

True Story: Lisa Rybovich Crallé & Rebekah Goldstein

October 26–December 14, 2013

Reception: Saturday, October 26, 2–5 pm

tmoro projects

Gallery Hours: Saturday 2–5 pm

1046 Sherman Street, Santa Clara, CA 95050

www.tmoroprojects.com

The work of Rebekah Goldstein and Lisa Rybovich Crallé invokes a surprisingly pleasant sensation that there is something missing, something incomplete about their art. In fact, these works are peopled with fragments. In viewing the exhibition one will encounter bodiless legs relaxing against a wall or fingers poking from behind geometric shapes and loose strokes of paint. Of course, it is common to associate fragments with the trauma of loss or the frustration of lack, but I would like to insist that these works playfully seek to open our perceptions up to the deeper potential of the incomplete or the not-quite-there. Here, the *True Story* (the title of this exhibition) has less to do with the boring wholeness and stability of a “fact” and more to do with the uncanny familiarity of the unknown and the delightful potential innate in the lives of fragments.

The fragment may very well be a major trope in contemporary life. Fragments suggest both the partial way in which our encounters with the world are framed as well as the keen awareness that our experience is incomplete—part of an inconceivable whole. We consume world events through headlines scrolling through a news feed, and conviviality often takes the form of tweets and snippets of personal confessions posted remotely. In a world where two minute clips are too long, information about contemporary life seems reduced to the simplest forms and the most digestible communications. These fragments occupy our days as they circulate at intense speeds and go viral in fleeting flashes of spectacle. This is perhaps why the works in *True Story* are so strange yet familiar. Capitalizing on the pervasive logic of the fragment, both Crallé and Goldstein seem to play with the dual concepts of reduction and abstraction of meaningful signs and the emancipation and agency of these new forms.

The works in this exhibition engage in a rabid quotation and accumulation of histories that are so much a part of contemporary modes of collecting and consuming the world. In Goldstein’s paintings one can read hints of Pablo Picasso’s cubist reductions of form, or Philip Guston’s corporeal signs. Crallé’s sculpture seems part ancient ruin, part art deco decoration, and part constructionist sculpture. Yet as much as they include bits and pieces of this broad range of histories and forbearers, they reduce these references into their most basic elements—combining and simplifying them in one stroke. Consider the example of Crallé’s two works, *Legs (James Dean)*, and *Legs (Reclining)*. They appear as jointed tubular forms punctuated with clean bursts of gold. Historical allusions seem to multiply. Their simplicity carries suggestions of minimalist constructions, the title and casual stance of these sculptural pairs point to the glamour of Hollywood’s golden age, while their white monumentality invokes the classical sculpture that inspired them. Yet association with these sources is as far as we can go. Direct quotation is not readily available due, in part, to the fact that they are abstracted into basic form and their attitude is reduced to the simplest gesture of repose. This is where the work so playfully invokes the logic of the fragment. Using only the subtlest hints of historical antecedents, the works are emancipated from the stability of direct quotation but simultaneously insist on meaningful reference. Like a lone puzzle piece, they suggest a number of possible wholes to which they may belong. They are almost like archetypes reduced to the essence of a meaningful sign—a subtle gesture or simple form. But they refuse to be complete.

Goldstein’s painting seems to follow a similar logic of abstraction. Her paintings are characterized by both a gestural painting style and a linear geometry. These forms layer upon one another creating new contours and spaces. The work is often characterized by a confusion of forms where objects dissolve into negative space, creating a tension between figure and ground reminiscent of Picasso’s cubist works. But, like Picasso’s abstractions, these geometries are never completely non-referential. As one explores these works, certain representations begin to people them—an eye peering out at the audience or a finger beckoning from behind a block of color. Even the shapes themselves begin to take on their own personas. They double and multiply, often making appearances across a number of works. Like Crallé’s sculpture, the forms and figures in Goldstein’s paintings hint at a number of possible interpretations. Goldstein seems interested in exploring the core basics of language, reducing each shape and figure into fragmented and meaningfully open-ended signs.

Throughout Goldstein’s oeuvre, her multivalent fragments appear over and over again changing with each different context. As such, Goldstein’s works suggest an abstracted form of narrative, providing the settings and players in a drama that must be completed by the viewer. Like the rabbit in *Alice In Wonderland*, the morphing figures of these works draw us in. But in as much as they draw us in, the fragments also seek to occupy the space of the viewer. In related sculptural work that Goldstein has created, the geometries in the compositions literally come off of the canvas. They seem to have been cut directly from their painterly worlds and invade the space of the gallery, slumping over painted wooden constructions. This gesture suggests not only the mutability of representational space in Goldstein’s schema, but also insists on the materiality of the abstracted forms that people them. Goldstein’s fragments want to come live in our world.

This is part of what makes the works so startling. While the contemporary logic of fragments may prepare viewers for the work in this exhibition, the adamant tactility of the works confound our expectations. Tweets and headlines define our informational world, but rarely do they take on the materiality that these works insist upon. The materiality of the fragment is seen in Crallé’s work as well. As sculpture their material presences are unavoidable as they literally share our space, but they also subtly call attention to how we define our space (an aspect that may draw from the artist’s interest in Russian Constructivism). Some of Crallé’s constructions seem like bits of architecture broken from buildings. Others take the form of leaves and plants. Like Goldstein’s multivalent representations where one form shifts from object to space, Crallé’s objects seem to shift in our setting. They are parts of bodies, parts of architecture, or parts of the living environment. Despite their insistent “thingness,” the works blur the lines between categories of things content even to rebuke the designation of art object and hide out as houseplants.

By blurring these boundaries between viewer and artwork, between artwork and everyday object, we as viewers may become a part of the drama, confronting the possibility that in the true story we too are fragments. The *True Story* diverges from the modernist myth of wholeness, connecting to the multiplicity of time and the possibility of incompleteness. That is how these works so playfully introduce the perception that there may be something missing—and this is okay. They suggest that in the great drama of it all, we too lead the lives of fragments.

Author: Tobias Wofford



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