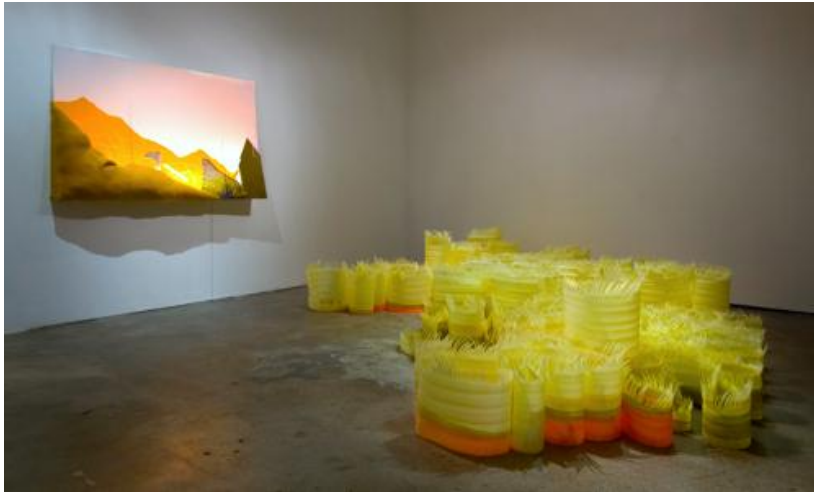


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whitehot | October 2011, Ashley Hasen Russell @ Dorsch Gallery



Orange Mountain, Gold Hill, 2011 (left) - Yellow Field (Miami), 2011 (right)

Acrylic sheet, fabric, glass dishes, vinyl, digital prints, wood, fluorescent lights, 48 x 73 x 10 inches

and

Insulation foam, thread, spray paint, dimensions variable



Down Spout, 2011 (left) - Tangle, 2011 (center) - Brush Pile, 2011 (right)

Found objects, wood, fabric, plexiglass, paint, polyester fiber, 111 x 83 x 64 inches

Cinderblocks, dishes, sticks, acrylic rhinestones, paint, gold mylar, metallic gold leaf, 68 x 32 x 17 inches

Fabric, wood, found objects, 113 x 162 x 99 inches

Ashley Hasen Russell: Gold Slaw
Dorsch Gallery
Through October 2nd

In seventh grade I heard a joke that, from some reason besides humor, has stuck with me.

Q: What is West Virginia's state flower?

A: The satellite dish.

Granted, this was the era of Jeff Foxworthy, when the mere mention of cinderblocks, Randy Savage, or Astroturf could be reverse engineered into a jab at those living in Appalachia. However, I believe that this one, in all its irreverence, speaks to the contemporary position of the redneck as a post-agrarian. Those that were once on the frontier of civilization and nature now represent the conflation of the two. The bucolic hills provide for isolation remedied by hour-long commutes, big box retailers, and satellite television. This balance between the natural and the artificial is the basis of Audrey Hasen Russell's sculpture.

For Gold Slaw, the Tennessee native has created several rooms of sculptures that evoke a landscape through materials used to divide man from the elements. Plexiglas, cinderblocks, insulation foam, 2x4s, and other materials that seem scavenged from a flea market. In the front gallery is *Yellow Field (Miami)*, 2011. Spirals of foam that are cut and spray-painted to resemble sand dunes, the piece creates an unlikely volley between the material and the idea of environment as symbol. Sand dunes here being equated to a leisurely vacation, a state equated to a condo timeshare, cheaply built with insulation foam. It doesn't matter that the foam doesn't visually resembles the beach, unless you count the unlikely instance of a destroyed condominium bobbing in the hurricane-swollen water. The rewarding aspect of this work, and that of the rest of the show, is this spirit of associative ingenuity – the git 'er done, square peg in the round hole, duct tape-fixes-all state of mind.

Incidentally, the sculptural process of altering found objects to spur unusual mental leaps is the stuff of great art. Though in no way derivative, Russell's work finds echoes in the industrial mutations of Roxy Paine. The kitschy busyness exists in recent work by Thomas Hirschorn. Most importantly, there is the mix between the organic and the constructed. Speaking about his work, Gabriel Orozco says, "...it is like a tree which at first sight seems natural but which is one hundred percent artificial." This holds true here as well.

A charming example of this is *Untitled (Bubble Wall)*, 2011. Russell photographed a stucco ceiling and then set the photos under glass hemispheres affixed to the gallery wall. From the side, these bubbles look like chintzy paperweights. But straight on, the stucco, distorted by the curving glass, looks just like the moon. In recasting the galactic sublime in stucco, Russell's series points to poignant truths. Most simply, staring at the ceiling is little different from staring at anything else.

In another room is a thatch of ambitious sculptures. By wrapping fabric and Mylar around cinder blocks, brooms, and wood, Russell creates sculptures that lazily assert their mimetic intent while reveling in an often tacky artifice. (The pieces are bedazzled with rhinestones and gold leaf.) More than superficially embellishing the natural, these additions are central to the sculpture's underlying logic. That is, the contrivance of the New South, and how this has affected the psyche of those whose still trying to eek out an honest relationship with their surroundings.



Brush Pile (Detail), 2011
Fabric, wood, found objects
113 x 162 x 99 inches



Garden Prop Gold, 2011
Digital prints, wood, fabric, gold mylar, metallic gold leaf
90 x 46 x 30 inches



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