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fine ARTS

VIRGINIA OVERTON

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Opening Thursday, 24 February, 1800hrs

Jean-Claude Freymond-Guth
Brauerstrasse 51
8004 Zürich, Switzerland

T +41 (0)44 240 0481
office@freymondguth.com
www.freymondguth.com

Wed - Sat 14 - 18hrs
Saturday 12 - 17hrs

Or by appointment

We are very pleased to announce the first solo exhibition of Virginia Overton (born Nashville, TN, lives New York, NY) in Switzerland.

Pushed against the wall and hung from a rope. Drawn together. Revealed in plain sight. A balance act and the slide down. A next time.

If this describes our contemporary condition in anyway, Virginia Overton's sculptural constructions are both a reflection and a product of this precarious existence — one that negotiates a contingent context of temporary relationships and incorrigible spaces. Where Overton's practice may intimate a social terrain, it is wholly enacted in the physical register. These are heavy-duty yet teetering analogs that depend on its surrounding conditions (dimensions, gravity, temperature, moisture, tension, pressure, time, etc.) and its provisional relationships for stability.

The material elements that comprise Overton's sculptural work must then be able to withstand constant displacement and renegotiation while holding its own position long enough. For Overton, the possible usages — both creative and functional — of construction materials and commercially produced objects lend itself to this task as well as carry a visual valence.

The wood beam, light bulb, plastic mirror, ratchet strap, chair, and metal ladder among others are part of a specific inventory of materials Overton uses to create her elegantly spare sculptures and temporary arrangements. In a recent exhibition at the Sculpture Center in New York, Overton presented two works in the catacomb-like spaces of the building that exemplified this approach. In one area, Overton wedged an orange utility ladder brought from her studio into a concrete space with same corresponding size, leaving the ladder dangling horizontally off the floor unmoored from its usual function — it is now a temporary art object until deinstallation.

In the choice of materials and their ad hoc configurations, Overton locates artistic practice continuous with the creative problem solving, or what she describes as 'fixing', that occurs in daily life. These are provisional solutions done with limited resources usually outside of any formal skill set. These are solutions to prop up; to hold together; to illuminate; to move things; to keep things going; to make something out of it. Overton continues these operations in her art production; however, nothing is necessarily broken that needs fixing here. For her, these are situations and spaces that give rise to the generative possibilities created from the need to figure things out.

A recent invitation for Overton's exhibition in Basel, Switzerland, features a snapshot that she took in passing of a maroon flatbed pickup truck parked in a rustic setting. A single thin ratchet strap holds down an impossibly tall stack of wooden shipping pallets to the truck — perhaps just long enough for the unwieldy payload to reach its destination. Similarly a few years earlier, Overton drove a borrowed pickup truck down South for her VA4398UV, (2006), project, collecting discarded objects in the cargo space along the way. When she arrived in Memphis from New York her truck resembled the one she would find later capture in a snapshot along the road. It is no coincidence that wooden pallets, utility straps, heavy machinery, and other materials occur in Overton's work. These elements make up the pared-down, rugged aesthetics that characterizes her work.

By nature of their basic physical attributes and placement, these objects can also be a source of displacement and negotiation. The work is not only subject to surrounding conditions but can be a producer of it — they reflect, block, light up, and hold down. The centerpiece of her exhibition at Dispatch, *Untitled* (2010), featured two large sheets of slouching plastic mirror propped up on opposing walls by a wood beam, creating a reflected infinity from repurposed materials. As the mirror pieces buckled from the pressure of the supporting beam, multiple spaces proliferated in its imperfect, scratched reflections beyond the confines of the small gallery space.

In her photographic work, Overton handles images much like physical material: to be manipulated, repurposed, put under pressure, and transposed. This includes representations of visual displacements such as images of reflections and illuminated liminal spaces.

For her contribution in the Greater New York exhibition P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Overton's floor piece, *Untitled (chimney)* (2010), involves a double displacement operation: a digital trompe l'oeil image of a mirror reflection revealing the light shaft above the entrance to the museum. A space and image now to be stepped on.

In describing their equilibrium series, which depicts common objects balancing together in playfully impossible arrangements, artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss mention their interest in the eventual entropy of these fragile constructions. Their well-known film *The Way Things Go* (1987) document this unraveling as a series of causal events catalyzed by the artist as a way "to steer the objects in a certain direction during yet another of their inevitable collapses."

In the movement, positioning, and use of the materials in her practice, Overton's objects similarly achieve moments of stability but are not pushed into collapse. What is precarious and contingent becomes manifested in material and physical relationships. Because Overton works from an economy of objects and operations rather than from the surplus material universe of Fischli and Weiss, the stakes shift toward the ability to construct a sustained, new configuration with these building blocks, however long as possible and on to the next time.

-Howie Chen*

Virginia Overton was born in Nashville, Tennessee and received her BFA, University of Memphis, TN. She lives in New York.

Recent exhibitions and projects include (selection) : Mitchell-Innes and Nash, NY (g), White Columns, NY (g), Republique-Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris F (g), Elizabeth Dee Gallery, NY, (g), Basel 41, Basel, CH (g), PS1 MoMA, NY (g), Dispatch, New York, NY (s), Cheekwood, Nashville, TN (s), , Museum of Contemporary Art, Tuscon AZ (g), le Magasin-CNAC, Grenoble, F (g), Artlab at AMUM, Memphis, TN (g), Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, NY (g), Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY (g), Powerhouse, Memphis, TN (s), Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, NY (g), Brooks Museum, Memphis, TN (s), Powerhouse, Memphis TN (s)

*=written for Virginia Overton's show „Untitled (Milan)“, 2010 at N.O. Gallery, Ilaria Barbieri, Milan, IT