



**FOR MODERN AND POSTMODERN** artists alike, the street has served as muse, stimulus, and stage for aesthetic production. From Baudelarian *flânerie* to Situationist *dérives* to activist demonstrations, the street figures prominently as the site for chance encounters and political revolution. It is, in one sense, a heterotopic site, where all actions are seemingly permitted (or at least attempted), and simultaneously dystopic, where social injustices are exposed and raw. Jayce Salloum continues this tradition of exploring the terrain of the metropolis with a photo-installation bearing multiple titles — *NEUTRAL/ BRAKES/STEERING*, *22OZ. THUNDERBOLT*, and so on<sup>1</sup> — phrases drawn from the signs, posters, and product packaging appearing in storefront displays. As much as the photographs here form an archive of the street, arise from the street, and are about the street, they constitute a subjective, almost autobiographical, record of the vernacular of the street — an optical diary of numerous journeys and urban ambiances.

## City of (Broken) Glass

With the preponderance of storefronts, display cases, transparent façades, and show windows in Salloum's photographs, one could say that glass, as an affective aspect of the built environment, is a consistent *punctum* of Salloum's peregrinations with a camera. The installation thus might be characterized as an investigation into the ideology of glass. The ubiquity of glass in the urban landscape earns it an overlooked status.<sup>2</sup> In the realm of merchandising, glass is the material that revolutionized the display of commodities and goods, yet it is often considered merely a means to display; its function, after all, is to be seen through. What is little considered is the agency of glass, what Margaret Morse calls "vitreous transformation," i.e., its ability to alter, fetishize, and animate whatever lies beyond it.<sup>3</sup> And in regard to window displays, "the plate glass of the storefront," writes Stuart Culver, "invests commodities with a certain supplemental value that ... can't be purchased or consumed."<sup>4</sup> Salloum's photographs, in effect, catalogue the psychic effects of glass, offering a compelling inventory of how objects can be scenified, orchestrated to evoke desire, summoned to infiltrate our interior lives.

**JAYCE SALLOUM, HOME MADE CHOCOLATE, installation view, Argos, Brussels, 1999, dimensions variable.**

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IMAGE AND INSCRIPTION

<sup>1</sup> For its installation at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, the title was the former; for the version at the Contemporary Art Gallery, it was the latter. The titles are taken from language found in the installation's photographs, and change with each exhibition venue.

<sup>2</sup> Only when glass is smoked, darkened, or mirrored, for example in limousines or business offices, does attention accrue to it as a signal of the opposite — exclusivity.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Morse, "An Ontology of Everyday Distraction," in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 202-3; see also Celeste Olalquiaga on the animation of the dead in *Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities* (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), ch. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Culver, "What Manikins Want: The Wonderful Wizard of Oz and The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows," in *Representations* 21 (Winter 1988): 107.



As much as glass performs psychically, transforming objects and mediating viewers' imaginations, glass is a physical entity. It reveals, yet it also restrains, protects, quarantines. Extolled during the era of arcades and early modern architecture, glass served as the exemplar material of a burgeoning urban aesthetic; its transparency would, many felt, usher in an age of openness and democracy. Architectural visions of entire "cities of glass," crystalline, gleaming and featuring thoroughly unobstructed views, exemplify the most extreme fantasies in the belief in the liberatory potential of glass. Salloum's dissertations on glass, however, allude to dystopic politics and economic uncertainty. Glass that is cracked, taped, gridded, steamed up, or blocked by signs, articulate a reverse mythology: that the materiality of glass, and the promises for both security and enfranchisement which it stands for, are leaky, vulnerable, unstable.

Paul Virilio, in "The Overexposed City," writes of a postmodern city of glass, this one differing from the modernist version by the evolution of the physical city into a simulated one — dominated by the glass of the computer screen and surveillance monitor, a city of pure surface.<sup>5</sup> Salloum's glass city approaches this scenario, especially since the glass of the shop windows imply the glass (or Plexi) framing the photographs on the wall, and from there even allude to the lens of the camera shooting the image. The multiplication and variegation of glass planes, which might lead to the kind of disorientation, dislocation into a non-place, or psychasthenia — where the boundaries between image and self are obscured — are here counteracted by the artist's three-dimensional installation. Engaging the body negates a purely optical understanding of Salloum's imagery, for the layout brings into play the viewer's corporeality to balance out the de-realizing effects of glass.

### Storefront Dreamworlds

In North America, department stores and mall complexes are programmed as "festival" marketplaces, spaces of inclusion where consumers engage in celebratory rituals of acquisition. To enter into these public places is to experience an overdetermined thematic temporality where Christmas, Halloween, or Valentine's Day merchandise and displays

<sup>5</sup> Paul Virilio, "The Overexposed City," in *Zone 1/2*, (1986): 15-31.

<sup>6</sup> Simon Doonan, employed at Barneys, is a window designer who has gained notoriety. See Guy Trebay, "The Display's the Thing," in *New York Times Magazine*, (November 8, 1998): 61; and in general see Barry James Wood, *Show Windows: 75 Years of the Art of Display* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).



**JAYCE SALLOUM, 22 OZ. THUNDERBOLT, installation view, variable dimensions, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, March 1999.**

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (Minnie Mouse, Mickey Mouse, Barney and friends, christening wedding birthday shop, Clinton St., Lower East Side, NYC)*, 1994, 50.8 x 61 cm.**

parallel the managed seasonal “occasions” marketed by Hallmark cards. In contrast to these hypnotic contexts of consuming pleasure, what Walter Benjamin called “dreamworlds,” Salloum’s installation returns us to the streets, shaking us awake with images of public space that reveal the dispiriting realist backside of capitalism. Rather than idealized displays, here we see evidence of how individuals “make do” given the brutal truths of commerce.

Often compared to miniature theatres, show windows in urban centres wield a bravura and mystique that earn them the designation of minor spectacles, a popular form of entertainment that has evolved its own lineage of auteurs and devotees.<sup>6</sup> Salloum’s vitrine tableaux, however, are far from the glamorous New York creations appearing at Saks, Bloomingdale’s, Barneys, or Macy’s not only in terms of location but also of sensibility — they are decidedly unspectacular, haphazard, neglected, even abject. His anonymous, quotidian window displays, found mostly in New York City’s East Village, document less the drama of leisurely or luxurious consumption than economic distress or what Neil Smith terms “uneven development,” i.e., the strategic disinvestment from and subsequent decline of certain areas of a city as other, more politically influential sections grow and become enriched.<sup>7</sup> The number of photographs featuring signs about clearance sales, close-outs, price reductions, and bankruptcy point away from the shop window as an eternal, pristine arena of commodity pleasure to a scenario of financial turbulence and shattering shifts in fortune. While the promises and dreams of capitalism continue undeterred in uptown, upscale department stores and boutiques, the streaked and dusty windows recorded by Salloum invoke narratives of coupon-clipping subsistence. Rather than confirming what

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (textile store display, lower Broadway near Broome St., NYC), 1997, 50.8 x 61 cm.***

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (cleaning supplies, hardware store/bodega, Avenue B (near 3rd St.), East Village, NYC), 1996, 50.8 x 61 cm.***

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (bodega, Avenue Band 12th St., East Village, NYC), 1994, 50.8 x 60.96 cm.***



Henri Lefebvre calls “the Display Myth,”<sup>8</sup> in which the exhibition of commodities becomes an end in itself, these images reveal the contradictions in the desire for commodities, the breaks in the seamless spectacle of display, the tragedy, banality, and darkness of the consumption ethic.

Lest this interpretation seems to pigeonhole Salloum’s photographs as an earnest exposé of urban spatial politics or a fixation with poverty, there is, amidst the surplus of goods and the excess of signage, a vitality to the scenes that nevertheless emerges. It is an energy sparked by cultural complexity, heterogeneous configurations of the local and the global, a syncretic flux of topography and sensibility. The lure of a good deal, a fast buck, a singular find permeates many of the commodity displays from Canal Street, Broadway, Avenue A, or 14th Street. Shelves burgeoning with kitschy knick-knacks, household cleaners, coffee cups, or fake designer paraphernalia attest to an entrepreneurial spirit that despite the best efforts of corporate strategizing cannot be suppressed. This enthusiasm may be partly due to the colour photography, often shot on sunny days; yet the sense of celebration springs from the diversity of styles and the creative chaos that characterizes the vibrancy of the city.

The storefronts in Salloum’s photographs are defined by immediate use or family directives rather than a developer’s vision. They fascinate as ruins, places of local and unformalized mythologies lying below the spreading cloud of franchised capitalism. Each shop window arrangement escapes the panoptic standardization of ubiquitous stores like the Gap. They move outside the hegemonic discourse of consumerism by operating beyond the control of the conglomerations’ marketplace. The windows of the small businesses lining the streets of the East Village evidence what Michel de Certeau calls “microbe-like, singular and plural practices” which skirt both regulation and collapse to reinforce themselves with “proliferating illegitimacy.”<sup>9</sup>

Commodities colonize one’s attention in Salloum’s images, for actual people are nearly absent. While the photographer may be amongst the crowd, human beings are visible only in a reflection or two. Rather, it is transitional space which is recorded and fixed by the

<sup>8</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 105-6.

<sup>9</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 96.

<sup>10</sup> As Susan Buck-Morss has pointed out, however, the “blissful state of the flâneur is denial of the other hellish side of the urban phantasmagoria, the shattering of experience due to the neurologically catastrophic, persistent repetition of shock.” “The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe,” in *October* 73 (Summer 1995): 8.

<sup>11</sup> Jayce Salloum, interview with the authors.

<sup>12</sup> de Certeau, 93-99.

camera. Whether a public sculpture (which is walked by), a car wash (which is driven through), or a bakery (which is stopped in), what is marked are ambiguous zones of liminality and transience. So unlike Starbucks or Barnes & Noble — those corporately inscribed perches of the contemporary flâneur — none of Salloum's places is one where people would linger.<sup>10</sup> The absence of people, however, is more than compensated by a surplus population of figurines, anthropomorphic toys and media images. These surrogate bodies inhabit a parallel city, one on the other side of the glass, seemingly bearing the potential to reverse the relations of display.

### The Phatic Shutter

Salloum's practice of taking photographs works as a kind of visual diary of the act of "passing by." Countering touristic "first-glance" snapshots, he is committed to knowing a place well before photographing it. Daily walks through his neighbourhood in the East Village, where he lived for a decade, dominate this show. He works intuitively, catching an image at a particular time, often at a moment when he is en route. His process is one of stopping, turning on his heels, snapping the shot, and then moving on without missing a beat.<sup>11</sup> This is so casual that, on occasion, friends accompanying him are surprised to find that he has just taken a photograph. This instantiates what de Certeau has called a "phatic" aspect to walking: moments when walking is interrupted by clearing one's throat, looking at one's watch, saying "hello," or — in Salloum's case — snapping the camera shutter. Despite the inherent visibility of Salloum's practice, his perambulations in the city escape the optical imperative that lies at the heart of photography: "the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye."<sup>12</sup> Contrary to simply viewing surfaces, Salloum explores a spatial practice that fixes moments yet fosters mobility.



**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (paper products, party items, lottery tickets store, 14th St. (Ave. B/Ave. A) East Village, NYC), 1995, 28 x 36 cm.***

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (entrance to old tailor shop, now a mixed business selling firewood, coal, AmeriVox long distance, size 9 1/2 x 10 ski boots, 2nd Avenue near 4th St., East Village, NYC), 1996, 12.7 x 17.8 cm.***

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (discarded phone books and magazines, Mercer St., by NYU, NYC), 1994, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.***

<sup>13</sup> Jayce Salloum, "Introduction," in *Untitled: Jayce Salloum* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre; Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 1999), 29, emphasis in original.

<sup>14</sup> Jayce Salloum, "Untitled: 1988-98," in *Untitled: Jayce Salloum* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre; Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 1999), 41.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Said, "Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations," in *Race and Class* 32(1), (1990): 16.

<sup>16</sup> de Certeau, 101.

Salloum's position paradoxically draws from and counters the documentary tradition of street photography embodied in the works of Eugène Atget, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and Gary Winogrand. Saturated with colour, yet anti-formalist, Salloum "make[s] evident the machinery, apparatus and history of documentary, the aggression that documentary partakes in, and the violence that is wrought in its name."<sup>13</sup> Foregrounding the affect of economic disenfranchisement, yet avoiding the romanticization of urban ruins, he seeks "to go beyond a symbolically stated street photography that relies upon the fetish of the moment(ary) (simultaneity, coincidence, serendipity, etc.), into a more conceptual and theoretical arena in the investigation of visual culture, one that maintains direct ties to the actual social referent."<sup>14</sup> The documentary style Salloum practices is a self-conscious and reflexive one in which pleasure, deconstruction, affect, and politics are dialectically interrelated.

### The Street as Gallery

Salloum's photographs record the material evidence of presentational gestures: how commodities, objects, and signage have been arranged. In turn, the photographs themselves are clustered and hung on the gallery wall in unusual configurations — in what Edward Said might call "atonal ensembles,"<sup>15</sup> groupings which assert an indefatigable sense of hybridity and heterogeneity. There is an intriguing reversal to the dimensions of display: on the one hand, the street becomes a gallery for the photographer; on the other, the gallery becomes a virtual street for the beholder.

Here the street is Salloum's primary context. While the majority of the photographs record storefronts, businesses, or public spaces, the few that present domestic interiors are significant in that they depict an "inside" counterpoint to street-life's "outside." Their calm, cozy ambience is the bustling street's other, a retreat from the inevitable shocks accompanying a walk in the city. An artist's studio, a friend's kitchen, these are the places away from the street where refuge and regeneration take place.

Many of the storefront displays disclose traces of human presence via the placement



of objects and signage. Whether at the hands of the proprietor of the bodega, the shop cashier, the bakery counter clerk, each store window instances a logic of array, a three-dimensional sign in the rhetorics of the street. De Certeau has described the synecdochal capacity of fragmentary objects to, in effect, expand in space when he remarked that “a piece of furniture in a store window stands in for a whole neighbourhood.”<sup>16</sup>

Salloum’s photographs do not simply record the surfaces of storefronts, they document the dimensional practices of “outsider” curators — a kind of folk art. Whether in the windows of pharmacies, bakeries, driving schools, or doorways (one has a particularly poignant handwritten sign urging a runaway to call home), we find elements “put together” notwithstanding their untrained, amateur, or vernacular design. These photographs are an implicit examination of display practices — stacking, arranging, or marking — in the





context of ordinary culture. Order and disorder are fluid notions as happenstance and chance rule. Relics and signs collide, revealing an unconscious at work, even if appearing unaesthetic in conventional terms. Hand lettering and misspelling ostensibly tell us something about the person who made them, and to whom they are addressed, be they a potential customer, a runaway, or good Samaritan. Whether such displays are organized haphazardly or carefully, each manifests — however idiosyncratically — particular logics, hierarchies, and sentiments of presentation. It is ironic that despite their transience, Salloum's shop windows exude an ambience of museum period rooms.

### The Gallery as Street

In contrast to the instantaneity of the images, captured in a split-second, the process of installation is laborious. Photographs of different sizes — from 5" x 7" to 30" x 40" — have been grouped and meticulously hung in a salon-style arrangement. Whether singly, in pairs, trios, quartets, or in oblong or transverse relationships, they counter the aura and authority of the singular image.

Salloum records the empirical domain — things found, handled, moved, arranged — while at the same time he takes the conceptual role of curator-collector in developing the groupings of images. Photographs have been amassed from different cities, but when displayed in the gallery the thematic of the street appears continuous. One aspect of coherence is evident in the photographs themselves — the point of view of the pedestrian-photographer who traces a path of meaning and affect by his choice of images and trajectories.

Salloum's compositions of photographs recall another trope featured in de Certeau's analysis of walking in the city: that of "asyndeton." In written discourse, asyndeton

17 de Certeau, 101.

18 Trinh T. Minh-ha, "The Totalizing Quest of Meaning," in *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 30.

describes the suppression of linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs. As a figure of pedestrian rhetoric, de Certeau points out, asyndeton “selects and fragments” the spaces traversed.<sup>17</sup> So in addition to the spatiality of synecdoche — where a notable object expands to signify the whole neighbourhood — Salloum’s gallery installation disconnects the storefront from the continuous expanse of the street. The hanging of the photographs places elements in spatial relationships which open up lapses and gaps. In the gallery, the photographs act as reliquaries of street affect; records of specific atmospheres, experiences, and moments are configured together, oriented in relation to beholders as if pedestrians themselves.

As viewers engage with Salloum’s installation, they adopt a perspective of seemingly perpetual locomotion. The irregular placement of the images on the gallery walls — forcing one to bend down and stretch up to view in detail — makes visitors conscious of their own manner of perambulation. The negative spaces indicate that viewers are not just optical points; for the time of the show, we reside within and negotiate the images and voids on the walls with the entirety of our bodies. The noticeable gaps instantiate what is normally glossed over in more seamless representations — the empty space is room to project, imagine, fill up; viewers are responsible for negotiating these spaces just as much as the images. Like Trinh T. Minh-ha’s notion of the interval — “a break without which meaning would be fixed and truth congealed”<sup>18</sup> — these voids destabilize the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the individual images, compelling visitors to consider the possibilities of meaning against, across, beyond the boundaries of the frame.

And what can be discerned from these constellations of photographs? Any reading will necessarily be partial, for the images contain a surfeit of formal, symbolic, social, and iconographic clues. They evoke a range of resonances, from humour to poignancy. A pairing of cigarettes and collectible figurines, for example, appear to make as much of a statement about the addictive aspects of consumption as its pleasures. Issues of control are insinuated when chicken cages and a bank’s hand-railed ATM queue are juxtaposed. When photographs of bride-and-groom figurines atop a wedding cake, a baseball team

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (car wash, 24th St., Chelsea, NYC), 1995, 66.2 x 101.6 cm.***

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (icon and print shop, 14th St., East Village, NYC), 1994, 60.9 x 66.2 cm.***



perched on a field of frosting, and an advertisement for guns and beer are clustered, the concept of “togetherness” doesn’t seem so natural, peaceful, or beneficial to society. A column of photographs picturing housewares, a plea for wayward son to return, and cheap firewood, strike an uncanny note whereby the home can be just as easily an ominous as inviting place. The profusion of celebrity images — of sports heroes, fashion models, movie icons — at once call to mind the hope (and futility) of star worship, and the irony that the uniqueness of the idol depends upon mass production and popular identification. Yet these thoughts are only a few of the numerous possible linkages one could articulate. The circuits of meaning at play here are manifold, and each viewer will walk away with his or her own network of interpretations.

### **Imperfect Mirrors**

It is not easy as it first seems to situate ourselves in such a virtual street. While the grids underlying the installation imply a certain logic of connections between images at once striking and evanescent, they are not without a certain type of anxiety, manifesting what the artist has termed “productive frustration.”<sup>19</sup> Resisting any form of singularity, for either himself as photographer or for us as viewers, these photographs demand the adoption of a motile subjectivity. Their diversity, occupying all positions on the spectrum of aesthetic possibility — alternatively seductive/repulsive, intriguing/banal, formally sophisticated/snapshot raw, empathetic/voyeuristic, surreal/documentary — replicates not the identifiable, trademark vision that is so often demanded of an artist, but the fractured, fluid experience of living and being in a contemporary metropolis.

Since the glass of the show windows (and the glass of the photographs) both reflect and allow the viewer to peer through, it performs as an imperfect mirror, forcing viewers into a kind of protean mirror stage. Unlike the psychoanalytic version, in which the child amalgamates inchoate, disjunctive bodily sensations into a coherent image of the self, Salloum’s reflective surfaces yield a multiplicity of subject positions and sensibilities — images of the self splintered by commodities, signs, architectural forms. Coherence of the

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (reward poster, motorized toys and sales items, Love discount drugstore, 14th St. and 1st Ave., East Village, NYC), 1996, 50.8 x 28 cm.***

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (Love discount store, 14th St. and 1st Ave., East Village, NYC), 1993, 28 x 36 cm.***

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (NY Yankees, Audrey Hepburn, Marky Mark, Bruce Lee, Betty Page, Mike Tyson, Micky Mantle, Al Pacino (Scarface), and friends, framing shop, Broadway and 17th/Union Square, NYC), 1993, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.***

<sup>19</sup> Jayce Salloum, interview with the authors.

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (home made chocolate, Lafayette St., NYC), 1994, 50.8 x 60.9 cm.***



self is not an end, the stability of identity not a goal.

Through the photographs, one can read a variety of gazes: the first is that of resident, in which the photographs reveal an intimacy with a neighbourhood, where ordinary sights acquire a patina of significance by virtue of their familiarity. The newsstand, bank, or coffee shop are instrumental reference points necessary to the day-to-day negotiation of the city. The second is that of the tourist, prowling for bits of local flavour to visually consume, seeking souvenirs of the streetscape to savour at home. We can also see the documentary gaze of the sociologist, ethnographer, or journalist present here. The details of the everyday framed against each other could conceivably be used to compose a collective portrait of how members of a particular community live, work, desire, and survive — if we only had an elucidating textual component. Some photographs seem to embody the detective gaze, whereby objects act like mute clues, environments like crime scenes seething with narrative potential. A political edge manifests many of the images, and it is the eyes of an urban activist that are invoked as the photographs portray the injustice of the city's social and economic policies. There is also something of the flâneur's appreciation of the ironic and oneiric in these metropolitan tableaux; looking at them one identifies with the visual connoisseur who relishes odd juxtapositions, uncanny ambiances, or arresting contradictions. Finally, the images here evoke the sensibility of a stranger.<sup>20</sup> As much as any particular scene is familiar, there is a peculiar overlay of liminality, otherness, and alienation, a dislocation, that prevents us from knowing exactly which side of the outsider/insider divide we inhabit.

During the time Salloom photographed the streets of New York and other cities for this installation, a phrase (re-)entered critical discussion of the politics of space and urban geography — “cognitive mapping.”<sup>21</sup> The revival of the term was in response to the search for a tool by which a comprehensive understanding could be made of the pluralities, ambiguities, and discontinuities of postmodern space and society. Several assumptions are implicit in the notion of cognitive mapping: that a unitary, totalizing representation of the city is necessary to urban living; that space is a static, passive backdrop to human

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the “stranger/flâneur” complementarity, see Rob Shields, “Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin’s Notes on Flânerie,” in *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 68.

<sup>21</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 38-54.

<sup>22</sup> Salloom, “Untitled: 1988-98,” 41.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, “Bodies-Cities,” in *The Sexuality of Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (Princeton: Princeton University School of Architecture, 1992), 248.

<sup>24</sup> Rosalyn Deutsche, “Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy,” in *Social Text* #33 (1992): 49.



will and desire; that mastery and resolution of difference is the primary goal of residing in a complex environment. The grid-like schema underlying Salloum's installation may give the impression that his cartography of the cityscape aligns with the objectifying principles of cognitive mapping, yet the effect of the photographs is, if anything, subjective and contestatory. Salloum's mapping methodology identifies places where divergent histories and cultures intersect, and "specific acts and struggles of representation are played out."<sup>22</sup> The themes, interpretations, and connections one makes between the photographs are multiple and equally plausible. The fact that the artist changes the exhibition title with every venue, and periodically adds to the collection, underscores that this representation of the city is resistant to the singularity of cognitive mapping and is, instead, protean, partial, and dynamic.

For Salloum, the ambiguities of the postmodern metropolis are not something to be controlled or eradicated but sought out and heightened. The space of the cityscape is not experienced as *prima materia* but in an ongoing relationship with the self. Bodies and the built environment are, as Elizabeth Grosz asserts, "mutually defining."<sup>23</sup> In turn, the aesthetic experience may act upon us just as Salloum's titles suggest: contexts may wash over us (like the car being cleaned in *NEUTRAL/BRAKES/STEERING*) or we may be hit out of the blue (by the lightning seen in *220Z. THUNDERBOLT*). The fragmentation foregrounded by Salloum need not be immediately assumed to be problematic. For Rosalyn Deutsche, fragmentation is a positive, restorative process because it "allows the perception of conflicts, heterogeneity, and indeterminacy in the social, a precondition of the search for new kinds of common ground."<sup>24</sup> Salloum's installation continues in the photographic tradition of imaging the street — but avoids the urge to make the city comprehensible, legible, stabilized. It is precisely the embrace of the urban streetscape's irreducible complexities and polyvalency that demonstrate the intertwining influences of space and identity.

**JAYCE SALLOUM, *untitled (kids clothing store, Broadway, downtown Los Angeles)*, 1997, 50.8 x 60.9 cm.**

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This essay is a slightly revised version of the original appearing in *Untitled: Jayce Salloum*, Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre; Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 1999, 19-26. Reprinted by permission.