

Michael Ruglio-Misurell

Project #12

AUGUST 25 – OCTOBER 3, 2009

OPENING RECEPTION - AUGUST 26 5-8PM

It takes exploration and examination in *Project #12* to find the broken pieces and small clues, like derelict eatery signs, that add up to a recreation of what might once have been a shopping mall food court. Garbage abounds. The gallery is stuffed with material—old wood, disused wallpaper, abandoned shower doors, salvaged fluorescent light fixtures, parts of shelving units, broken doors, paneling, foam padding, fabric, wiring, display cases, urinals, carpeting, and much more. But within the disorder can be found discrete groupings. Food trays and empty cups litter tabletops, as well as form hanging curtains. A plastic bottle, part of a fake plant, and a sock rest inside a urinal. Three pairs of men's shorts are tied like flags to a line. These isolated clusters reveal a casual but fully intentional order within the disarray. Ruglio-Misurell's recalls the balancing act of collage, in which chaos and control, cacophony and formalism, are modulated.

Moreover, these arrangements of detritus echo Romantic era exaltation of the ruin—and often of the fake ruin. For Romantics the ruin as fragment created frisson for a viewer between a past and present, a launching point for imagination. Some have suggested that the temporal paradox that made the ruin so compelling in the 18th and 19th centuries was a byproduct of the rise of museum culture. Collected and presented for close examination, antiquity fragments in early museums lost any coherent unity they might have had when viewed *in situ* from a distance. Another aspect of museum history is embedded in *Project #12*. As museum methodologies developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, museum exhibitors borrowed the display strategies of department stores and shopping arcades. *Project #12* evinces that continuing complicated relationship with the inclusion of empty and upended display cases that may once have held jewelry but just as easily could hold museum objects.

These display cases, along with several other items in the installation, came from a deserted store in a local shopping center. That stores are frequently vacated and malls often forsaken all together points to the speed, excess, and waste of the market economy. Shopping fashions change, economic interests move on, spaces are abandoned, accessories and inventories left for waste. Ruglio-Misurell's interest in detritus and the neglected functions similarly to the later works of Robert Gober, whose 2004 *Venice Biennale* installation

included replicas of items washed up on beaches. Ruglio-Misurell's numerous urinals located within *Project #12*, like Gober's sinks and drains and their accompanying pipes, give body to the potential to whisk away the unwanted and excessive. Furthermore, the questions of identity raised by Gober's culver pipes and drains are also touched upon by the traces of habitation that Ruglio-Misurell has located within the installation. Clothing is stuffed in holes. Socks form ties. A tent canopy of cloth covers a makeshift sleeping area.

To consider another artist's work might illuminate the potential of the private spaces in Ruglio-Misurell's installation. Mike Kelley's 1999 work *Framed and Frame (Miniature Reproduction "Chinatown Wishing Well" built by Mike Kelley after "Miniature Reproduction 'Seven Star Cavern' built by Prof. H.K. Lu"* recreates a wishing well monument from LA's Chinatown. With this lumpy partially painted, bricolage mountain-shaped fountain, as is clear from the title title, Kelley is interested in how things are delineated, separated or identified. One of several fantastic elements Kelley inserted into his recreation of the fountain in *Framed and Frame* is what he called a "crawl space/fuck room outfitted with a mattress" under the mountain. Ruglio-Misurell has secreted a bed space both beneath a patched canopy and behind a counter. These beds, as well as other seemingly private areas of the installation, assert a subjectivity that eludes the frames of border politics found in Kelley's work and form a surplus value to the devalued consumerism of disused shopping mall accoutrements. The subjects who have adopted *Project #12*'s food court exceed its form.

Kelley has stated that *Framed and Frame* harbors a wide variety of interests across which he can roam intellectually and not reach any conclusions. *Project #12* likewise touches on sculptural collage, the artistic history of ruins, display strategies, identity, subjectivity, and the market economy's reliance on waste. As in the Romantic tradition, *Project #12* is multiple, or as a recent critic wrote of the Romantic fragment, "[it] refuses to resolve itself into a discrete thought ... scattered as if by some cataclysmic eruption or invasion."¹

For more about Ruglio-Misurell's work please visit his website mmisurell.com.

Substantial donations to Project #12 provided by Westfield Old Orchard Shopping Center and Recycling Systems Inc.



¹ Brian Dillon, "Fragments from a History of Ruin," *Cabinet*, Issue 20, Winter 2005/06.

GALLERY 400

400 SOUTH PEORIA STREET (MC 034) CHICAGO, IL 60607