

RESONANT CITY

Leslie Shows, Split Array

November 20, 2011



Leslie Shows. *Face E*, 2011.

In the era of hyper-immediacy, geology can be a difficult thing for the human subject to understand. Dreamlike and ancient landscapes exist as remnants of inconceivable time. Tectonics and alluvial processes occur over millennia, outside of the human timescale. Leslie Shows' strong attachment to geology finds its way into all of her works. Her work is difficult to classify; hybrid paintings originating in the landscape tradition, blending materials and layered portions in collage-like processes. The evolution of her work has moved further and further towards abstraction, removing many overt symbols or figures; adding deeper levels of layering and materials to become more elemental and atmospheric using forms such as icebergs,

batholiths, caves and rock faces buried under large striations of color and material.

Split Array features new work, loosely conceptualized around Fool's Gold (iron pyrite). Using large sheets of polished aluminum Shows layers paint, glass and mineral fragments, and scans of a chunk of pyrite. Each piece uses a different face of the mineral as its starting point. The materiality of the mineral faces and subsequent layering and striations add to the already distorted immanence that the polished surface provides. The reflective surface forces viewers to place themselves within confusing geologic contexts.

Following the pyrite theme, Shows created sculptures from caked sulfur, molding it into different forms and scattered it along portions of the gallery's floor. Most of the forms are consumer electronics, remotes and video game consoles, children's objects such as water guns, model rockets, and beach toys. The sulfur is fragile and many of the pieces crumble and dissolve into one another.



Leslie Shows. *Face M*, 2011.

Additionally, Shows includes a video piece, a narrative about coming to terms with the Other, described as a supernatural presence. The benign ghost story is coupled with interior photographs

and odd reflective surfaces. In a loose way this piece relates to the distorted image of the viewer that is presented when one stands in front of the work.

There are two ideas at work in *Split Array*, though both are subtle. First is that value is something that is fragile and tenuous. Pyrite gets confused for gold because people's irrational desire for material wealth sometimes distorts their perception. Secondly Shows puts us in a position radically outside of her subject matter. Geology can be understood scientifically, but cannot usually be identified with in a personal way. Viewers do not see themselves in her landscapes and cannot romanticize them in the way that traditional landscape painting allows for. The paintings are visually interesting although the materials seem less important conceptually than for the high production value they provide. The video and sculpture are interesting exercises at connecting an abstract subject to different mediums but the mineral materiality is the biggest takeaway available in *Split Array*.