

Art in America

Kate Steciw

by Charles Marshall

Schultz,

Jan 13, 2013

Kate Steciw's work investigates the shifting relationship between objects in the physical reality of everyday living and their two-dimensional representations on the Internet. Desire is at the core of this connection, playing out in the networks of commerce that are essential to the artist's practice. Intensely hued stock photography and scads of inexpensive Internet purchases are transformed into sleek, voluptuous wall-hung assemblages that attest to the manic saturation of online consumer society.

Steciw's is an art of gathering and ordering; associative logic and optical intuition seem to be guiding forces. Of the five pieces in her recent exhibition, «Boundless Hyper,» three feature altered photographs the artist pulled off the Web. These C-prints hang in unfussy oak frames and are variously adorned with bric-a-brac, such as stickers, Scotch tape, glass beads, bandages or car ornaments. In each work, two photographs have been completely recomposed into a single abstract image, notable for its lush colors and textures. Objects can be recognized within the composite images, and the combinations are eccentric: an egg and a fitness machine, pipe fittings and flames, sweaters and glass. The works have listlike titles that suggest connections having to do as much with form as with

content, for example: Adhere, Adhesive, Aqua, Alter, Base, Based, Bauble, Blase, Blend, Blending, Blue, Crease, Decanter, Dimension, Elan, Filter, Faulty, Gaiety, Gauge, Glass, Grain, Mason, Masonic, Melange, Mystery, Opal, Opalescent, Own, Owned, Pwn, Pwnd, Sconse (2012).

Central to Steciw's process is a reckoning with the forces that motivate Internet shopping. Desire to enhance one's vehicle, for instance, is spurred by an online image of an automotive ornament. The image stands in for the thing. In Steciw's works, the objects themselves have little inherent value, which might be understood as an inversion of William Carlos Williams's dictum «no ideas but in things.» Here, all things are reduced to representations of ideas.

These three assemblages have a seriousness that is less present in the accompanying wire sculptures. Each titled Live Laugh Love (2012), the two twisting balled-up forms sat elegantly on bright white plinths near the gallery's picture window. The artist created the sculptures by bending and conjoining wire signs she purchased online that spelled out the works' title. On their own, these pieces are close to conceptual one-liners. However, on the afternoon I visited, they cast weblike shadows across the gallery floor. The curvilinear lines of the sculptures and the abstract patterns of their shadows corresponded neatly to the dynamics of the assemblages.

below
*Action, Active, Adult, Adjust, Background, Break,
Breakfast, Blast, Ceramic, Close, Crack, Cuisine . . . , 2012,
C-print with mixed mediums in custom oak frame,
60 by 44 inches*

