

ARTFORUM

New York

Meredith James

MARC JANCOU CONTEMPORARY

Great Jones Alley

April 17–May 22

Meredith James's first solo exhibition at this gallery is titled "Espalier," which nicely captures the artist's elaborate conceptual frameworks and her work's natural charm. This rare combination might account for why James's material investigations—which often consist of hermetic, media-based puzzles—seem so oxygenated. To make *Six* (all works 2010), for instance, James filmed the eponymous subway train through a small hole, zooming through this aperture as the train ground its way through Grand Central Station, and then refilmed the footage while it was projected onto a TV set that simultaneously played the film. The result is rear-projected here within a black box that resembles a view camera or a distended monitor, thus completing the concertina folds of perspectives, mechanisms, and surfaces that James expertly compresses and expands.

Whereas *Six* accumulates apparatuses, a series of "Cuckoos" rigged to sluggish metronomes are presented without their clock armature, function, or punctual song (instead the metronome arms unmelodiously open and shut their beaks and wings). Watching the old birds, all worse for the wear but endowed with a tetchy kernel of personality, is like being backstage at Disneyland. James has walled off most of the gallery's back room, concealing it but for a short tunnel laboriously constructed out of reclaimed windows, and a diorama titled *A stand of roadside cholla against which small birds had been driven by the storm and there impaled*, which imparts all the surprise renounced by the retired cuckoos: Through a hole in the center of a desert scene, one glimpses cacti and an uncanny blackbird that—startlingly—stares back. The title is a description from Cormac McCarthy's 1992 novel *All the Pretty Horses*; however, considering the telescoping perspectives and deceptive simplicity of James's show, another line comes to mind: "When the blackbird flew out of sight / It marked the edge / Of one of many circles."



Meredith James, *A stand of roadside cholla against which small birds had been driven by the storm and there impaled*, 2010, lamp, lightbulb, grow light, wood, sand, cacti, magic sculpt, crow wings, crow skull, plastic, acrylic paint, glass, oil paint, rocks, mirror, dimensions variable. Installation view.

— Joanna Fiduccia