

Paddle⁸



IN THE GALLERY

ltd, LOS ANGELES

RACHEL FOULLON
"Ruminant
Recombinant"

April 26 - May 26, 2012

Paddle⁸ presents IN THE GALLERY | NEW YORK, a special web project dedicated to select partner galleries based in New York or participating in NYAW fairs. During May, IN THE GALLERY | NEW YORK shows a selection of artwork drawn primarily from the galleries' May 2012 exhibitions displayed with related content.

May 9 - May 15 Featured Artists
Michael Bilsborough (Invisible Exports)
Luke Butler & Tammy Rae Carland (Silverman)
Rachel Foulon (ltd)
Jan Kempenaers & Jens Ullrich (Van Horn)
McDermott & McGough and Jack Pierson (Gaviak)
Georgi Tushev (Fitzroy Gallery)

P8: The Clusters are made using elements from pre-existing artworks and other found materials. Can you tell us the backstory behind one of the clusters?

RF: While I had sewn, dyed and prepared all of the individual elements for the *Cluster* sculptures in advance of my show, I made the decision to conceive and arrange the exact combinations and compositions on-site in the gallery, over the course of a three-day installation period. My intention was to convey a sense of immediacy, or even urgency in how these works came into being. In *Cluster VIII*, I had sewn three different sizes of overalls, the design taken from a 1929 Sears catalogue. In the back of my mind, I thought I might use them to make a Cluster evocative of multiple generations of one family, or perhaps something about a growing body amidst a lifetime of hard work, but after I dyed them in a drought-y beige using a very small amount of water (resulting in maximum variations of the dye), the canvas seemed to transmogrify into aged marble. It struck me that I had the components to create a soft and abstracted version of the monumental sculpture, the *Laocoön Group*.

In composing the work, I reference the marble figures' dramatic gestures using only the three pairs of overalls' straps and pant legs in tension between three of the pegs on the cedar rail system (that I had designed as apparatus for the entire *Cluster* installation.) A skinny dark green garden hose culled from an old cow barn seemed to beg for the role of serpent. Under a pile of tools in the same barn, I had found a pair of leather gloves dried into a curled position – all I did was clean them. Their "grip" fit the pegs exactly and provided the right punctums for holding as much of the agony and struggle that is conveyed in the *Laocoön Group* as these humble materials can. The original's depiction of a heroic father succumbing to his death while his dotting sons watch in horror as they themselves are also taken down, felt apt parallel for some of the somber underlying themes within my own work: the tenuous livelihood of laboring families, and the suggestion that hard work does not inevitably lead to prosperity or relief. I see this *Cluster* as contributing an additional vignette that helps to tell an epic and open-ended history of relationships between humans, animals and the land...where my Trojan horse is the giant horse blanket two clusters to the left, and the serpent is a feedback loop retracing and repurposing my own body of work as well as the history of sculptural production.



P8: There is an open-endedness and iterative nature to this exhibition (the cedar molding allow for other arrangements, the use of pre-existing artwork suggests that these works may take another form later on). Is an artwork ever "finished" for you? Is there a role for "finality" in your work?

RF: I am interested in modular systems and reconfiguration, however I do not mean to suggest that there exist infinite permutations of my work. Six of the *Clusters* incorporate fabric elements from previous artworks made between 2009 and 2011. They are "convertible," in the sense that there are now two versions of these sculptures. In each, I challenged myself to find one alternative arrangement that I felt was as equally successful and compelling as the original. For now, I am calling them "Primary Version" and "Storage Version"—the latter referring to the *Cluster*. Thinking about this question of "finality," as you phrased it, was what prompted me to cross-examine my infinitely flexible and style-able materials, and my own assumption that there was only one arrangement called a Sculpture, called Art. I am simultaneously wholly convinced by this, and also raise an eyebrow at it, which is why I sought to give these six works a way out, a double-life, a dual and more complex existence.



P8: Do you find it challenging to address themes of agrarian life while living in an urban environment?

RF: No—in fact, the opposite. When I am in the city, I am seduced by things that remind me of the country, and vice versa. The two realms usefully account for each other if we are careful to avoid exoticism, and rather make use of what is positive, forward-moving and sustainable about each. In my work I draw connections between specific historical moments of pioneering farmsteads (particularly the Dutch *hallenhaus*, a combined barn and domestic interior, where humans and animals cohabitated amongst their tools and food storage), and an artist's live/work existence. They are both environments of self-sufficiency, isolation and control, autonomous zones of extended work and play where the inhabitants make the rules. The overlay of the two territories for me, provide a fertile ground for thinking about object-making.

P8: Is there any extant material related to the exhibition that you wish to send us? (perhaps the text by Aram Moshayedi)?

RF: For my exhibition at the gallery in 2010, *An Accounting*, I was grateful to have Michael Ned Holte write a companion text, available on the gallery's website, here: http://www.ltdlosangeles.com/Past_exhibitionRF.html - it's a raw, poetic piece which really helped set the tone for the show. When Aram Moshayedi and I began discussing what sort of written contribution would be appropriate for *Ruminant Recombinant*, Aram had the brilliant idea of mirroring the *Clusters'* re-combinatory gestures as the conceptual framework for his essay. Scrambling Michael's exact words, and effectively "tilling the land," Aram constructed a brand new text, freshly evocative of the nuances of this exhibition's timbre.