



The Tension of Objects in Space by Michelle Levy

A Room, in Three Movements

Sue Scott Gallery

1 Rivington St, New York, NY 10002

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Galleries face the constant challenge: how can one activate a sterile white box in a way that allows the art to embody its greatest potential? The idea of a temporal exhibition that changes throughout its duration is one that comes up often during curatorial brainstorming. It is poetically enticing in that it invites intuition and an increased level of exchange as well as a trust in the unknown. However, it can be unwieldy or difficult to realize effectively, and therefore hard to pull off.



"A Room, In Three Movements" elegantly engages the above strategy. Featuring the work of Katy Heinlein, Sheila Pepe, and Halsey Rodman, the show is as much about the allure of the sculptures present as it is about personality of objects when defined against their environment and each other. It is an exhibition that reorganizes itself three times throughout its duration. At any given moment, two works are paired in the front room of the gallery, and one stands alone in the back room. The three cycles allow the work to confront each of the others, as well as to exist in solitude.

The transmutations that occur are relatively subdued in that they do not happen quickly or drastically. However the tension created by the potential of future or past movement charges the artworks and the space with heightened energy. Chances are, you will only see the show in one incarnation. But the knowledge that it has had one or several lives before this one causes each object to vibrate as your awareness of it and its relationship to the others expands, as well as your understanding of your own relationship to the space. You become increasingly aware of the negative space around each installation that exists in dialogue with the the room, and with you, introducing a curiosity beyond the individual work leading you to wonder how does it behave differently now than it did before? In short, these still, tactile objects have come alive, imbued with character.

Although the works are still, each embodies a kind of movement. Halsey Rodman's structure "The Wolves from Three Angles" suggests, in human scale, the movement of frenetic energy and shifting perception. Presenting several juxtaposed viewpoints all within one structure, it consists of three connected standing panels that are fanned out in such a way that you can never get a view of the whole thing at once. It is both a blockade and a shelter comprised of virtually identical perspectives, thus creating an effect similar to when you look at something with one eye closed, and then the other (and then a third!). This work was apparently inspired by a dream where the artist saw a pack of wolves from three positions simultaneously, resulting from the fact that he was existing in three places at once. Each section consists of a collection of almost identical paintings and drawings that were created simultaneously by the artist. Painted wildly with electric colors, this structure appears as a set for a staged action that radiates against its surroundings. It was in fact used as the set for the video on view in the entrance where Rodman playfully reenacts the vision from the dream using his own dog.

Katy Heinlen's sculpture "Natural Fall" exhibits a vulnerability of latent movement. It consists of various types of fabrics draped across a hidden structure. With some material taught, and other sagging, it appears rigged up like a colorful make-shift lean-to at once holding shape but fragile, at risk of potential shift or collapse. The dangling fringes that add whimsicality that inject playfulness into a formal minimalist composition. It is graceful and humble, the hanging fringe, the areas of sag in the fabric, lend it to casual motion brought on by any shift in the surrounding environment. But



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although it appears fragile, it has an air of dependability in that it actually must thrive in this tenuous state and therefore is sturdy enough to hold its form.



Sheila Pepe's "A Mutable Thing" participates in the movement game most literally. This object, a giant "improvisational crochet" was created with the intention of changing form as it moves to its different locations. In the second mutation (the one I saw), the "Mutable Thing" is draped like a hammock between pillar and corner of ceiling, taking on the form of a floating vessel- the lines appear drawn, created by the woven combination of crude and elegant handmade materials that cast quirky shadows on the wall. In its prior form, the object stemmed from the same pillar to a different wall, extending as a fence-like grid that divided the room. Its third form promises to be something "wearable, referencing the body in space." Each time the space changes, the dialogue changes, the shape changes, the shadows change, suggesting three chapters of a non-verbal, non-pictorial line-drawn narrative that exists in three dimensions.

By the time this review is published, the exhibition will have made its third and final movement. Whether or not you will have had the chance to see more than one variation, you will experience a certain generosity in this presentation. It is playful. It is a game that suggests the artists, the space, and you the viewer, to engage more actively. It does this carefully and in a controlled manner, and thus allows us to contemplate how time and space have settled around the work, and to investigate the tensions that continue to resonate.

*Also on view is Kabinett curated by Nayland Blake. Blake invited a host of respected queer artists to contribute work in the format of two 8 ½ x 11 pages to be displayed in plastic sleeves, forming a cumulative zine titled "Unpunished."

~ Michelle Levy



Images: Sheila Pepe, detail of "A Mutable Thing," 2011, Crocheted string and fabric. Dimensions variable; Katy Heinlein, "Natural Fall," 2011, Cloth, wood and fringe, 48 x 84 x 48 inches; Halsey Rodman, "The Wolves from Three Angles," 2011, Acrylic paint, MDF, aluminum tube, magnets, gouache and pencil on paper, 107 x 42 x 99 inches; Sheila Pepe, "A Mutable Thing," 2011, Crocheted string and fabric. Dimensions variable. All courtesy Sue Scott Gallery.

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