

LOS ANGELES

George Herms: "Xenophilia (Love of the Unknown)" at MOCA Pacific Design Center

California Assemblage artist George Herms has been spinning remnants of the quotidian into a narrative characterized by gesture, rhythm, and chance since the late 1950s. "Xenophilia (Love of the Unknown)" features intricate collages and sculptures pieced together from found materials, while exhibiting alongside a younger generation of artists from Los Angeles and New York, who express a similar commitment to counterculture. Fellow artists Rita Ackermann, Kathryn Andrews, Lizzi Bougatsos, Robert Branan, Dan Colen, Leo Fitzpatrick, Elliott Hundley, Hanna Liden, Nate Lowman, Ari Marcopoulos, Ryan McGinley, Sterling Ruby, Agathe Snow, Ryan Trecartin, Kaari Upson and Aaron Young continue in Herms' footsteps as they explore and re-imagine the assemblage tradition.

In many ways Herms is like a dumpster diver sifting through discarded materials and returning those objects to the urban landscape. The sculpture *No Nonsense* houses found artifacts inside a rusted birdcage. Eroded tools with menacing razor teeth hang off the sides, while the innards of a parking meter are helplessly caged inside the frame. Scattered around the sculpture are the wings of a camouflaged toy airplane, the bent arm of an action figure separated from its body, and fractured "don't walk" sign. Objects like the busted meter have lost their function in the world of practicality, but find renewed use in Herms' reliquary, wherein that which is forgotten possesses the most beauty.

A collaboration between George Herms and sculptor Aaron Curry titled *The Standard of the World* examines the role of the artist in a nation whose identity seems uncertain and literally fading before our eyes. Composed of

acrylic on muslin and found objects, the left portion of the visual field riffs on the American flag with a blue background and only ten stenciled white stars crammed in the corner. The remainder of the canvas is left blank leaving the viewer to imagine 13 rows of red and white stripes or a pattern from another country altogether. A wooden artist box adhered to the middle of the piece is opened and filled only with a found twisted CD and metal. In *The Standard of the World* there seems to be a complete absence of a "standard" —rather, the work points to a state of flux where artists are no longer armed with materials to create, but must think outside of the box to continue with their craft.

—A. MORET

"XENOPHILIA (LOVE OF THE UNKNOWN)," 2011
George Herms
INSTALLATION VIEW
AT THE MOCA PACIFIC DESIGN CENTER
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