



At The Aldrich: Poundstone, Shaver & Stiler

May 1, 2015

by Kathryn Heine

RIDGEFIELD, C.T.-The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum opens a museum-wide exhibition comprised of six solo shows this weekend. Presented as a suite of shows beneath a single exhibition umbrella, "Circumstance" aims to reveal the ways inspiration and its influence manifest across object making, according to the museum. Each solo shows include commissioned works and presents rarely-seen aspects of each artist's art making practices. Exhibiting artists in "Circumstance" are B. Wurtz, Virginia Poundstone, Nancy Shaver, Ruby Sky Stiler, Penelope Umbrico and Elif Uras.

Hamptons Art Hub has put together a two-part look at the six exhibiting artists, courtesy of information provided by The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum. Part I provides an in-depth look at exhibitions by Virginia Poundstone, Nancy Shaver and Ruby Sky Stiler. Continue scrolling to read.

Part II reveals insight into exhibitions by Penelope Umbrico, Elif Uras, and B. Wurtz. Click [here](#) to read Part II. Click [here](#) to read information about the public Opening Reception on May 2, 2015 and information about the exhibition in general.

"Virginia Poundstone: Flower Mutations"

Virginia Poundstone's practice spans photography, sculpture, video, and installation and is exclusively focused on the history and botany of the flower and its socio-economic and cultural significance. The exhibition pulls heavily from two sources of inspiration: Giacomo Balla's series of "Futurist Flowers" and traditional American flower-pattern quilts.

"Flower Mutations" features a number of new works, including an outdoor sculpture surrounded by an earthwork comprising over 3,000 tulips.

Debuting is a new outdoor sculpture, *Quilt Square (Tulip)*, 2015, which is sited beside the earthwork *Tulips*, 2014-15, planted on the Museum's grounds. The sculpture, a geometric flower in stone and glass, is based on the geometry of a traditional quilt pattern. Placed in the interior courtyard where it is visible from the museum's atrium, it will be seen for a fleeting period with the backdrop of tulips in eight dynamic hues.

Inside, the exhibition presents artworks and objects investigating the visual representation of flowers through abstraction in art and design. Featured are the new sculpture, *Rose Mutation*, 2015, and a monumental wall print of *Rainbow Rose*, 2013. The art is complemented by works on loan from institutions across the nation that span generations and art historical movements. Objects

from Poundstone's own collection, including one thousand slides of wildflower photographs taken by her grandfather, Bruce Poundstone, round out the show.

Curator Amy Smith-Stewart states: "For almost ten years, Poundstone has centered her practice on the symbolism of the flower. She uses the overt artificiality of *Rainbow Rose* to reference the floral industry, where hundreds of thousands of flowers are mass-produced, assembled, packaged, stored, and transported in near freezing temperatures, utterly divorced from the wilds of nature."

Poundstone adds: "I also think my fascination with the Rainbow Rose™ comes from my knowledge of how much time (years) and money (hundreds of thousands) it takes to get a product like this to market. The only way something like this can exist is because there are a lot of people who want it to exist, so they can spend their money on it. Our collective desire for such artifice, or control, of our natural world is succinctly described in this product. I had to monumentalize it."

"Virginia Poundstone: Flower Mutations" has been organized by Aldrich curator Amy Smith-Stewart.



"Rainbow Rose" by Virginia Poundstone, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

"Nancy Shaver: Reconciliation"

"Nancy Shaver: Reconciliation" utilizes a diverse range of objects from contemporary culture that includes fabric and photographs by way of exploring the sociology of aesthetics and how notions of beauty and value are manifested in art, textiles, and the worlds of decoration and fashion.

For "Reconciliation," Shaver juxtaposes recent sculpture made from clothing fabric and other materials found in rural thrift stores with Depression-era photographs by Walker Evans (who was one of her teachers) and images of art by painter, textile, and fashion designer Sonia Delaunay.

Curator Richard Klein explains, "Shaver's practice is not just based in an intellectual pursuit; it is equally informed by personal experience—specifically a life that has been lived in the dichotomy between her rural, working-class roots and the high-art world that she has engaged since the 1970s. *Reconciliation* juxtaposes sculpture (made by the artist out of found materials), works by other artists, found objects, folk art objects, and utilitarian objects, all framed by the presence of Evans (1903–1975) and Delaunay (1885–1979). By bringing them into this dialogue between objects, Shaver is revealing the reconciliation involving class and aesthetic values that informs both her art and her life, while acknowledging two artists whose work has impacted her own."

Klein continues, "Many artists who work with materials or images that originated in popular culture attempt to elevate them, moving them vertically from their populist, working-class roots to high-art commodity status. However, Shaver's work suggests horizontal movement, a socioeconomic leveling where there really isn't much of a difference between haute couture and Walmart.

“Nancy Shaver: Reconciliation” has been organized by Aldrich exhibitions director Richard Klein.



“Blue Chair as Base” by Nancy Shaver, 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

“Ruby Sky Stiler: Ghost Versions”

“Ruby Sky Stiler’s “Ghost Versions” is inspired by the history of plaster casts. The exhibition features wall-scale Hydrocal plaster reliefs displayed alongside a selection of seven Greek and Roman classical casts loaned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Bellarmine Museum of Art at Fairfield University.

Ruby Sky Stiler’s process is informed by an extensive investigation of authority, value, and taste, weaving together imagery from the realms of architecture, craft, design, and art history, such as Hellenic bas-relief, Le Corbusier’s concrete buildings, Picasso’s sgraffito ceramics, Native American pottery, Matisse’s cut-outs, Louise Nevelson’s monochromatic assemblages, and municipal sculpture.

Stiler’s plaster-cast reliefs originate in discarded compositional elements from past pieces and fragments found in her studio. In using these remnants, Stiler conjures a “ghostly reference” to objects she describes as “no longer in existence.” Her practice hinges upon a compression of cultural referents, an espousal of both high and low, and an incorporation of the monumental and the cast off.

Stiler explains, “My interest started intuitively, in the studio, thinking of ways to incorporate and repurpose salvaged parts of past studio work and errant scraps into a new form: crumpled foam core, a representation of a body part, a pattern. Not long after I started experimenting, I came across an archival image of the Hall of Casts at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Through my research I learned that at the time the collection was established, there was no stigma attached to displaying second-degree plasters, and the collection was invaluable as an opportunity for the American public to see the world canon of sculpture.”

Stiler continues, “I’m interested in the instability of the cast reproductions, which have associations with death and decay, but also offer the opportunity for us to embrace ideas about anonymous authorship, copies, and simulacra. The imitation of more elevated materials and the question of skill and craft, high and low, might also play with elements of kitsch.”

Curator Amy Smith-Stewart says, “Stiler’s fascination with classical plaster casts developed initially from testing the plaster casting procedure and evolved as she learned that while the value of the classical works had diminished, they had enjoyed a recent ascent in popularity. There is a mash up

of contemporary and modern and ancient art references in her plaster wall reliefs. The forms within her abstract, monochromatic compositions orbit each other and read almost like a hieroglyphic tablet—Stiler operates like an archaeologist, digging up thousands of years of ancestry and then spinning it all together.”

“Ruby Sky Stiler: Ghost Versions” has been organized by Aldrich curator Amy Smith-Stewart.



“Pattern Frieze (diptych)” by Ruby Sky Stiler, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York.

BASIC FACTS: “Circumstance” is organized by museum exhibitions Director Richard Klein and Curator Amy Smith-Stewart. It opens May 3 and remains on view through October 25, 2015. The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum is located at 258 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877. www.aldrichart.org.

“At The Aldrich” Part I features art by Virginia Poundstone, Nancy Shaver and Ruby Sky Stiler. Click [here](#) to read.

“At The Aldrich” Part II features art by Penelope Umbrico, Elif Uras and B. Wurz. Click [here](#) to read.

For details about the exhibition in general and this weekend’s public opening, click [here](#).

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