

ARTFORUM

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Olga Koumoundouros

REDCAT

Los Angeles-based artist Olga Koumoundouros converts two-dimensional graphics and typography into sculptural, at times quasi-architectural, forms. A recent example is her 2003 work *Town Meeting: After Acconci*—a wood-framed and sheathed buttelike structure. Only after climbing atop the plateau could one see that it comprised massive, three-dimensional letters spelling out the word **TERROR**, with the hollow of the *o* providing a makeshift safe room.

The artist employed a similar method at REDCAT for her installation *Demand Management*, 2009. Within the conventionally cubic gallery stood a high, curving white wall, which defined a large circular volume. Entering the structure through a doorway, audiences encountered a vertical plane running from the center of the cylindrical interior to the edge. While one might have expected this partition to be a wall of uniform thickness, it turned out to be a very narrow, sharp-edged wedge—a sliver of the circle made solid and tangible. Koumoundouros, it turns out, based the floor plan on a pie chart, which she lifted from *Harper's Magazine*, visualizing the distribution of wealth in the United States. The slim shape represents the one percent of the population that holds a full third of the nation's wealth—a figure made all the more egregious when blown up room-size and rendered in 3-D.

Immediately, one noticed small angular forms covered in collaged newspaper that penetrate the wedge: the tip of what was, in essence, the iceberg on the other side, a seemingly gravity-defying Möbius strip of appliances and domestic accoutrements—a bed, toilet, dish rack, lamp, chair, bathtub, laptop, refrigerator—that stretched from floor to ceiling. Countering the flat planes and clean lines of the pie chart, the components were joined in odd tangencies, forming a structure with an impressive sense of movement, like a juggling act with no juggler, frozen in time. The structure comprised a list of essentials for a modern studio apartment and was covered entirely with bits of newspaper. Most of the clippings were torn so small as to offer only glimmers of stories; but while headline-making milestones were hard to come by, one could detect information on the general state of affairs, economic and otherwise, among headlines announcing comedienne Carol Burnett's seventy-sixth birthday or evidence that H&M was dominating retail clothing advertising. As in collaged work ranging from Picasso to Rauschenberg to Franz West, the papers anchor Koumoundouros's sculpture in time.

Just as *Town Meeting: After Acconci* seemed a parody of the way in which a complex web of politics, beliefs, and actions can be reduced to a catchword, Koumoundouros here seizes upon the inequities that the pie chart represents while at the same time rejecting their simplification into a graphic. In merging the intensely associative potential of collage and



Olga Koumoundouros, *Demand Management*, 2009, mixed media. Installation view.

assemblage with post-Minimalist sculptural space, and in tweaking conventional expectations of the gallery and the home, she renders the statistic-based abstraction of the chart uncomfortably inhabitable and converts the basic amenities of domestic life into an object of contemplation. The appalling economic reality represented by the pie chart remains clear, but the meaning of her interrogation is left open. As artists of a previous generation used collage and assemblage to explore matters of class, politics, and identity relevant to their era, so too does Koumoundouros—in a time no less conflicted but clearly not as optimistic.

—Christopher Miles