

ARTFORUM

29 September 2016
by Meg Whiteford

LOS ANGELES

Stanya Kahn
THE PIT
918 Ruberta Avenue
September 18–October 30



The Earth is round: a hopeful curve, a just-around-the-corner, light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel, what-goes-around-comes-around sort of shape. Loops, circles, and patterns attempt to assuage the panic of “Is this all there is? This rude heap? This heavy lump?” After too many turns, however, the wheel becomes a self-fulfilling and nauseating prophecy. The rub then is the anticipation of corners. When you’re hanging upside down, the randomness of Earth outstretched indefinitely begins to feel more comfortable.

The humor and immediacy of Stanya Kahn’s exhibition “Heatstroke” mimics this absurdity, the impossibility of making sense of the primordial puree. Funny points out the coiled mayhem and stretches it to voltage, as in the ink drawing *In All the Wrong Places*, 2016. Funny electrifies the feedback loops out of complacency in the canvas *Keep It Together*, 2014. Paintings such as *Kill Me If I Ever Get That Hot*, 2015, or *Heatstroke*, 2016, are stopgaps from cycles of anxiety or the volley between one political snake to the next.

If satire is as mathematical as Lenny Bruce states—tragedy plus time—then it is through progression, a piling upon or digging deep, an equation of “yes, and,” that the nightmare Ferris wheel ride can rest. The work in Kahn’s show, appropriately located in a gallery called the Pit, is very much at home in the yawn and void, a place from which we can only look up and out.