

Pick of the Week

by Jody Zellen

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Lynn Aldrich

O' Magnify

Denk Gallery

May 25 - July 13, 2019



Lynn Aldrich at Denk Gallery

Lynn Aldrich has an incredible knack for transforming everyday building and household materials into something unexpected. Throughout her long career, she has continued to delve into the depths of her imagination to create floor sculptures and wall works that are both fascinating and enchanting. What is most surprising about her current exhibition, *O' Magnify*, is the inclusion of works from the mid 1980's when Aldrich was combining painting and sculpted elements that referenced specific artists and the history of art. *Pathways (Fragments After Smithson and Van Gogh)*, 1988 is a shaped canvas with a painted spiral that follows the shape of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* imposed atop an ambiguous void. To the right of these painted elements is a sculpted form that resembles a scorpion's tail. Similarly, in *Visitation (Fragment After Van Gogh)*, 1988, Aldrich paints a fragment from Van Gogh's *Starry Night* on an oblong shaped canvas with a blue upholstered vinyl half circle endpoint. While these early works clearly articulate Aldrich's appreciation of art history, they are playful modifications of the past that are useful in understanding Aldrich's trajectory from representation to abstraction.

Included in *O' Magnify* is one of Aldrich's largest works to date. Entitled *Hermitage* (2019), this work is comprised painted plastic disks as well as a fourteen foot Sonotube which can be entered through a small doorway. Once inside the enclosure, viewers can look up and down. It is a marvel that through the use of

these simple materials, Aldrich has created a unique light and space sculptural akin to the works of James Turrell.

Aldrich's pieces also have an aspect of play. This comes in part from her materials, but also from her sensibilities and the way she combines and repurposes found elements. *Pet Rescue for the Anthropocene*, (2017) is a round silver ring with an array of fake fur swatches in multiple colors and patterns attached to a steel chain leash. On the wall, the artwork alludes to the movement of some absent cartoony animal reminiscent of Giacomo Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*. Also presented are examples of Aldrich's vinyl hose and galvanized steel constructions combined to resemble trees and plant-forms made from house-hold and construction materials. In *Water Tangle* (2018), Aldrich has assembled sections of galvanized steel gutters, creating graceful curves that flow up and down, back and forth like a memory of the movement of dancers on a stage. The gutters in *Reverse the Rain* (2019), also fashioned from galvanized steel, extend up from the floor as a series of vertical columns, each with a unique twist at the top. These works negate the original functionality of the materials, turning them into something more organic and fanciful.

Crack! and *Porthole* (both 2019) are made from hand-cut plastic roofing panels. It is easy to imagine Aldrich in Home Depot looking at the different colors and textures of such substances while pondering the ways she might cut and combine them into sculptures that transform and expand upon their base properties — like making a porthole that references the undulations of the sea from textured plastic.

For more than thirty years, Aldrich has reassigned function to create beautiful works that have both a formal elegance but also speak to the relationship between the natural and man-made worlds. In each successive exhibition, Aldrich has continued to invent new ways of transforming the ordinary into something transcendent.