

Backordered

NY Artists Circle online exhibition

December 15 - Feb 28, 2022

Curated by Sara Nightingale,

Gallerist/ Owner of The Sara

Nightingale Gallery, Sag Harbor, NY

Lois Bender NYAC Liaison

Everyone wants what they can't have – the love interest who ghosts them, the painting that's already sold, a return to a time when their inbox was manageable – but Americans, in particular, are mostly used to getting what they want when they want it. Take toilet paper, for example.

The pandemic changed all that, and its lasting effects have triggered a new far-reaching problem that's put a damper on consumer instant gratification.

Disruptions in the global supply chain have

exposed the fragility of this complex system. Covid related factory shut-downs abroad, a shortage of truck drivers and increased spending on goods, as opposed to experiences and travel, have contributed to bottlenecks at our ports. Container ships and containers themselves have been crippled or rendered useless. Of course, there are many factors that have led to the recent slow-down in international commerce, but among them, the American desire to consume – whether through e-commerce or brick and mortar retail shops – has been the predominant driving force behind a backlog of STUFF that Americans want.

While the artists in the exhibition do not intentionally address the supply chain specifically, they have been selected because their work examines consumption in all its forms or references a network of

linked logistical elements that serve as a metaphor for the supply chain.

I: Consumption

In order for consumption to occur, there must first be desire, yearning or hunger.

Yvonne Lamar-Rogers' "Poems"

Installations, in which collaged plaster casts of her hands reach upwards with outstretched fingers, appear ready to "catch" something, perhaps the other objects in her intricate installations.

Next, storage becomes an issue. Where will our "stuff" be kept? **Lynn Dreese Breslin's** noir paintings of houses provide the solution. In her drawing, "Reliquary", an average American home is literally deemed "a container for holy relics."

For the first time in recent history, Americans were faced with empty shelves in grocery stores as people hoarded food

and other basic supplies early in the pandemic. I recall hearing a young couple from Brooklyn being interviewed on the radio during this time. They had both just lost their jobs due to Covid and were worried about their future. They said they were afraid to waste any food, and even ate the green tops of the carrots they bought. **Cheryl Aden's** photographs, *Pepper Under Glass* and *Caged Apple* are poignant illustrations that call to mind inner fears of food insecurity. **Douglas Newton's** *Onions and Glass Bowl*, despite its realistic and straight forward style, conjures metaphors associated with onions – peeling back the onion to find deeper meaning and, of course, onions are a key ingredient in so many comfort foods, even if they make us cry. **Maria Spector** also addresses things to put in our mouths, desirable things, such as candy. In *Candy Boy Under the Sugarplum Tree with Snake*, one gets the

feeling that something more ominous is afoot. The reference to Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden looms over the adolescents depicted as innocents.

Some have posited that the uptick in online sales during the pandemic was a result of "boredom, sadness or insecurity". Clothing can have a transformative effect; it can alter or refresh our appearance, and therefore, we believe, our mood as well.

But when we order clothes online, we have to wait for them. Even before the pandemic and before the internet, there were catalogues meant to entice and seduce us.

Jaynie Crimmins' *In Search of Beauty #1* and in *Search of Beauty #10* employ shredded Patagonia and Bloomingdales catalogues, respectively, transforming "manufactured notions into her personal vision." **Lucy Wilner's** paintings *Box* and *Overflow* illustrate the over-abundance of clothing that most of us own in comparison

with people in other countries around the world.

Sometimes “stuff” is harmful to us and to our world. **Marcia Annenberg’s** plastic object sculptures *On the Beach* and *Yellow, Orange, Red, Green* seem to blurt out a warning with their bright colors. They are a call to action to acknowledge and consider the effects of our consumption. **Bob Clyatt’s** wall sculpture *Cscape #53* is a montage of brands, news, and objects – a cultural catch all that is loaded with references to money and class. Without money, there can be no consumption. **Jenna Lash’s** “Crumpled Money” series, “asks viewers to consider how their money, and what they chose to spend on (or forego) go hand in hand with the worth assigned to individuals, things, societies, and countries.”

No story about consumption would be complete without the end game: post-consumption. **Amy Regalia's** *Xmas Tree #87 (Bronx, NY)* depicts a discarded Christmas tree left out on the street in front of a church, thus illustrating the complete cycle from the origin story of the Christmas tree - the Christian celebration of Jesus's birth - to the tradition of cutting down living trees for this single use. The tree, now dead and useless, was meant to celebrate new life. A Christmas tree surrounded by mounds of gifts, many of which are likely useless to the recipients, is the ultimate symbol of over-consumption.

II. Supply Chain

The supply chain is a complex network of many moving parts, and several of the artists in the exhibition create work that is intricate, labyrinthine, or elaborate and illustrate connectedness – or broken

connections – even if it is purely abstract. **Amy Cheng's** *Untitled 2020-8* spherical reference speaks to how the entire globe is part of this chain. **Susan Beallor-Snyder** creates weavings made from sustainable manila rope. Among other things, her medium references colonialism and the shipping trade – the first global transportation system, which moved goods around the world. **Eleni Mylonas' QP Matches** video is a great example of how what happens to one part of a chain effects the other parts. **Andra Samelson's** paintings are beautiful examinations of the relationship between micro and macro, the molecular and the galactic. The global supply chain is a “galactic” creature, but it's repercussions when things go wrong effect individuals on the most personal level. Finally, **Carolyn Oberst's** *Zeitgeist* paintings capture the current overall mood brought on by supply chain problems. Her

floating figures in Zeitgeist #17, for example, interspersed with gears and connecting, but jagged, lines mirror these tumultuous times.

Sara Nightingale

Oct. 2021 for January 2022