

For immediate release

BEFORE SHIFTING TO THE BLACKNESS

DAVINA SEMO

September 10 – October 23, 2011

Reception for the artist: Saturday, September 10, 6 – 8 pm

Rawson Projects is proud to announce the gallery's fall exhibition Davina Semo: BEFORE SHIFTING TO THE BLACKNESS. Born in 1981, the artist received her MFA from University of California, San Diego. Currently the artist is included in The 2011 Bridgehampton Biennial, organized by Bob Nickas and Martos Gallery. The exhibition was recently reviewed in The New York Times by Karen Rosenberg. Semo will also be exhibiting concurrently with Martos Gallery in Chelsea.

Below is a short interview between the artist and Rawson Projects.

Rawson Projects: When I first saw your work, what stood out to me was how you manipulated industrial materials to create what appeared to be remnants of urban landscape and decay. Perhaps most interesting, is that you distress and alter the materials rather than use found objects that are already dilapidated. How does decay play into your work? What draws you to construct the objects this way as opposed to using found materials?

Davina Semo: I don't think much about decay per se— in the sense that decay implies a kind of fall from grace. Some of my work does look like something you've seen on the street, but upon closer inspection, it's not falling apart nor is it the aftermath of some disaster; it's totally intact and useless— it's something for you to look at. Occasionally I'm drawn to something I might use as-is, but it's usually an element of a larger structure that is very much still in use. For example, old concrete bridge supports, a fluorescent X painted on a house slated for demolition, broken wire glass in the door of an abandoned school, or lengths of chain link fence and posts - bent and formed around a car that came crashing into it. The car was towed away, but the fence remains in this altered form. I love that it still exists in place— it's useless, it's really a sculpture now.

RP: The aesthetic of your work, at least to me, is profoundly urban – concrete, security glass, chain, one-way mirrors – the materials that one finds at construction sites, run-down liquor stores, separating investigators from criminals. These materials by virtue of their specific use make reference to certain aspects of the urban landscape, especially that of New York and, even more so, poverty in New York. When you envision the works do you think in terms of specific narratives of urban life, or are you attempting to confuse or diffuse those specific narratives?

DS: I'm really interested in something quite simple - which is the basic human experience of affect, or consciousness, or thought - whatever you want to call it. I've spent my life mostly in urban and suburban places, though I don't think of my interests as being specific to those landscapes. I am interested in the aesthetics of how cities repurpose already existing buildings, houses, stores, etc. Similarly, my work is not about poverty, especially not in terms of class or money. The structure of contemporary life - rich or poor - is already profoundly abstract— people are relentlessly urged to exercise "self control"— which is precisely the opposite of human nature. Whether the setting is increasingly populated/urban or abandoned/rural— it feels like we are all headed towards the same violent future, when real need will meet chaos.

RP: The titles of your work, as well, seem to have an, albeit obscured, narrative quality. Are they quotations? How do you conceptualize them in relationship to the work? Do you have a specific title in mind when you begin working on a piece, or does it come after the work is complete?

DS: I use titles to give background thoughts to the works. I like the idea that someone could come see my work, walk around, have their own impression, pick up a checklist, and walk around with this other voice in their head. My titles are not always quotes, but oftentimes they are— recent sources include books by Carson McCullers, Sarah Kane, Jim Thompson, Jane and Paul Bowles, Alfonso Lingis, Graham Harman, Jean Genet— as well as films by people like David Cronenberg and John Carpenter. I never title work before I make it. I keep an ongoing stash of titles, and, when I finish a group of new pieces, I sort of try on different titles. Some titles stick from the beginning and others get moved around until I can't bear to separate the title from the work. That's when I stop.

For more information, please contact the gallery at info@rawsonprojects.com or 718-388-2706.