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L'OFFICIEL ART

## Artist Maggie Lee Celebrates the Glitter of Youth in New NYC Installation for Nordstrom

The multimedia creator speaks to L'OFFICIEL about designing her free-spirited space for Nordstrom and the Whitney Museum.

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Photos: Connie Zhou

Layers of youthful nostalgia create the feel of “Daytime Sparkles”—artist Maggie Lee’s new installation for Nordstrom NYC and the Whitney Museum’s Emerging Artist Program. Calling on her teenage experience of time spent in malls and department stores, the artist’s project is an homage to the young love of “hanging out” in public spaces—whether to shop or just to be in the space itself. Just opened, this “secret meeting space” for people to spend time in mimics a retail vibe but stays true to its artistic roots. “I was thinking about how teenagers like to loiter for long periods of time in places just because they can, and for no good reason at all,” Lee tells *L’OFFICIEL*. “To be mischievous...that’s part of the attitude.”

Lee’s environment perfectly captures the playful irreverence of youth with an adept collage of store elements inside the casual hang-out. Artfully redesigned sofas, pop music, and light projections unfold into its complete ambience. Alongside bright “blings” wall shapes and store merchandise, analog TVs loop commercials for Byredo Suede, Diptyque candles, and background city imagery. While “No Loitering” signs hung tilted, sideways, and upside down provide a cheeky effect for the dedicated lounge space.



The hideout intends to be an unexpected discovery, a world unto itself that is happened upon by store-goers. Each creative detail has been carefully considered for its meaning to the experience. "The idea of activating a public space, that is not intended for its purpose is exciting to me," says Lee. "I like to be ambiguous. [The space] speaks in cryptic codes, it's for the people to observe, to witness it, and to make things your own."

Personal experience and memory have often been a part of the artist's work and storytelling. Born in Westfield, New Jersey, Lee's early arts interest began with zines and the alternative/underground music scene. She then studied at Pratt Institute before developing her multimedia practice into an international art presence. Her evocative film *Mommy* gained attention as a coming-of-age story with stream of consciousness form—infused with home videos, diary entries, and drawings—that was screened at the Whitney Museum of Art in 2016. Lee's intuitive, experimental approach has continued to guide her artwork since, including doll-filled tanks as terrariums; surreal, moody light installations; and wholly imagined, fictional worlds as creative fodder.

Here, in her latest project, the artist describes the spirit of "Daytime Sparkles" as a place for everyone and a moment of solace and respite in fun energy, to celebrate the wonder and the gift of free-spirited abandon. In Lee's view, the space is meant, "to reclaim and be part of something. To see something special in the daytime—a sparkle is irregular. And to loiter just because you can." And the artwork offers just that—the gift of the unexpected and a joyful, lightheaded feeling to experience—simply because you can.