



The artist's beautiful juxtapositions are so L.A. By **Dan Nadel and Rachel Uffner**

# KATHRYN ANDREWS



(l-r) "End of Vaudeville," 2011; "January 23," 2010; "Rod," chromed steel and rented props, 2010.

**KATHRYN ANDREWS IS SOMETHING OF A CONNOISSEUR OF VISUAL CONTRADICTIONS.** Born in Mobile, Alabama, Andrews has been in Los Angeles for just over 10 years. It is the perfect place for her sensibility, which thrives on and generates startling juxtapositions—lawn jockeys carry aloft an enormous chromed steel pole; a wall-mounted chromed steel gate floats cheap balloons off its posts. As Andrews says, "By putting these super-produced, chromed objects in relation to very popular, easy-to-obtain ones, a tension is set up, making obvious that there are multiple value systems at play in our understanding of what makes for 'good art.' Things that are highly manufactured and expensive to fabricate signify in one way, and things that are not signify in a different way, but both can offer a pleasurable experience." It's a real tension, too—almost a physical shiver that's startling because you just don't see that every day, but also because of the subtle subversion of the 'high art experience.' What saves all this from the academic is both that shiver of discomfort and that the work is, in fact, quite beautiful in the way that, well, the city is itself. Unwieldy, instantly historical, dreamlike and then, finally, universal.

And this vibe, unlike her objects, is fairly natural. Andrews says one of her primary bits of "research" into styles and visual modes is that great L.A. pastime: Driving. "I drive around in my car. I get my ideas from the street, really," she says. "I drive downtown, head across Olympic over to the West Side. I see crazy things on almost every block. L.A. consists of so many histories thrown together without an apparent logic. It's a city that's been minimally planned. It feels like everyone was thrown here and left to their devices; stylistic contrasts from one cultural group to the next, from one era to the next,



are hugely obvious." L.A. suits her because "when you're in a place and it all looks the same, you don't question what went into making it that way."

Posing those precise questions is at the heart of her most recent work, "End of Vaudeville." It is a sculpture in three distinct movements. There is an armoire, à la Pottery Barn, that looks like a fancy bit of 18th-Century French design. On its mirrored surface sits a photograph of Mae West dressed as the Statue of Liberty from her 1934 film *Belle of the Nineties*. Between the gallery wall and the armoire, reflecting down and across the

room, is an enormous sheet of polished stainless steel. It's a shock to contemplate—three objects, each an inherent contradiction, each doubly "misused" to capture ideas about one another. An American icon like the Statue of Liberty was, of course, a gift from the French, and yet Mae West, an American pop vulgarity, plays the part. And removed yet again, that old image of West is ever so casually placed on a piece of mass-produced furniture that offers the illusion of culture. Then all that steel—an ur-minimalist move that snaps you back into the world of art and material values. All these dichotomies are then doubled in

the reflections, pinging off each other faster than you can process them.

And speaking of pinging, Andrews, who is currently at work on a solo presentation for Art Basel, relishes the non-ping and the quietude of her city: "In L.A., it's the architecture that drives how people interact in the space of the city, and the architecture is so disruptive to casual exchanges and the dissemination of information..." She continues, with a note of relief: "It's isolating, but that can be a good thing for making art."

**Dan Nadel** is a writer and the editor and proprietor of PictureBox in Brooklyn.  
**Rachel Uffner** is the owner of Rachel Uffner Gallery in New York.