

MARGO LEAVIN GALLERY

812 n. robertson boulevard los angeles 90069

Gonzales, Elyse. *Shana Lutker, Anna Sew Hoy, Brenna Youngblood*. Exhibition brochure for California Biennial. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California Art Museum, 2008.



IALA

an arm) or the imprints of several different lives. Sew Hoy asked friends and family involved in the work, either in physically making it or in supporting her emotionally, to etch their names on the side of the wood.

Complementing these objects is *Untitled* (2008), a photograph of Sew Hoy's hand working with clay and conspicuously resembling a solidarity gesture. This image, executed in a collaborative project with Eve Fowler, exemplifies the sense of unity that

pervades Sew Hoy's work. Only through the active participation of museum viewers or the generous donation of wood and casts will Sew Hoy's works be completed. And even those that have been completed, have relied on the technical or physical assistance, goodwill or donations of others. Fowler and Sew Hoy's photograph brings that unity and solidarity to the forefront, making it obvious to the viewer that they, just as much as Sew Hoy, are central to this exhibition.



Eve Fowler and Anna Sew Hoy; *Untitled*, 2008; light jet print; 40 x 30 inches; Courtesy of the Thomas Solomon Gallery and Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles

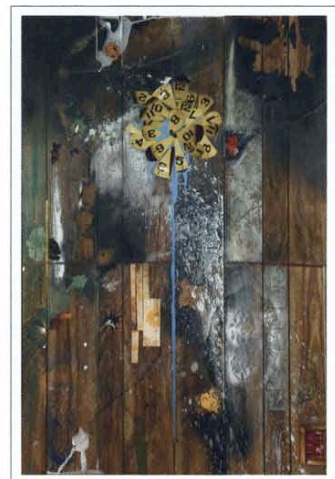
Brenna Youngblood

Brenna Youngblood often carries a camera with her, snapping pictures of all the small details we might overlook walking down the street or through a room: doorknobs, pictures of flowers and floral patterning, graffiti, light bulbs and switches, television sets, vans, trucks, cars, and wood paneling. She focuses our attention by zeroing in on specific items which would normally register, if at all, as everyday moments. Her photographs slow us down, so we see all these objects anew, and pulled from their settings they take on a singular appearance as in *GRAB* (2008) or become even beautiful as in *Light Switch* (2007).

In addition to photographs, Youngblood builds compositions using layers of paint and collaged elements, including cut out portions of her photos, which often act as the grounding force in her canvases. Her collaged photos, as well as the other materials she includes, allow our eyes

to latch on to recognizable imagery but her use of paint guides our experience of these objects. That experience often remains mysterious as the narrative surrounding her work is never fully disclosed and one is easily seduced by the formal rigor of the work.

Some of Youngblood's works allude to domestic and urban landscapes that at once seem dire and hopeful. In *The Backbone of Resentment and Reassurance #79* (2006) we catch glimpses of a domestic space, complete with faux wood paneling, but the chaotically splattered paint gives it a sinister appearance, as though it has been the site of a traumatic event and is now a place in ruin. Even time has been fractured, indicated by the broken face of the clock. But it is also the clock that forms one of Youngblood's signature images: a flower of carefully articulated petals. Another bloom can be seen in the lower corner. While the



The Backbone of Resentment and Reassurance #79, 2006; color photographs, acrylic paint/medium and spray paint on wood panel; 72 x 48 inches; Collection of Marc Selwyn, Los Angeles



STATION, 2008; color photographs, acrylic paint/medium, and collage on two canvases with found frames and stool; 85 x 46 x 18 1/2 inches

All images courtesy of the artist and Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

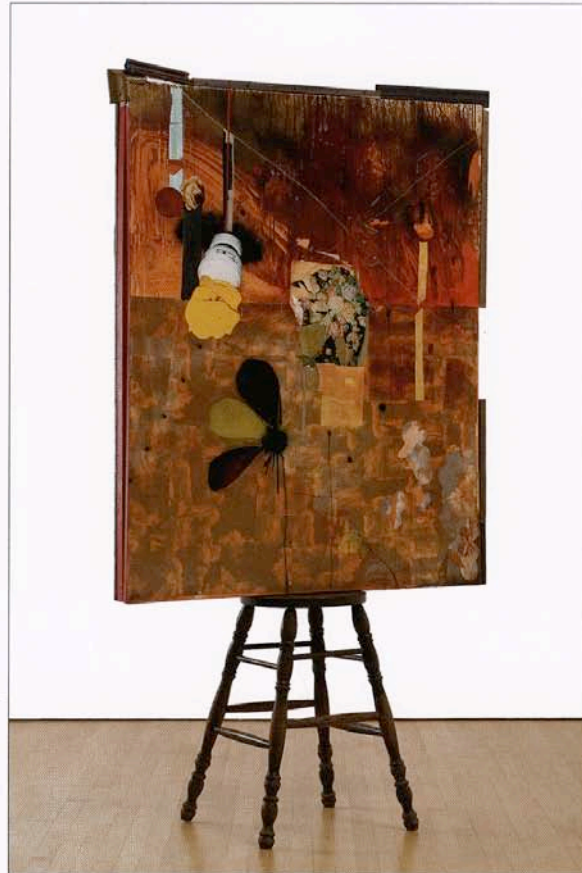


image may suggest a period of destruction, regeneration nonetheless finds its way into the ruins. Outside the domestic spaces, Youngblood's world incorporates views of the street. *Color Checker* (2007) depicts a clunky old van she's photographed, taken apart, and then reassembled against an empty, dark background and set into a found frame. Cartoon-like characters painted on the doors peer out, while above, each of the windows has been painted over with a bright color. The wire vertically attached over the jaunty, yet dilapidated van, lends to the experience of looking at the work, and feeling as though you are picking your way through the detritus you might see in any big city.

In *STATION* (2008), Youngblood's most recent work, she moves the canvas off the wall and into the space of the gallery turning her two-sided painting into a sculpture. By using the stool as a

pedestal, Youngblood creates an experience in which the viewer is encouraged to walk around the canvas, seeing it from different vantage points. Being able to consider the work from different perspectives is key to her methodology and describes more fully the world she sees around her and the one we live in: complex and multilayered. These works aren't meant to be easily digested—if anything, they disorient and upend the

natural order of things. In *STATION*, Youngblood uses clouds on printed stationary below the "horizon line," an especially confounding move given that a flower, being nourished by the sun, or a light bulb, in this case, grows from them. Even her photograph *Vertical VHF* (2008) which would normally be read horizontally is hung vertically, momentarily throwing the viewer off kilter. That moment, very simply yet powerfully, makes us realize that Youngblood helps us to reassess our consideration of the world around us, absorbing all its complexity and beauty.

Elyse Gonzales
Curator of Exhibitions