XX Openings

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XX Openings represents my dual sculpture and photography practice. The title comes from a 70’s domestic frame, with 20 openings of varying sizes for family pictures. Half of the slots were filled with stock pictures of smiling family scenes, while the others just had measurements for the openings themselves. The object struck me as alienating, and oppressive. I didn’t see any scene within those openings I felt connected to.

The frame came to symbolize varying perspectives, ways of seeing, and ways of being. As my sculpture practice has weighed more heavily on my work as a photographer, I feel tensions in making that didn’t exist before. The works in XX Openings all fall within different openings, different approaches. Some are about abstraction, some translation, some connections, some textures, while others are directly engaged with gayness and identity. I feel a pull towards making personal work, work that engages with politics, but I also have just as much to say formally. This show and project represents these varying approaches, and the ways they inform and avoid one another.

The source of the Roman numeral in the title is a 70’s S&M gay porn magazine. There’s a centerfold in which two men and suspended from a ceiling by chains and leather straps. The two pictures, one a grey-blue tone and the other a saturated orange tone, are visually different, both in style and quality. Yet, the forms present, the X’s formed by the model’s bodies, are consistent.

I felt a connection with this image, and inverted it upside down, so the men are floating in space. Gay identity and sexuality has evolved so significantly since that era, and looking back at media from the time I feel at once distant and close; a personal connection and an analytical disconnect. These two perspectives, one focused on the formal, the other on the internal, mirror my works in XX Openings. My formal approach to this same picture was to create two 7-foot tall wooden X’s. Each made of stepping boards, used to construct staircases. The planks are joined together with two slits, visually seamless, and without any hardware. The integration of these two forms, into one structure, at once filled with the implication of movement, but grounded by its weight, reflect the underlying motivation for XX Openings.

Jackson Siegal, 2018