights at the Mission’s Rock Bar. The DJ sets spawned Xerox-themed bar nights, and the flurries of photocopies led to schemes. “What if we had a permanent gathering space?” they wondered. They searched. In the expected narrative arc, costs were prohibitive across San Francisco. That is, until they landed in Chinatown, touring a chain of “funky spaces” before chancing upon a storefront at 716 Sacramento Street.

CAPITAL, San Francisco’s newest gallery, is barely larger than 100 square feet. Despite the economy’s efforts to push the arts and artists out of the city, some people seem more determined than ever to carve out project spaces. [Et al.](#), just one block away, is a hidden fluorescent-lit basement of consistently solid programming — one of those deliciously funky Chinatown spots, behind and downstairs from a Kearny Street dry cleaners. The addition of CAPITAL to the neighborhood created a veritable gallery crawl on Friday, Jan. 23, with openings at both locations.

Touch the Spindle, CAPITAL’s inaugural show, features exactly five artworks by three artists, delicately positioned to make the most of the space. Like *Sleeping Beauty* and her fated spindle, we are invited to fall under the spell of objects on view. Referencing fairy tales and their opposite — the cold reality of non-magical death — Cynthia Daignault, Virginia Overton, and Will Rogan’s works become elements of a small, enchanting narrative.



Street view of *Touch the Spindle*. (Courtesy of CAPITAL)

Sleeping Beauty's spindle, though disastrous, sets her story in motion, bringing about both a hundred-year slumber and a princely kiss. Daignault's two oil paintings (titled *Mirror* and *Mirror*) form two halves of another notorious object from fairy tales of yore. Reflecting nothing, they face Sacramento Street dead on, opaquely refusing to answer any magical queries.

Virginia Overton's site-specific contribution casts the entire space in a different light, literally. Her Duratrans prints wrap around the gallery's fluorescent bulbs, washing the room in a green-blue shade. The enlarged images are scans of Overton's own hair. Curling around the lim tubes, Rapunzel does Dan Flavin. The effect is fantastic

Bringing the installation to a close, local artist Will Rogan's *Before* is two silver gelatin prints of a hearse at a distance. In the first photograph, the car sits in a gray field. In the second, the car is replaced by a puff of white smoke, partway through a disappearing act. *Daily* hangs in the opposite corner, a graceful mobile fashioned from wood, string and "hearse parts." Mindful of mortality, Rogan provides the hearse with a second chapter, an afterlife, or a miraculous awakening.



Virginia Overton, *Untitled*, 2015. (Courtesy of CAPITAL)

I haven't yet mentioned the most noteworthy feature of the gallery: its street-facing window, a massive floor-to-ceiling expanse of glass that is one entire wall of CAPITAL. At the opening of *Touch the Spindle*, the exhibition was as much outside as it was inside. With Overton's underwater lighting, the gallery-goers indoors appeared as if in a fishbowl, conversing casually, pondering seriously, and gesticulating in silence, oblivious to the crowd gathered on the sidewalk. Their actions were genuine, but it was hard for me to shake the feeling of watching a staged version of a gallery opening, a play in a storefront.

Given the gallery's slim hours (Saturdays, 12-5pm), the window is a huge boon to the space. For an up-close and personal viewing experience, inside will always win, but the entirety of CAPITAL is visible from the slanted street. The next show, opening in March, is a solo exhibition by Los Angeles-based (and former Bay Area resident) Rainen Knecht. And after that? "Nothing nailed down," writes Runcio, mentioning the possibility of record releases, film screenings, performances, and limited editions.

CAPITAL proves once again it's not size that matters, but what you do with it.



Will Rogan, *Daily*, 2015; Courtesy of CAPITAL