



Laura Dinner & Richard Rooney Window Gallery

The Window Gallery is sponsored by Laura Dinner & Richard Rooney

Speaker: Sequoia Miller, Chief Curator and Deputy Director

Audio Tour Transcript

Hi. My name is Habiba El-Sayed. The following work is from a series called *Fragile Plane*. What is lost when we experience someone through a screen? This is a question that is ever-pressing during isolation. Our screens—a physical and empathetical barrier. There is a two dimensionality, a flattening that occurs. We scroll past, experience each other, but only for a moment. The bombardment of information, a sense of global grief that is always accessible, inescapable. We cannot turn away, yet we cannot entirely feel.

During the pandemic, many of us have experienced a sense of burnout that can make it hard to connect to our loved ones, to our communities, and even to ourselves. *Fragile Plan* explores the thin layer that connects us, but also separates us from the world. It is the glass of our screens, but also the edges of the psyche. The ephemeral, blurry planes of dissociation and memory.

Paralleling Egyptian creation mythology with our experience during quarantine, I considered the way humans experience and process grief, our attitudes toward crying as it pertains to gender and race, and the way we have always found hope and renewal during trying times. It is through isolation that we have learned to adapt, created shifts in society, changed history.

After being reunited with his lost children, the god Atum, cried tears of joy that became the waters from which humanity rose. Crying, a remarkably human display of emotion, is what birthed us into existence, according to the ancients. Perhaps it's because we come into this world crying, seeking connection right from the start.

Historical references of Egyptian water vessels have been flattened, reduced to planes that now hold raw clay. It is emotion, forced behind a screen. It is oozing out the sides, cracking away to

reveal our own reflection. It is the network. The desire for tangibility—to touch and to be touched. Wet, primordial, changing, and multiple. The material is the zeitgeist.

Artwork credits:

Habiba El-Sayed

Narcissus, 2021

Plexiglas, unfired porcelain, steel

Habiba El-Sayed

Narcissus, 2021

Plexiglas, unfired porcelain, steel, ceramic

Habiba El-Sayed

Zoom Fatigue (accept these your cool waters), 2021

Plexiglas, acrylic mirror, acrylic rod, unfired porcelain

Habiba El-Sayed

Abrasive (Stain Series), 2018

Ceramic, India ink, ritual sanding

Habiba El-Sayed

Abrasive II (Stain Series), 2018

Ceramic, India ink, ritual sanding