

Hand and Foot Notes

Here are some thoughts and notes about the project rooms exhibition.

"By Hand and Foot" show title

The show is about mobility: movement toward opportunity in America.

The cyclical interconnections between American myth, personal agency and social dynamic. There is a dialectic between the redeeming and necessity of striving behind ambition and the abuse behind and exhaustion of certain models. I care about that contI am thinking of the body holding memory of cultural tropes and expectations of the American dream and tragedy and our own bodily volition to re-enact certain tropes like the pioneer story or ladder of success or Horatio Alger's "pulling oneself up by one's boot straps". That success is achieved by the individual alone...American rugged individualism. I'm more interested in the interconnectedness of power, people, and agencies to bring forth a step up. The tar ladder references the multitudes mentioned in the Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri book "Empire" following an ascension not based on the old narratives, one that is not from bodily labor alone, but one of ever-shifting terms.

"Pull"? (the plaster cart

The Pioneer story is one of searching for a home, a place to land and plant oneself, squatters' rights and land claimed simply through bodily hard labor and bodily occupation. An American story that politicians to this day employ in their rhetoric. How is the "American Dream" complicated for the middle class nowadays, a joke for so many hard working Americans and yet there is the reality that there are those that do improve their living, one that permits a better life for their children. How does a garden car with bark covered wood and rustic housing construction with the lights from a Chevy Cavalier and a pair of Levi jeans make a pioneer wagon? Invoking the histories of numerous migrations: Gold Rush to the west, Dust Bowl during the Great Depression, The Great Migration towards the industrial Midwestern and Northern towns after slavery.

This narrative has an interplay with power structures such as who climbs the ladder how meritocracy works in the US and the final component is the body and mind's participation in the narrative/ What all Americans' justly deserve: God given right to a little piece of land to call their own. How come we are so hard on those that don't "make it"? Is it their fault?

Power within vs. Power given vs. Power taken

To climb and move upward class levels self-improvement, higher ground, financial betterment, and class mobility.

To travel or move vs. stagnancy

There is a violence inherent within the striving. The reach, the ascension requires will, agency, space, energy and consumption of resources and human energy of others.

Is the representation of the body that of the walker, the climber? Or is it the representation of those stepped on? Is the cart or wagon with pioneering or American historical referent a monument to that struggle or is it entombed, embalmed in plaster and seized up in paralysis. I began the plastering as pours but that suggests an entropic enveloping of the earth. This dynamic is not the inevitable forces of nature to reclaim, nor do I believe that it is a retaliatory fate. I preferred the mark of the hand in the laying up of the plaster with the putty knife. This makes it structural and more architectonic, a deliberate encasing and rigidifying. At the same time the plaster being gestural is expressionistic. The plastering is full of agency of the doer and the marker of a hand making quick decisions and holding idiosyncrasy and memory of a body.

"Locomotion?" (tarred jack structure)

The jacks are a violent assault on the opulence and grandeur of the chandelier. Yes we are in decadent times. The twinkle of the crystal provides is dizzying mesmerizing and optical and a measure of currency - conspicuous consumption. To be "jacked is to be fucked; a car jacking. It is also the incremental repeated movement towards the prize: jacking off. Or is this class war?

This is not a domestic object- yes it belongs in interior space but its use value is not that of everyday, not about basic needs: food, shelter, and warmth.

It may even be something at a celebration hall for rent, a restaurant, boutique, hotel lobby but those that can afford it can bring such a festooned apparatus into their domestic realm.

The tension between being shafted, jacked and own our participation in this undermining. Do we get up and climb?

The two enhanced metal jacks are covered in tar. The tar is corporeal in its nature: crusty and sticky like drying blood, internal fluids, and scabbing skin. This is the tar of the road traveled toward ascension. It is the travel that leads to apotheosis? Suffering leading to a final ascension to the divine, Homeric in nature, Christ story too.

The route itself is a violent one it is full of tragedy exploitation, physical exhaustion and toil. The tar is the asphalt, the coals from the earth

it is a fugitive materials always moving and shifting and adapting, it is people of color whose labor and exploitation fueled American wealth, it is a pejorative term linked to "tar baby", it also references abuse through "tar and feathering". It is the color of the fuel itself that came from coal that sustains this country. Energy. Is this particularly about America? I'm not so sure but it is about people trying to have a better life. Everyone is trying in one way or another to move towards betterment sure enough as hot air rises. More levity. The A-frame is minimalist industrial sculpture Anthony Caro perhaps? It is the ladder without rungs, it leads up and the chandelier is the prize. Is the chandelier on the backs of those that have labored for the wealthy or is it the laborers finally getting their due. The Prize is cocked off kilter from the ascension from the journey from the struggle.

Is the jack the people, those that are making their way? Is the jack the ladder that the chandelier owner climbed on the backs of the people?

The ladder is also a balance piece. Once again I challenge the laws of physics. The placement is precarious and destabilized. (Of course it will be secure) But the laws of physics are compromised "for every Action there is an equal and opposite reaction" The two jacks posed at each other. One jack is larger and longer it is met at the top by a shorter thinker jacks. The smaller jack also keeps the strident angle so the longer jack from kicking out. It is a dance of balance and forces that come together into a single form. That comes together to create the ascension.

The two sculptures are pitted against one another. Plaster: ancient, historical, canonized, stagnant, white, rigid, brittle, smooth, sets up when hot, structural, vs.: Tar: modern, not structural, shifting, versatile, melts when hot, black, gritty, resilient, weathering.

One sculpture is gravity the other is levity. One is very expressive with mark of the hand, and assemblage of various materials vs. a cleaner post minimalist industrial metal structure with a readymade. One is static... mobility immobilized and the other is energetic. One is a failed model and the other with energetic with indictment and potential.

**There is a third piece I am working on that takes into account some of the information we spoke about in the meeting. This would hopefully take the place of the wall drawing. The show title is "By Hand and Foot" and is set. The sculpture titles are only working titles. I'll let you know about it once its closer.