

ARTFORUM

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Maryam Jafri

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Maryam Jafri's "War on Wellness" states that the wellness industry has polluted more than it has detoxed. The exhibition has resonance now that pseudoscience, in the form of climate-change deniers and flat-earthers, has become authority. If "wellness" only targeted the affluent, it would be a mere perpetrator of victimless crimes, no more dangerous than a bottle of Dr. Bronner's soap—but it isn't. It's part of a nexus of unattainable dreams and delusions that have hijacked our best instincts toward ourselves and sold them to the almighty Oz.

Self-care, 2017 is a toilet-paper roll made from a purple strip of yoga mat. It's a surrealist object and a sculptural meme at the same time (one should not discount the meme as a critical strategy in a time when accepted methods of critique are too slow-motion for our current greenhouse of horrors). *Where we're at, 2017* is a wall-size functioning crossword puzzle/bookshelf of psychobabble, pop political science, and secrets-to-success books. It suggests that our problems, as defined by the prophets of false hope, are utterly solvable—not intractably social, physical, geographical, and economic.

A prayer altar with a monitor showing an army captain teaching meditation to troops, (*American Buddhist, 2016*), is not a takedown of certain reflective practices. But it does underline that the possibilities of utopia through healing are thwarted by the fact that no self-improvement technique is morally neutral or divorced from our self-inflicted forces of destruction—regardless of how much water dribbling off polished stones is present. The work also points out that the wellness industry, by aping the forms of organized religion, is guilty of perpetrating similar abuses.



Maryam Jafri, *Where we're at, 2017*, wooden frame, books, vinyl, dimensions variable.

— Matthew Weinstein