

V MAGAZINE

MIRROR CELLS: MAGGIE LEE AT THE WHITNEY

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The artist's film *Mommy*, which will be shown at two screenings, is a cinematic revelation in nostalgia

The lifestyle of kids in New York city always hits a wall. Whether in Harmony Korine's film *Kids* or Joan Didion's book *Goodbye to All That*, there is a moment—to be expected or out of the blue—that makes the youthful glow and appeal of the metropolis seem a little more dull. It's a story that has built up the mythology of this city and made it the place where everything is okay until it's really, really not. Artist Maggie Lee's incredibly clever and nuanced film, *Mommy*, delivers a fresh take on the narrative.

Told through a collage of found graphics and footage, home movies, and first person shooting of normal nights out in Brooklyn, *Mommy* presents Maggie Lee's brief exit from the city after her mother's unexpected death and her reckoning with the life that she left behind. The story is told in chapters, and each one introduces a new visual element that will be familiar to anyone who grew up in the '90s and 2000s. By referencing the aesthetics of everything from *Sailor Moon* to the high strobe style of Gaspar Noe's *Enter The Void*, *Mommy* not only chronicles an incredibly personal story but also a generational narrative arc. It presents a collection of memories, which switch between being personal and being overarching of a public consciousness.

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Since the release of her film in November 2015, Maggie Lee has continued exploring the themes presented in *Mommy*. Her most recent show at Real Fine Arts, *Fufu's Dreamhouse*, was an analogue equivalent of *Mommy*. Fish tanks, hamster wheels and other pet-sized objects collected from her mother's house became doll houses for a collection of dolls. The miniatures in this case do not embody fantasies of domestic bliss, with kitchen islands and pools, but are chronicles of teenage personas complete with old favorites like *Keroppi* and *Batz Maru*.

Lee is currently part of a three person show at The Whitney, titled *Mirror Cells*. In conjunction with the exhibition, *Mommy* will be screened twice, on May 21 and June 4. It is also available for online rental on Vimeo.