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Fall 11-1-2011

Flotsam & Jetsam

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Recommended Citation

Shake, Nicolas S., "Flotsam & Jetsam" (2011). *CGU MFA Theses*. 36.

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My work is pastoral and post-apocalyptic with one foot firmly planted in historical painting and the other in traditional still-life, so it is entropic and sanguine, gleeful, despondent, and matter of fact. It comes at a point in time when the fiction of Nature as a refuge is no longer viable, persuasive or convincing. But rather than rehash this fact, my work celebrates the pastoral's everyday ordinariness, the capacity for the viewer to experience something wondrous amidst decline. I focus on the cast-off household and utilitarian items that show up in the desert on the outskirts of Los Angeles. The items I engage with could easily be categorized as rhapsography, but it is this insignificance that gives them the ability to be reassigned a new aesthetic value, transforming the rubbish into something unexpected by capturing and conveying its uncanny power and peculiar beauty.

In my work I engage in the act of gleaning; I arrive after the initial act has already transpired and take from that the fragments what has been left behind. The items are allowed to continue on in a life that was never intended or anticipated. A bouquet of debris is arranged and, for a time, lives out its existence in the austere light of the desert. At other times the arrangements comes to life at night. The nocturnes are powered with energy and light that needs no help from the surrounding public utilities. The simplest of things, a flashlight, illuminates the images.

When I am addressing a sculpture, it starts with a selection of one item at a time, piece-by-piece coming together, juxtaposing practical with caprice. I also engage in chronicling, bringing objects into the studio not in the physical form but through their painted depictions. The erected structures in the photographic and painted works have the

semblance of solidity even while the objects continue to corrode. Returning to the same spot in the desert time and time again, I watch new items accumulate while others decay. My work captures the history of impermanence, and emphasizes the ever-changing value of objects.

When constructing works onsite, I accept that there are elements beyond my control. The photographs crystallize the image in a single moment. A photograph is a fixed form of a specific time and series of objects that may no longer exist in that locality. The perception of time through my paintings is fundamentally different; they now function as a monumental still-life history of the decay, in a permanent form. It is not human achievement that is now celebrated; it is that achievement's deterioration.

There is an element of freedom, play, and acceptance, which is innate to the items themselves; stacking, constructing, pulling, prodding, dragging and wedging each article into place, the site becomes more than just a tragic site of decay. Memory becomes a focal point, reminding how it both serves us with great acuity and ultimately falls to its own enviable entropic predicament. Perhaps the work fits into the tradition of *memento mori*, reminding us of the impermanence of everything, even of those things that are seemingly stolid. The desert is an equalizer and magnifies and intensifies this fact, repeatedly bleaching from existence that which has not adapted.