

Artadia's 15th Birthday Adventure in NYC

Rozalia Jovanovic, Thursday, October 16, 2014



Bill Davenport, Enter Through the Junk Shop (2014).
Courtesy of the artist and Longhouse Projects

What starts in a junk shop, ends in a fire museum, and involves a crochet-jam? Most art exhibitions don't lend themselves to this kind of riddle, but Artadia's 15th Anniversary Exhibition happens to. The show celebrates the organization's 15-year history, over which time it has given out over 285 grants (unrestricted awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000) to artists across six cities—Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco (next year, they add New York)—by bringing together the work of 20 Artadia awardees. Curated by Gianni Jetzer, the show, which runs through October 25 at Longhouse Projects, is a fun antidote to the white cube exhibition.

Enter Through the Junk Shop(2014), an enticing yard-sale-cum-art-installation at the entrance of the gallery is, in effect, artist Bill Davenport's answer to the museum gift shop. There, visitors are invited to buy a tie, a funky painting, or a wire clothes hanger that the Houston-based artist, toying with the art world's notions of value, has transformed into art by adding his signature or a painted statement and hanging it in an artful display. It also just may have the power to lure unsuspecting passersby into this art exhibition.

Blurring the lines between a white cube gallery space and non-gallery space or other kinds of community spaces seems to be part of Jetzer's plan for the show. Several large crocheted wall-hangings by San Francisco-based artist Ramekon O'Arwisters hang in one room. As works of art, they fit in the white-walled setting at Longhouse Projects, but they were created during an in-gallery "crochet-jam" that allowed visitors to bring clothing items to be shredded and woven into the colorful community-oriented works. The table used during the jam is still in the room.

As a testament to Artadia's vision, looking at the works in any given room or space, you get the feeling you either know the artist or feel like you should. Some of the artists are well-established though perhaps undersung like Meg Cranston, whose Pop-like painting seems as inspired by advertisements as it does by Instagram, while other artists, like Ryan Foerster and Margaret Lee, are newer and buzzier. Lee's contribution to the show is a kitschy humorous sculpture of bananas, a chain, and a rose. Yet another contingent display works slightly beyond their primary focus like Stanya Kahn whose clean cartoon-like drawings of a figure with a phallic object are outside her main practice, video.

Outside the gallery, two works are visible from the street. For Foerster's installation, the artist, who according to Jetzer is interested in "imperfect processes," covered a wall adjacent to a parking lot with colorful misprinted newsprint paper. The other exterior-facing work is just as grabby: Glowing from the window of the gallery (facing the street) is a large light-box image of a sunset with the phrase "When the Fun Stops," which artist Cayetano Ferrer appropriated from a brochure for gambling addicts.

But the gallery is not the only venue for the show. Across the street, at the New York City Fire Museum, the show continues. Nestled among the antique fire trucks and fire-related artifacts from as early as the 19th century (and worthy of a visit in their own right), are delightfully placed works of contemporary art including several paper sculptures by Weston Teruya. On the second floor, Teruya's paper rendering of a cake, *A Moment (Harriet Duren)* (2014), was inspired by a story written by a female fire fighter named Harriet Duren whose team once saved a

man's life and thereafter received a yearly gift of a cake. Teruya's site-specific works based on stories by people in New York's firefighting community resonate unexpectedly with Artadia's own profile as a community-centered organization.

Back at Longhouse Projects, a large plywood wall has been installed at Jetzer's request. The intention, Jetzer said, was to transform the space, which normally houses shows that have a more "corporate feel." While it took some convincing to get the approval, he added that the raw touch was necessary to more appropriately reflect the organization. According to Jetzer, "The story of Artadia is something else."

"Artadia's 15th Anniversary Exhibition," curated by Gianni Jetzer, is on view at Longhouse Projects and NYC Fire Museum, through October 25, 2014.