

MONYA ROWE GALLERY

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For Immediate Release

DEVIN TROY STROTHER

The Me and You, Your Mother and Maybe Even Your Cousin Too
&
The Hey Sister, Soul Sister Go Sister, Woah Sister

September 8 – November 5 2011

Opening reception: Thursday, September 8, 6-8 PM

Because this body of work is my first solo show in New York, I wanted to make work that would introduce me to a new audience. And because the most basic form of an introduction would be to simply stand up and show myself, I felt a form of a self-portrait was in order.

The self-portrait leads me back to the source of inspiration for my previous body of work, which was my Auntie Ann's apartment. In my first show, in Los Angeles last year, I compiled a series of paintings that were derived from a painting that my aunt had hung in her living room. As far as I could remember, she had always had a freestanding shelf. On it were family photos and religious sculptures juxtaposed with knick-knacks from Las Vegas and all sorts of kitsch objects. That shelf became a visual introduction that painted a picture of who my aunt was.

My new body of work is an exploration of sculpture mediated by shelves. I've always had an affiliation with all types of these kinds of units. To me, the most interesting part of the shelf is how it works both as a utilitarian unit while acting as sculptures when they are void of objects. When they are used, they seem to enhance and juxtapose the objects they carry- becoming more complex and concentrated once the objects are added and arranged. The shelf as a platform is what I'm interested in- of course, the objects upon the shelf are significant in their own vernacular, but they seem to take a back seat to the shelf, because the substrate itself is what influences and directs which objects are to be placed on it. The objects placed on the shelf serve two functions: as homages and as a self-introduction.

The first function acts as standing records or homages to many artists who have made a minor to major influence on my work. Rather than just pay homage to them, I try to keep a dialogue with more recent and current trends within sculpture and figures in the contemporary world. Partly the objects and also the shelf as a sculpture represent an abstract idea.

Jonathan Lasker talks about his paintings as a 'kit,' or 'kit paintings'. "*I often think of my paintings as a form of image kit... which offer components of paintings as clues pointing the viewer, not to a finished narrative, but rather to a self-awareness of how one construes a painting.*" Both bodies of my work initially arose from this quote. I abstracted the idea so it could apply to my own. I wanted to move toward a degree of abstraction but not completely. I formally separated all the materials and objects that I use to make collage paintings. I categorized and isolated all the materials and objects one-by-one, into marks, strokes, wet paint, dry paint- all different forms of paint. Isolated and taken out of their natural context, the materials set alone started to resemble sculpture. Flat fields of mixed acrylic paint reminded me of the paint pours of Lynda Benglis' *Blatt* and *Night Sherber*. Dried paint elements resembled Felix Gonzalez Torres' *Untitled (Portrait of Ross)* and Michaelangelo Pistoletto's *Venus of the Rags*. Small wooden blocks and thin multi-colored dowels reminded me of Carl Andre's *Trabum* and Andre Cadere's painted objects.

In this series at Monya Rowe Gallery, these miniature sculpture-look-a-likes become the setting for a group of naked black women arranging these fictional objects. The objects are arranged next to each other as if the women are curating some sort of collection. The paintings talk about the object and the objectified and the rise of the curator being just as popular as the work in the show. I have began to think of these black people as objects that are aware of their situation within the painting; the figures within the composition are somehow knowingly participating in the painting in collaboration with myself in order to make an image. They become actors in a play that I'm writing and orchestrating. The group of black people arranges the objects that represent sculptures that could one day be manifested in actual spatial objects in homage to an artist that I'm particularly interested in.

Secondly, the objects function as a form of introduction. The objects tend to vary while the undercurrent stays the same. Whether the shelf is placed in a lower-class apartment or an upper-class house, the objects are the only different variable, but the outcome stays the same- the unit still serves as a self-portrait. An immediate introduction is made through the objects the person chooses to place on these units. The arrangement of these objects resemble Lasker's idea about kit-painting and arranging objects that wouldn't normally be next to each other to make a composition. The objects I've chosen for the shelves reference and come from the materials used in my paintings. Because my paintings are collage and assemblage-based, they've always had a dimensional quality that I've been slowly exploring in actual spatial sculpture by materializing one of my functional shelves.

This is **Devin Troy Strother's** first solo exhibition in New York and at Monya Rowe Gallery. Strother received a BFA from *Art Center College of Design* in Pasadena, CA in 2009, and completed a residency at *Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture* in Skowhegan, ME in 2010. Strother lives and works in Los Angeles, CA and Brooklyn, NY.

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday 11 - 6 PM

For more information or images please contact the gallery at 212 255 5065 or info@monyarowegallery.com
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