

“There is one thing more beautiful than a beautiful thing, that is the ruin of a beautiful thing.”

[Attributed to the French Symbolist painter Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898)]

Like cut and polished agate, the Berlin-based American artist Mia Goyette (b. 1989 in Rhinebeck, NY) presents new sculptures in the form of island landscapes in her first solo exhibition at Galerie Luis Campaña, and the first exhibition after the gallery’s renovation. Mounted on thin-legged pedestals, the surfaces, suggesting an amorphous contour of coastline or a still expanse of water, almost float in space. They appear to portray once biodiverse lagoons, now exploited and decimated. Abandoned there on grayish sandbanks are the isolated and derelict remains of industrial buildings, warehouses, or weathered concrete ruins. The surrounding stagnant water, with its smooth, mirrored surface of pigmented resin, changes between turquoise, ocher, olive, and dark brown and resembles in its coloring a shimmering, but sluggishly viscous oil spill.

As a counterpoint to the scenic sculptures, galvanized aluminum pipes joined by heavily oxidized copper hardware run in fine lines along the walls and around the central column of the gallery. They are supported in part by copper-coated hands with the same oxidized blue surface. The cast hands, like the copper joints, undergo a chemical treatment that exaggerates a natural aging process. Like reliefs, the pipes draw one through the gallery and act as a leitmotif in Goyette’s previous work. The combination of pipes and hands appear repeatedly in various configurations, where they stand in for the basic infrastructure that provides heat and water, and draw a figurative connection to the circulatory system of a body.

The combination of modeled, cast, and found materials, and those supplied from hardware or specialty stores, is significant in Mia Goyette’s sculptures and installations where she unifies these elements; pipes, casts, plastic bottles, bleached and patterned textiles, and the more recent introduction of detailed scale-model architecture. The refinement of these materials through manipulation or further degradation directs our attention to their composition, to their surface, color, shine, opacity, translucency, their rawness or dullness, thereby underscoring their specificity or poetic idiosyncrasy.

In a broad sense, her work returns to the questions of modernism, where assemblage and collage were established in art. The exhibition’s title, ‘Latemodel Picturesque’, refers to the Romantic hierarchy of landscape images, where the picturesque is situated in limbo between the pastoral and the sublime, and describes the renewed appeal of the depiction of decay, using the example of architecture as a site to be reclaimed by nature. In contrast, the modern ruins of industrial and unyielding building materials like concrete and steel are more often subjected to human destruction than to natural dissolution.

Mia Goyette’s works offer viewers an open field of interpretive possibilities. They are often beautiful, even elegant, and precise in their workmanship, but they do not shy away from a documentary and unvarnished view of our lives and environment. They testify to the Romantic desire to connect beauty and dread. They operate as a microcosm where landscape or nature and architecture, in their shrunken and thus, more manageable model scale, can share their space in equal measure. There, man styles himself as the link between them, or worse, with his compulsion to create and to optimize, the supposed reformer.

Mia Goyette, Latemodel Picturesque, 7 März- 25 April 2017  
Galerie Luis Campaña, Axel-Springer-Str. 43 10969 Berlin

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