

WASHINGTON, DC
"Here & Now"

Transformer Gallery

"Here & Now," a two-space exhibition featuring site-specific and site-responsive works by emerging artists, was held simultaneously at Transformer Gallery and at 1840 14th Street NW, a building formerly occupied by the Church of the Rapture. The show's lo-fi materials hummed with energy at a time when exhibitions of so-called "recession art" have drawn suspicion and cynicism. The borrowed space for the show deserves some of the credit—credit that the artists seemed willing to give. Mandy Burrow, for example, created a diorama of the building's history presented through materials found on site. Divided into three focal areas spread over a large space, Burrow's installation presented the building's various lives—a showroom on Washington's Automotive Row, a deli supplier, and a Pentecostal church—using tires, a meat slicer, and Book of Revelations study handouts. One small hideaway assembled from loose rubble spoke to the building's prior—and present—use as a space for revelation.

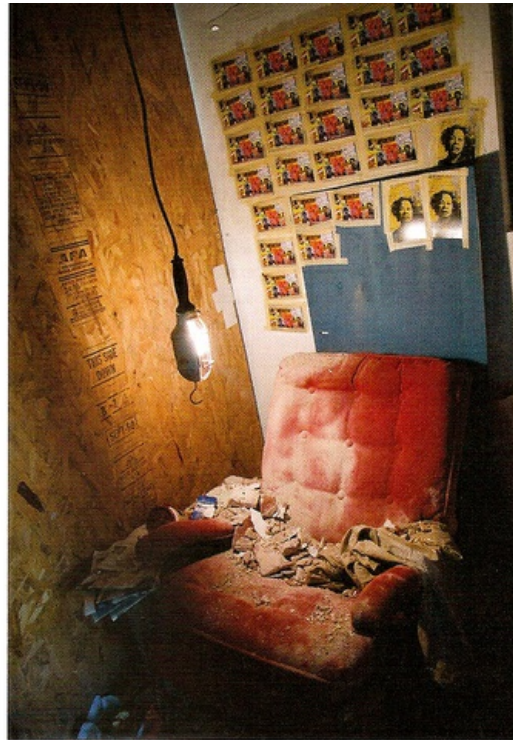
Lisa Kellner also took great advantage of the building, tucking silky cysts into every nook and cranny of an upstairs apartment. Sunlit and weather-cracked, the gray space complemented the bright fuchsias and magentas of Kellner's fabric bioforms. Scattered mohair and flax chords detracted slightly from the overall notion of the room as one giant culture, from which Kellner apparently drew out carcinogens and distilled them in vivid, fiery colors.

Chris Moukarbel's stuffed animal monument and Amy Rubin's hanging trees and drawings were darkly twee. In Mia Feuer's animal barricade, black-and-blue, bruise-colored equine creatures were laid on top of one another as if they had fallen over or been knocked down. Their hooves were painted security-alert orange, and the barricade blocked one of the building's exits.

The work at Transformer was site-specific, but not to this space. Jennifer Burkely Vasher uses drugs collected in her home of New Mexico to weave pills into sculptures; here, her work was both a dangerous funnel and a safety net. (Halfway through the exhibition, works by Mariah Johnson and Valerie Molnar replaced Vasher's in the main space.)

Sonya Blesofsky used packing tape and aluminum foil to make a barely there work that rhymed structures within the space. It was the most ephemeral work on display—even wind affected the state of the skeletal edifice. Blesofsky's contribution was also the most thoroughly grounded in present-day practices. Some other works, like Kyan Bishop and Kate Hardy's fishy installation—in which goldfish swam in wall-mounted half-globes backed by transparencies of photographs snapped at sites around the city—looked more like hometown craft than contemporary art. Graham Childs and Lily deSaussure's collaboration, on the other hand, was shocking: a replica outline of the couple's sunroom, built entirely out of context and placed boldly on the grimy warehouse floor, challenged the dictates of a space and our inborn presumptions of what belongs where.

—Kriston Capps



Top : Mandy Burrow, *This Place*, 2008. Mixed media, detail of installation. Bottom: Lisa Kellner, *Inner Sanctum*, 2008. Mixed media, detail of installation. Both from "Here & Now."

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