



Left: Ligorano/Reese, *Morning In America*, 2011. 2 views of ice sculpture, 22 x 4 ft. Below: Liliana Porter, *The Intruder*, 2011. Duraflex, 28 x 41 in.

show, *The Intruder*, juxtaposes a crowd of over 50 figurines varying in size, era, material, and culture. A white knitted toy poodle, Mao in a gray uniform, a cowgirl, and a white porcelain Chinese figure take precedence in terms of size, followed by birds, ducks, Pinocchio, a very small drum-playing pig, a tiny clown, and a dog. The smallest players in this ensemble piece include a wooden Mickey Mouse and a replica of Jackie and Jack Kennedy in their presidential convertible. An equally small blue clown faces an empty ceramic pitcher decorated with the face of George Washington. In this group portrait, America's international stature is dwarfed by communist specters and superficial cultural icons. Porter positions these objects on her world stage "to break up the linear perception of time and to make simultaneous things, situations, and objects that are not." She wryly puts forward and critiques the values represented by each object. Does this portrait question our cultural values in relation to those of the Kennedy era? Every thought about this haunting, complex, and ambiguous composition leads to another thought.

prints and a video documenting sculptural works. The video focused on a single image—a monumental ice sculpture of the words "MIDDLE CLASS," which slowly melted as Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders pronounced his vision of an America on the skids, with pulsing, apocalyptic music in the background. While the video is very short, lasting only a minute or two, it has staying power.

Ligorano/Reese call their public ice sculptures "temporary monuments." They form words such as "ECONOMY" and "DEMOCRACY" with these sculptures, which often make timely appearances in politically charged sites: Foley Square, on the edge of the Wall Street financial district, during the 79th anniversary of the Great Depression; in front of Denver's contemporary art museum during the Democratic National Convention in 2008. It is particularly clever of Ligorano/Reese to photograph and videotape these sculptures, which, once installed, can weigh more than a ton and take as long as 24 hours to melt. Video allows them to transcend the difficulties of photographing sculpture, which remains tricky in the sense that it offers only a two-dimensional view and gives no sense of depth,

but often their works appear from only one angle. The words "MIDDLE CLASS" are unalterably frontal, disappearing bit by bit as Sanders intones his judgment of an America driven by greed. Just as our middle class is slowly wearing away, so does the ice piece inexorably come to an end.

There is a larger point to be made here—about the use of legible language as a component of visual art. The words in these works are what they are, *denoting* what they literally mean; however, it is possible for their history—the event of their disappearance over time—to act in a manner *connoting* such concepts as decay, failure, and loss. Part of the power of the film images lies in giving sculpture, usually thought of in static terms, a performative aspect, which suggests change, movement, and emotional power. Adding to the complexity is the portrayal of volumetric art in two-dimensional terms, which may well expand our notion of how sculpture can function in a photograph. Ligorano/Reese work this out quite successfully in *Morning in America* (2011), whose weight can be felt despite the flat perspective. In terms of materials, too, *Morning in America* decisively changes our expectations

of sculptural art: despite its status as a monument, the sculpture inevitably decays; it is not permanent. Ligorano/Reese are to be thanked for giving us a vision of resistance even as they underscore the unrelenting decline of the American middle class.

—Jonathan Goodman

NEW YORK
Liliana Porter
Hosfelt Gallery

Although many artists incorporate figurines, toys, animals, and signs into their work, Liliana Porter's take on this strategy stands out for its overtly political, international layers. For example, one work in her recent





Situations with Lost Objects (2011), a wall-sized assemblage on four panels, features another incomplete narrative enacted by a black Mickey Mouse shoe and foot, a car going in circles, a milkmaid with pails of red paint or blood, and a car moving away from wrecked objects. This work incorporates thick waves of paint and line drawings to set an eerie mood of someone or something careening out of control.

The installation *Man with Axe* (2011) took up most of the largest gallery. The carnage was everywhere—smashed miniature chairs, a broken Che Guevara plate and bust, a beheaded Tweety Bird, a destroyed homestead, a moose with one antler on the ground, a gardener watering a broken ceramic rose. The top half of Charlie Brown’s head lay in a glittery white substance. There were broken watches and clocks, old books, white ceramic soldiers planting a flag—the whitewashing of American “victories”?—tiny horses, musicians, ships, suitcases, maps, and signs of domestic life interrupted. References to religion included deep blue dye spilling out of a ceremonial drinking vessel. Porter couldn’t resist adding mirrors

to suggest that we, the viewers, let this disaster happen, and that someone among us is, indeed, the villain, the *Man with Axe*.

—Jan Garden Castro

CINCINNATI

Alysia Fischer Manifest Gallery

Alysia Fischer’s recent exhibition, “Consumption,” featured seven extraordinarily handsome works made from what she calls “diverted materials,” specifically inner tubes from a local landfill. In *Chrysalis Forms* (2011), Fischer turns the stiffly awkward substance of the tubes into a pair of suspended, lacy, almost egg-shaped forms. The elongated ovals cut from the material to produce this open look were scattered on the floor below. Each piece hung on a hand-forged steel hook, also made of diverted material. Fischer writes, “My studio practice involves hand-cutting, hand-sewing, and hand-forging objects, with an industrial sewing machine stitching what my hands cannot.”

The diversity of the objects that come from her industrial sewing machine and self-limited raw materials was one of the impressions

generated by this small show. *Flight* (2010), a hanging fan-like arrangement of panels with none of the delicate openings that mark *Chrysalis*, suggested an unknown, air-breathing fish that flies, which may not have been the artist’s intention at all. Her stated purpose for these works is to “challenge viewers to reconsider what they send to landfills and think about whether those objects may have value within another context.”

Bloom (2010), the third of the large pieces, was, for me, the least pleasing with its suggestion of an ineffective rocket. A quartet of small pieces completed the show, two of them located in the adjoining restroom. The latter, *Camellia* (2011) and *Pill* (2010), were the smallest of the lot, one made of bits of inner tube and the other of upholstery stuffing, suggesting that Fischer finds uses for her own leftovers.

Imminent (2009), an engaging little work, incorporates valve stems from some of the inner tubes; they spike out from the rotund shape (upholstery stuffing inside an inner tube) so that it resembles a small animal that could almost be a pet. Those valve stems, however, might hurt the hand

that strokes. Or, given the name, the object might be a bomb waiting to go off. It’s an unsettling piece. *Projectile* (2009) continues that dichotomy. Its tapered shape exactly suggests its title: the sharp end could certainly pierce, but the form and surface (petal-shaped, overlapping pieces of inner tube) are markedly beautiful. The black surface gleams. Another found element is introduced here, although it remains invisible.

Projectile is formed around a glass vase.

Good intentions, i.e., to re-use rather than discard, are not enough to make art. Fischer’s scrupulous workmanship and flights of imaginative insight, however, bring her good intentions firmly into that realm.

—Jane Durrell

PHILADELPHIA

Paul Swenbeck

Fleisher/Ollman Gallery

For more than a decade, Paul Swenbeck has made cross-media work that materially explores the translation of marginalized practices into contemporary culture. His visual and theoretical sources range from the occult (he grew up in Salem, Massa-

Above: Liliana Porter, *Man with Axe* (detail), 2011. Wooden platform with objects, 45 x 144 x 152 in. Below: Alysia Fischer, *Imminent*, 2009. Hand-sewn inner tube, valve stems, and upholstery stuffing, 7 x 10 x 7 in.

