

ART PAPERS

STRIKING IDEAS + MOVING IMAGES + SMART TEXTS
MAY/JUNE 2009 US \$7 CAN \$9 UK £6 EU €8



HISTORY
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JOHAN GRIMONPREZ

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PLACE + SELF
MOSHEKWA LANGA

WRITING
BLACKNESS NOW
CARL POPE

REPRESENTATION
JESPER JUST'S
PROJECTION THEATER





KARYN OLIVIER + AMANDA ROSS-HO + LISA SIGAL
ATLANTA

folksy DIY project, much as Mari Omori's *Sundial* transforms sepia-stained tea bags into a wonderfully fanciful disc by pinning them to the wall like entomological specimens. Strangely satisfying because its message is so overt and topical, Jade Cooper's *House of Cards* creates a metaphor for America's battling political factions in a tower of red and blue cards. Craftiness goes truly low-tech in other pieces, like Ernesto Oroza's *Potential House*, where towers of marbled plastic cups are stacked on a rickety plastic table. Ad hoc and precarious, home is where you can find it.

Especially successful, and eerily gorgeous to boot, Glexis Novoa's finely wrought, elegiac drawings on surfaces both pedestrian and elegant create an atmosphere of future-shock doom. They also evoke the post-modern shambles of politics and philosophies, with politicians and ideologies all melting into a post-historical goo. In *Viva Fidel*, drawn directly on the wall, graphite images rise from a thin horizon line like the new day. The chaotic jumble of celebratory banners and spindly buildings whose spires project into the sky like a sci-fi novel cityscape collide past and present: Castro, Obama, the Soviet Union, and Atlanta—the artist's momentary host city—faintly rising in the distance. Novoa draws from his surroundings by incorporating details like a wind turbine in the parking lot across the street from Saltworks. The gesture implicates the city in the apocalyptic visuals and dramatically links a visible present with a hazy past. Novoa's *Refurbish*, a drawing on marble, continues the post-apocalyptic vibe with extraordinary refinement and a lighter-than-air tone. This ethereal drawing enlists the striations in the marble to amplify a dreamy theme, as a crane hoists a clutch of monuments into the air dangling like sinew in the sky.

The human will to make do, that is, to shape an existence out of life's meager offerings—be it in post-Katrina New Orleans or Fidel-era Cuba—is one of the show's most coherent and beguiling themes. But this idea emerges through the mental synthesis of the entire show rather than in any one piece.

—Felicia Feaster

Karyn Olivier, Amanda Ross-Ho, and Lisa Sigal use trompe l'oeil, found objects, and recycled materials to engage space in *Make Room* [Atlanta Contemporary Art Center; February 5—March 29, 2009]. In *Handball*, 2009, Olivier creates a playing field in the center of the largest gallery by installing what appears to be a sixteen-by-twenty foot concrete handball court. Secured in only a couple of places under metal ceiling beams, the massive court seems precariously balanced, which endows the space with a dangerous energy. The absence of players becomes ominous. The real game is not handball, however, but the artist's trompe-l'oeil illusionism. In reality, the court is a lightweight frame covered with painted stucco that, cracked or chipped in certain areas, belies the fragile and delicate nature of the work. The court is an aesthetic object that bears comparison with Jasper Johns' grey paintings or Barnett Newman's zips.

Trompe-l'oeil illusionism playfully confounds the spectator's understanding of architecture and space in Lisa Sigal's installation *One rm shelter, new const, loft storage, woodbrnstove, cozy, must provide lot, call Mad Housers (404) 806-6233*, 2009. With salvaged building materials and sheetrock cut from the gallery walls, Sigal creates an interior landscape of partially constructed and partially deconstructed structures and shelters. For the preceding exhibition, large sections of the drywall in the corner of the gallery were removed, revealing grey concrete walls with remains of a continuous band of red paint punctuated with grey, green, and white splatters on the lower half. Sigal illusionistically continues the splattered red frieze with a border imitating the grey concrete of the original industrial wall onto the white gallery walls, confusing the visual distinction between constructed neutral gallery space and the "ruins" hidden beneath. Recalling the traditions of ancient Roman wall painting, the painted remnants of the building's history become decorative additions to the contemporary gallery space. On the opposite gallery wall, Sigal's color-field painting on a rectangular canvas pursues her illusionistic replication of the splattered red field of paint. Thus trans-

formed, the gallery corner simultaneously evokes art history, the history of display, and the history of the site.

A partially constructed wooden shelter stands in front of the corner. Inside, a small canvas features a painted view outside the gallery's window. Sigal produced this installation in collaboration with the Mad Housers, an Atlanta-based organization that constructs simple, dry shelters for homeless people. When *Make Room* closes, the structure will be completed with materials from the dismantled installation and deployed by the Mad Housers as a functional shelter.

Recycled materials, themes, and found objects animate the opposite corner of the gallery in Amanda Ross-Ho's *Untitled Gift and Home Showroom (Negative Reinforcement)*, 2009. Dirty rags, stenciled cloth, delicate jewelry, and large painted panels with cutout designs create a narrative of 2-D and 3-D, fine art and craft, process, pattern, product, consumption, and display. Lengths of neutral beige cloth tacked to the gallery wall with pushpins create a flat stage for the presentation of objects and development of elements. To the left, soiled, blackened washcloths hang in neat rows on a wall-sized rectangular board. Beneath the cloths are barely visible shaped holes. To the right, a rectangular pattern of black stenciled shapes might have been made by the cutout board at the left; the black shapes could even have been made with the black substance that dirtied the washcloths. A folded drop cloth on the floor might evince the stencil process. A delicate gold belt hangs from the corner of the neutral background. It suspends a piece of cloth that, cut from another section of the installation, hangs like both the washcloths and an enormous red bandana further to the right. Even further right, the stenciled black shapes repeat, followed by a hanging backpack completely covered with handwritten heart symbols somewhat resembling the curvilinear patterns on the bandana. Around the corner are more panels with cutout shapes, this time painted slick black on one side, and attached to white painted panels re-used from a previous installation on the reverse. Supports between the panels create small shelf-like

ABOVE, LEFT: foreground: Karyn Olivier, *Handball*, 2009, mixed media (courtesy of the artist and the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta; photo: Mike Jensen); ABOVE, RIGHT: Lisa Sigal, *One rm shelter, new const, loft storage, woodbrnstove, cozy, must provide lot, call Mad Housers (404) 806-6233*, 2009, reused plywood, paint, panels, paper (courtesy of the artist and the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta; photo: Mike Jensen)