



The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum



Michelle Lopez: Angels, Flags, Bangs

April 6 to September 21, 2014

Sculptor Michelle Lopez explores the contested yet generative place where Minimalism and Feminism converge, diverge, and ultimately reunite. The languages she employs—material, form, and space—seek to, as she says, “corrupt Minimalism,” by making “macho sculpture feminine.” Exploring the fragility of cultural icons by manipulating materials to, in her description, “wilt,” “crease,” and “crush,” she seeks to (re)cover, (de)code, and (re)produce the methodologies of (un)making sculpture by collapsing, expanding, and ultimately releasing it from itself.

The exhibition presents new and recent sculptures spanning three bodies of work. Three works from the *Blue Angels* series (2011–ongoing) lean precariously against the Screening Room walls, with *Blue Angel* (Korean) and *Blue Angel* (United), both 2014, made specifically for The Aldrich. Their larger-than-life size and mirrored surfaces mimic Minimalism, but reject its industrial fabrication and imposing authority. The forms reference crashed fuselages, recalling the trauma of 9/11 and our looming fear of new technology. Lopez physically wrestled the massive steel sheets through intensive folding exercises on her studio floor.

Three works from the *Flags Series* (2014), each comprising a steel rod armature wrapped by malleable pure-lead sheets, are hung along the Ramp Gallery wall. Lopez reshapes symbols associated with victory and patriotism into frail objects. Evocative of surrender or a child’s bike pennant, the craggy finish heightens the sense of attrition or defeat. Although they may be perceived as anti-heroic, deflated, or even ragged, the visibility of their maker’s hand enlivens them, transcending their forlornness—though they droop, they still stand.

Bangs (2013), a site-specific sculptural installation, transforms the diminutive Small Space into an intimate encounter. Mimicking the scale of an elevator, heavy matte-black canvas cloth, cut, sewn, edged, and grommeted by Lopez, drapes across three interior walls, like fringed hair. Deep cuts expose grey felt innards and the folds, assertive in scale, suggestive of a colossal cartoon wig, intuit a being—albeit a bodiless one—as if a female ghost is emerging from the blankets’ curves.

Curated by Amy Smith-Stewart

Michelle Lopez was born in 1970 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, and Guilford, Connecticut. York.

Image: Michelle Lopez, *Blue Angels* (installation view), 2011-12.

Courtesy of the artist and Simon Preston Gallery, New York.

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