

RESIDUAL

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PLATFORM centre for photographic + digital arts

Colin Smith

Lynda Gammon is coming to Winnipeg to construct a "mess" at PLATFORM centre for photographic + digital arts. As I'm hacking out the initial scribbles of what you're now reading, the Victoria-based artist is "rehearsing" in her studio the deranged architectural maquettes you're now looking at. She's built for us the latest editions in her long-standing and outstanding and nervy series of recombinant sculptural assemblages known under the rubric *Salvaged*. These works emerged out of a growing grumble with sculpture and a turn toward photography. Inspired and triggered by a spell in Rotterdam, working in an artists' studio complex that had earlier been an abandoned box factory. The artists had occupied this warehouse to live in it as well as work, and renovated the monster with thrift and ingenuity. No fleck of space not thought out; a warren of rooms, and rooms within rooms. Using the inadequate medium of words, I'll strain to gift you an impression of Gammon's *Salvaged* pieces. She mocks out rational architectures through the Infini-D modelling programme (which is three-dimensional) and an operation called archi-animation. But then she starts screwing around with the models in accordance with intuitive, improvisatory, and surrealistic logics. The rooms — humbly fabricated from wood, cardboard, and foam core rescued out of construction-site dumpsters — are unlocked, swivelled, and smashed through each other. B&W photos of rooms and furniture are sculpted into this funhouse; some wind up hidden, some jut. Some are backlit, some live in murk. These photos — also of modest or antiquated means (Polaroid, or shot with pinhole camera) — are heartily manipulated. Cut down, enlarged, darkened, reshot, lightened, resized any way you can imagine. Also, the *Salvaged* may well have little objects tucked into it — miniature furniture that bolster a manic dollhouse memory aspect.

So she makes these really quite large pieces each time out in a kind of sweaty furore, because they're Improvised. Chucking and revising, twisting and taping. Interpolation, interpenetration. Velocity bolted into a flying mass that seems like it might not stay put, impaled into the gallery wall.

A kind of situationist joke.

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" ... will this abstract, hollow junk seem beautiful/ and necessary as just another offering to the// high assimilations: ... "

A. R. Ammons, from his book-length poem *Garbage* (New York: Norton, 1993), page 30.

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What is "garbage" exactly, and who gets the right to define it? After all, a home'd person's discarded refrigerator packing box becomes a homeless person's condominium.

And what might "graffiti" be? Something done with spraypaint on the side of a building, or the latest iteration of the Corporatist Breakfast Special on a billboard?

How you answer these questions will tag you socially.

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Word as container — no. Word as conduit — no. Meaning as metonymic — closer. Word as social effluent — closer.

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I think it fair to imagine we've all had dreams set in structures like Lynda's. Within which we go as hummingbirds, or maybe some maimed animal. Searching for friends, or struggling to evade some enemy. There might be a window or a dead end where one could not logically expect. There might be something hiding beneath the stairs. You might be hearing and questing toward a far-off voice, which might be your mother talking as you hear her from *in utero*. There could be vertigo and transformations. A grappling in strife or affection.

Some of David Lynch's hallways evoke here. Jan Svankmajer's 1988 film *Alice* (a demented transcription of Lewis Carroll). Certain photos of tornado aftermath — wow, here's a boat driven through and sticking out of a house.

Lynda's sculptural assemblages are canny in that while they represent no actual memory, they structurally trigger plenty for anyone standing before them. Which is kind of melancholic and disturbing.

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A smattering of other artists and works that share praxical territory with Lynda Gammon:

Locally: Ken Gregory.

Locally and lately: David Perrett and Robert Pasternak's pieces for the "Scratching the Surface" exhibition at Plug In ICA. Frieso Boning's show "The Winnipeg Trash Museum" at aceartinc.

Not lately but Canadian: Kelly Wood's enormous *Continuous Garbage Project* .

Archivally: Kurt Schwitters losing one "junk tower" after another to flight (Germany 1923/ Norway, 1937 / England, 1947) — away from the nazi state toward what passed for safety.

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"a waste of words, a flattened-down, smoothed-/over mesa of styrofoam verbiage; since words were// introduced here things have gone poorly for the/ planet: it's been between words and rivers,// surface-mining words and hilltops, cuneiform/ records in priestly piles; ... "

Ammons, *Garbage*, page 74.

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Increasing numbers of Gated Communities, armed from the lips to the back teeth in defence of a civil engineering project deploying as much justice as it does sidewalks.

Increasing numbers of Concentric Rings — the citystate as Saturn? — of the wildest sprawls of slum you've never seen. Peasants booted off their land in favour of some megaproject. Shoved into a jobless urbanity.

A souring bridge between.

Globalization is simply increasing everything.

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If rooms might be organs, then hallways could be arteries and veins.

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The Frances Street Squat. The Woodward's Squat. The Pope Squat. Every/ lovely/ cranky/ sexy/
thrifty/ punk house.

Every squat that didn't last long enough to garner a moniker because it was roused by pitbulls
wearing weapons belts, working for greedheads who imagine they should profit from whatever they
steal.

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" ... or is truth/ beauty, whenas so much truth is garbage by, // if by nothing else, obsolescence,
obsolescence, / though, only a matter of habiliments, which are // on and off, not essentials: ... "

Ammons, Garbage, page 99.

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Gammon's smashed-ups might become a simulacrum of the future, babies. The buildings in Canadian
cities are running to ragged. Plenty are a century old, buckled and gapping. Mould and dry rot.
Foundations shift to shot. Inadequate care and monies toward the upkeep.

Some mythical market demands a high rate of return on the social housing.

Accumulated weather has become so expensive.

The children will be left booming bills to pay.

Navigation through a broken maze.

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Each Salvaged is documented. But not kept. Is taken apart.

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Homelessness.

Like a death camp without the amenities.

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The human body as a building that will eventually wear out architecturally.

[Colin Smith]