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Jessica Stockholder

CHICAGO, at Kavi Gupta and the Smart Museum of Art

by Kyle MacMillan



Jessica Stockholder: *Assist #1*, 2015, painted metal, ratchet clamp, yellow webbing and felt, dimensions variable; at Kavi Gupta.

With exuberant, quirky and often kitschy creations, Jessica Stockholder has put a significant stamp on the medium of installation art. The Seattle native moved to Chicago in 2011 to serve as chair of the University of Chicago's department of visual arts, and currently has three major projects in the city—a solo exhibition and curatorial effort at Kavi Gupta, and an installation at the university's Smart Museum of Art.

An exemplary Stockholder installation can be found in "Door Hinges," the Kavi Gupta solo show. The installation, titled *Log or a Freezer*, involves an intimate give-and-take between art and architecture. A log

placed outside the building appears to be attached—by way of a long, taut rope that runs through the lobby—to a chest freezer affixed high on the wall of a lower-level gallery. In a physics-defying illusion, the weight of the log appears to be holding the freezer in place.

Just as door hinges are both functional and decorative, the show's other six works, which are all really mini-installations in their own right, bridge painting and sculpture and combine functionality and aesthetics. Three whimsical new pieces the artist calls "Assists" explore notions of dependency and context. In these works, L-shaped metal screens appear to be held upright (though they could probably stand on their own) by yellow belts that strap them to, alternately, a piano, a desk and a Smart car. Metal cutouts with curling or angular forms are attached to the tops of the screens. On view in an upstairs gallery is "Assisted," a group show curated by Stockholder that features artists who share her interests in form and objecthood, from steel sculptor Anthony Caro to language artist Kay Rosen. Stockholder's works are scattered among the selections, helping to tie the show to the solo presentation downstairs.

The Smart Museum installation, titled *Rose's Inclination*, ebulliently invades the building's atrium lobby and stretches outside into the courtyard. Colorful triangles just across a red-tinged section of mulch and onto the sidewalk. Inside, a swath of red paint sweeps up a wall onto the curved, 40-foot-tall ceiling and appears to spread across the floor, in the form of a triangular red carpet that cuts across the space. Additional elements include a Home Depot-like display of household lights arrayed along second-floor offices that project into the space, and a God's eye, five feet in diameter, hanging prominently in the center of it all. While this sprawling work certainly conveys the playful, unexpected and anything-goes nature of Stockholder's approach, her interaction with the architecture here seems somewhat superficial, probably because of the sacrosanct nature of the museum's modernist 1974 building by Edward Larrabee Barnes. Such a reservation, though, takes little away from this big Chicago moment for Stockholder, one of city's most essential artists.