



Ellen Harvey, *Arcade/Arcadia*, 2011-12, mixed media installation, 34 hand-engraved Plexiglas panels, dimensions variable, installation view. Locks Gallery.

Ellen Harvey

Locks Gallery
Philadelphia

In Ellen Harvey's installation *Arcade/Arcadia* (2011-12), she created a gallery within the gallery that housed 34 of her signature engraved landscapes on lightbox-mounted Plexiglas mirrors. Propped against the outside of the open-framework wooden structure, six-foot-tall illuminated aluminum letters spelled out the word "ARCADIA," conjuring an idyllic haven.

Inside the arcade, the old-fashioned illustrated landscapes recreated the once popular British seaside resort of Margate, where the painter J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) lived for many years, as a 360-degree panorama. In fact, Harvey based the dimensions for her arcade on Turner's own gallery in London, which he devoted exclusively to selling his own work, and her precise renderings echoed his stunning mastery of perspective.

Light boxes behind each engraving of Margate reminded us of Turner's reverence for natural light; his last words are said to have been "The sun is God." Installed at eye level were numerous views of buildings—some Victorian and some more recent—as well as the

Turner Contemporary, a new arts institution that has revived tourism in the rundown town.

A horizon line unbroken by human figures, however, underlined the installation's mood of faded glamour. Sea, sky, rocks, full moon, and many darkened commercial structures nostalgically evoked this bygone arcadia that once drew crowds of 19th-century visitors, now a seedy and bereft landscape. The boxes' electric rays multiplied the shifting reflections of gallerygoers on the mirrors' surfaces, infusing the eerie, unpopulated scenes with new life. Margate, the ghost town, was crowded once more.

Outside the gallery structure, an unattributed reproduction of George Jones's 1851 painting *Turner's Body Lying in State*, representing Turner's gallery hung with his works, was installed in an easily overlooked corner. More a coda to *Arcade/Arcadia* than a part of it, it served as both a memento mori to Turner and a reminder of the failed vision of Margate itself.

—Robin Rice

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