

Arising from an interest in the physical exertion and self-denial (a form of asceticism) apparent in the image cultivated through the body of the Victoria's Secret model, *Victoria Saint* is a long-term performative experiment which uses observational drawing to compare traditions of religious icon painting and commercial advertisements. Both efforts involve extensive modification of the body to produce an object of worshipful regard: the ad and the icon. Now, one is hard pressed to determine the venerated end of such objects. If not religious devices, then what? If not portals to a purchaser's headspace, then what?

In *Victoria Saint*, I physically inhabit commercial space, appearing self-consciously as a woman artist in the act of drawing. This is a spectacle of exaltation, not dissimilar from the posting of model workout videos to YouTube. It is a situation in which process is visible, treated with importance and reverence. I consider the drawing process a physical prostration, analogous to the model's athletic efforts, undertaken in service of a transcendent image. Both activities are essentially devotional in the sense that they require attention and physical effort, a sacrifice of personal time that may be given to other activities. The question, in this case, is what transcendence the drawing practice serves. Whereas Victoria Secret's object is the consistent sale of underwear--an end so obvious it may as well be innocent--the individual's body in such small motions makes less sense in consumer culture. Why push--often painfully--for something that will turn no profit? A final comparison of images produced by the artist's process versus that of the advertiser will illuminate this discussion.

Seated in front of the Victoria's Secret store at NorthPark Mall in Dallas, a location I visited two to three times weekly between January and March 2019, I practiced rigorous, unbroken observation as I drew for extended periods in an attempt to engage time and space using a deliberately slowed physicality. By altering the rate at which one normally moves and looks in commercial space, I became more aware of the mall as a void of consumption. Essentially a hollowed maze of objects, the patient gaze captures no movement. Only things reveal themselves to the eye and hand that refuse to move at the approved rate of

contemporary consumer activity. The artist is alone in an alternate zone of slow movement, forever behind, an expert of the minute and the passing rather than of the explicit or of the climactic.

Furthermore, I considered the act of image production by the intended consumer. What happens when the consumer extrudes in a space where she is meant to be filled? What happens when her attention results not in a series of purchases, but in patient contemplation, the production of her own image? Here, a new consumer dialectic arises, in which an alternate, productive response to the call to buy is possible.

My exploration of consciousness has led me to limit action in my painting and performance practice. I do this to test the effects of small and large movements, marks and gestures. I find that consciousness is most powerful at the brink of expression or externalization—in the moment of receptivity, restraint, and pause. It is in this moment that the bounds of reality are tested, rather than at the moment of extreme exertion. I cultivate a familiarity with this mental area—the realm of receptivity—through a contemplative action of painting. Eventually, small, private actions translate to broader public engagements in the form of performative experiments such as *Victoria Saint*.