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MODERN PAINTERS

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PHILADELPHIA

Ellen Harvey

KNOWN FOR HER urban interventions and institutional critique, Harvey has been exhibiting internationally for more than 10 years, with major projects presented at Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 2005; the 2008 Whitney Biennial, in New York; Miami's Bass Museum of Art in 2010; and the inaugural show at the Turner Contemporary, in Margate, U.K., in 2011. Harvey's contribution to the latter exhibition, in which she referred to J.M.W. Turner's relationship to Margate, a once-lively seaside resort, was reconfigured this past summer for "Arcade/Arcadia," her second solo show at the gallery.

Inspired by a visit to Margate and her discovery of a pair of 19th-century paintings by George Jones that show Turner's luminous paintings hung from floor to ceiling at his London gallery, Harvey created an installation consisting of 34 reflective pictures that depict a 360-degree view of the town, presented in a partial replica of the salon-style presentation of Turner's works. Inside the structure Harvey's images capture a skyline of clouds, buildings, and sea incised by hand on the reverse of mirrored Plexiglas and backlit by LED lighting. While outside the construction six-foot-high letters, lined with old-fashioned light fixtures and incandescent bulbs, shout the word Arcadia.

Arcadia alludes to the town in the time of Turner, but the arcade-style lettering, modeled after historical signage from Margate's defunct Dreamland amusement park, makes reference to the commercialization of the formerly idyllic spot that eventually led to its decline. Harvey scratched out realistic representations of every building on the current waterfront—ranging from the old lighthouse and Clock Tower to a Domino's Pizza joint and a Chinese restaurant. The



Ellen Harvey, Installation view of "Arcade/Arcadia," 2012.

newest addition is the Turner Contemporary, designed by the architect David Chipperfield and built on the site of a former boarding-house where the 19th-century master often stayed.

Harvey displayed the scenes—which have the look of old engravings, a popular medium in Turner's day, used to reproduce his rarely seen paintings—with the horizon line at the center of the walls of an open, wooden structure that mimics Turner's London gallery in a three-quarters scale. Above and below the line of buildings are images of the sky and sea—simulating Turner's style of painting. The spectator stands at the center of Margate today, being simultaneously cast back into the commercial domain of Turner's art. Mixing reverence for the two subjects with ironic observations, Harvey constructs a realm of enchantment—one that's as much about the viewer's experience of it as it is about a distant time and place. —Paul Laster



Ellen Harvey, Installation view of "Arcade/Arcadia," 2012.