



Sarah Gamble
Creeping Jenny no. 6, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in (27.9 × 35.6 cm)
SGAM 169

Touching from a Distance

September 17–November 7, 2020

Kate Abercrombie	Tristin Lowe
Queen Nancy Bell	Mark Mahosky
Anthony Campuzano	Julian Martin
The Dufala Brothers	Dan Murphy
Joy Feasley	Jayson Musson
Sarah Gamble	Eamon Ore-Giron
Knicoma Frederick	Kambel Smith
Jesse Harrod	Becky Suss
Isaac Tin Wei Lin	Paul Swenbeck
Jennifer Levonian	

While it may be difficult to find something to celebrate in the midst of a pandemic, a slide towards totalitarianism, and increased racial division, Fleisher/Ollman managed to move its operation and open a new gallery during this unprecedented time. We wish to acknowledge our reopening at 915 Spring Garden Street with a gathering of art works made by artists that have long histories with the gallery (in some cases, decades) as well those that we have shown relatively recently. *Touching from a Distance* includes artists first presented at three of the gallery's previous locations in Philadelphia: 17th Street, Walnut Street, and Arch Street. September 2020 also marks an additional celebratory occasion: the 50th anniversary of John Ollman's tenure at the gallery.

"Touching from a Distance," a lyric from Joy Division's 1979 single *Transmission*, evokes the pathos of our current condition where we long for contact but ultimately must remain more or less alone in order to save ourselves and others. In the art world under our present circumstances, the group exhibition can be rationalized as a kind of pretend social gathering, perfect for our times. If we agree to the idea that artworks are surrogates for the people who make them, these 20 artists can gather, mingle, converse, and enjoy one another's company unfettered by the mandates of PPE and

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social distance to which we and our visitors will be obliged for the unforeseeable future.

In September 1970, John Ollman began as director of what was then Janet Fleisher Gallery, sharing an enthusiasm with Janet for art outside the mainstream. Ollman expanded the gallery's program to include folk, African, Oceanic, pre-Columbian, Native American, and self-taught art, the latter for which the gallery became especially renowned. Since 1997, when Ollman became the gallery's sole owner, we have endeavored to re-contextualize the self-taught, showcasing this work alongside our contemporary program, which features both Philadelphia-based artists and those from further afield. In recent years, we have made efforts to broaden the view of what self-taught art might mean in a contemporary context by showcasing art from disability and mental health studio programs. Recognizing the power of the cross-fertilization of art made by trained and self-taught artists, and the leveling of distinctions and hierarchies when art is placed in dialogue, Ollman anticipated current conceptions of the self-taught by decades. *Touching from a Distance* continues this exercise inspired by John Ollman, and is a fitting exhibition to mark the twin milestones of a new iteration of the gallery and Ollman's long-term contribution to the field of art.

A percentage of the gallery's profits will be donated to the Youth Art and Self-Empowerment Project, an arts outreach program in Philadelphia for, and by, incarcerated youth who are being tried as adults.

Visiting the gallery during the pandemic

While there will be no formal reception due to the pandemic, we invite guests to make reservations to visit the exhibition on Eventbrite, which will allow us to limit the number of visitors at any one time.

Visitors must:

Wear a mask that fully covers both the mouth and nose upon entry to the building (required by the building's management), as well as inside the gallery.

Provide contact information via Eventbrite, or upon entry to the gallery, to allow for contact tracing in the event that a visitor or staff member contracts COVID-19.

Maintain at least 6 feet of distance from staff and other visitors.

Out of respect for our staff and the building's tenants, we request that visitors who have experienced any COVID-19 symptoms, or had close contact with someone exhibiting symptoms, refrain from visiting until symptoms have not been present for 14 days.

If you're having trouble with Eventbrite, you may email the gallery to make an appointment, which we will confirm if the time requested is available.