ALMINE RECH

Augustus Thompson
Winter '17

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Every year, we become obsessed with a different word containing the prefix "post-". "Post-truth" was the Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year in 2016, cynically and officially giving us a lexical tool for discussing the incomprehensible absurdity of the world *post*-Brexit, *post*-Trump. It is our linear temporal vision that makes "post" particularly heartbreaking (more so than "non" or "anti"): "post" doesn't just mean that something is absent; it means that it is *gone*, behind us in time as we float helplessly forward without it. Even though "post-" typically attaches itself to critical thought, it is the product of the same illusion of departure, of loss, that makes Americans long for the intangible "again" of Trump's #MAGA.

What if we decided to be *pre*-truth? We might not have the words to harmonize what has been with what is to come, but we can reposition ourselves in our personal and global histories such that we have not *lost* truth, but are instead still approaching it.

We are particularly fond of *post*-ness in the visual arts, of course, and have been for half a century. Fashion, though, places itself *before*—Spring/Summer 2017 shows happen in autumn 2016; a pre-Fall mini season happens between Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter shows. Some of the work debuted on the runway is never commercially produced or distributed—this is the optimistic and experiential philosophy of *pre*-dom, in which possibility is the goal and we are comfortable with mutability.

Pre-truth suggests an alternative to life in the gruesome aftermath of an enlightened era in which we chased facts over beliefs. Living pre-truth situates us in a historical *mise en place*: an arrangement of ingredients, an alignment of inner and outer environments, or, in psychology, the idea that small changes in how an environment is set up can make large changes to how people behave or act within it.

Augustus Thompson has told me that his work is "predicament"-based, and I relate this to his ritualized emphasis on the set up of ingredients —an intentional spread of studio materials, formal and cultural references, and methodologies, adapted for each particular project or environment. *Winter '17* romances the *mise-en-place*: it is reactive to the space of the gallery and the time of the show; it alters its environment, changing the rhythm of how it is experienced—just as putting on a record can alter the chemistry of a previously silent room. The works on view function as autonomous characters, presented as though they will recur—appearing again on the stage of the gallery (the *scene*) as players in a kind of relational theatre. The method through which these works are prepared is one of *pre*-purposing; each one is pre-contextualized, presupposed by the last. *Winter '17* is the intuitive result of a practice of preparation, an anticipation of a designed reality, a pre-staging of a material truth.

— Victoria Camblin