

ARTFORUM



View of “Whitney Clafin: Have You Ever Met a Mime So Real?,” 2016.

LOS ANGELES

Whitney Clafin

RICHARD TELLES FINE ART

7380 Beverly Blvd

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Whitney Clafin’s storefront feels more like an eye exam than a department-store display. Where artists such as Andy Warhol interwove art and commerce by putting their paintings in shop windows, Clafin renders the small, collaged objects she places behind glass almost inscrutable. Instead of jettisoning spectacle, though, she suggests it with bright lights that turn the window into a luminous frame, lit 24/7 and visible to passersby. That bright glow stands in tension with the artworks within, where three silver trays hang in a row, each adorned with cut-up typewritten text evoking zine aesthetics, for the series “Have You Ever Met a Mime So Real?,” 2016. Beneath each tray—faux silver and aspiring to sophistication, yet closer to the high-school cafeteria than Tiffany’s—is a plastic comb, one pointing in a different direction from the other two. As in modernist poetry, the scraps of words nearly cohere into meaning but not quite. A further obstacle: The trays and combs are far enough away from the window and the font of the text is small enough that the poems pasted upon them are impossible to read without squinting. The fruits of this painfully close looking are fragments such as “the hair on his arms voted onto the current culture phenomenon.”

Mundane objects are presented as votive relics, and the three aligned platters suggest a religious triptych. They serve not just as grounds for the textual content but also as mirrors that catch the viewer in the act of reading, or the headlights of passing cars. These cast-asides produce an experience of intimacy as one tries to decipher their mysterious messages; the middle tray reads, “everything is normal. / but it’s not.” Words tumble down the metallic surface in a column, continuing: “I wanted someone / someone, really.”

— *Nicholas Chittenden Morgan*