

JOHN MCKISSICK'S BACKGROUND IN PHILOSOPHY BURNISHED HIS CURATORIAL

debut, *Utilities*, at Radical Abacus, the project space amid warehouses in the endearingly coined LSD (Lower Siler District), a.k.a. Santa Fe's Utility Closet. The title suggests a collection of incredibly handy objects as useful as forks and spoons. However, within the caveat of art, utility gets questioned or even completely suspended. Although most pieces in the show use industrial materials or otherwise mimic industry, the ten pieces by eight artists in this intimate group exhibition (Amy Albracht, Nicholas Chiarella, Sean Di Ianni, Benji Geary, Lara Nickel, SCUBA, Martha Tuttle, and Bea Varnedoe Verrillo) are, like most art, beyond utility. The works invoke the irony of utilitarianism when trumped by aesthetics.

Sean Di Ianni's piece, *Wash Sand Ramp*, is the only one referencing Santa Fe, however indirectly via its list of materials and obscure title. A two-foot-long white plaster, wheel-less vehicle with purple stripes holds an extracted chunk of floor removed from a nearby, once-neglected bowling alley: George R.R. Martin and art collective Meow Wolf's newest venture. As exhibition director and chief operating officer of Meow Wolf, Di Ianni is in charge of coordinating design, construction, and permitting for the former alley. LSD is home to the most significant renovation/innovation happening in Santa Fe, and the repurposed floor remnant beckons to our city's growing pains of continued relevancy.

*Wash Sand Ramp* outshines notions of aesthetic glee with cumbersome industry. The inactive grey hunk with linoleum accents casually rides in its parodied readymade (modeled after a nondescript structure at the adjacent concrete plant). Indeed,

the whole contraption is awkward, inexplicable, clunky, and disruptive to traffic flows.

In contrast, Lara Nickel's *Siena Bricks* are foreign, carefully cordoned off, and very clean. Her stretched canvases, each measuring 12.25" x 2.75", lying on the floor and arranged in a herringbone pattern, emulate the bricks found at Piazza del Campo in Siena, Italy. They are the most recognizable objects in *Utilities* and cite something incredibly utilitarian—medieval infrastructure. Unlike Carl Andre's floor pieces, *Siena Bricks* are for conceptual inspection only, their astute crispness referencing minimalism as opposed to the soles of billions of pedestrians and horseshoes.

Martha Tuttle's *Concomitance (1)* and *Concomitance (2)* are wall pieces with cotton, silk, and other household items stretched across their cockeyed steel supports. Automotive wire dangles, plastic melts like shriveled skin, and dusty plums suggest ashen flesh. They push up against the wall, at odds with its rigidity and ready to exit on their own, blood and body indivisible. Her domestic and industrial materials merge viscerally and individuate from formal structures.

Benji Geary's installation mocks the dwindling intelligence of consumer culture. *HOW 2 dailies with Daley: process as fetish* is set up on a low plywood platform comically surrounded by yellow safety fence. There's an instructional YouTube video about how to clean a dusty orange extension cord that plays on a clunky, black, Sony tablet propped on an upside-down five gallon bucket. In a Joseph Kosuth manner, Geary also displays on the plywood the actual materials: orange cord, cleaning products, gloves, etc. On the wall above are projected adverts

with the tagline, "Let's do this."

Geary's Daley, the fictional Home Depot dude on YouTube, wears glowing face paint, neon rubber gloves, a plaid shirt, apron, and baseball cap and gives viewers step-by-step directions on how to clean the cord. He provides safety tips along the way and ultimately preserves a highly utilitarian household object, under the vague assumption that the unthinking, manic consumer would otherwise throw the dusty thing away. Daley is the soothing voice urging thriftiness over expenditure. Regarding the show's conceptual framework, curator McKissick does note, our own "preferences are cabled approaches, sheathed in color-coded plastic and towed into the seabed." As if these objects by default signal a short attention span, for which the consumers desperately need a preventative how-to. *HOW 2 dailies with Daley: process as fetish* feels haphazard and derelict and, in true Meow Wolf style, curiously postapocalyptic.

Thankfully, this show looks nothing like a utility closet. Despite its Meow Wolf-heavy cast, it's by no means a Meow Wolf production. Indie warehouses in B-list cities are already the new artistic hotspots and transforming a junkyard into a gallery is as logical as dusting off an extension cord. Don't throw it away.

—HANNAH HOEL

Sean Di Ianni, *Wash Sand Ramp*, plaster, tint, polyethylene, bowling alley floor, 12" x 29" x 12", 2015

