



LISA HOKE

Come on Down
An Installation by Lisa Hoke

December 13, 2013 - April 13, 2014

Lisa Hoke was born in Virginia and is an artist based in New York. Hoke has recently created installations at the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina; the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas; New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut; Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, Brattleboro, Vermont; the Michele & Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts; and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, Massachusetts. Her work has been featured in more than twenty solo exhibitions and numerous group shows in the United States and internationally. She is the recipient of a Joan Mitchell Award and the Edwin Austin Abbey fellowship from the National Academy Museum, New York. Hoke's work is in the public collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art; the Johnson Museum; Cornell University; New Orleans Museum, Louisiana; Orlando Museum, Florida; the Michele & Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Massachusetts, and others. A 2014 project, ARTmuse, will be created at the Sarasota Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida. Hoke is represented by the Elizabeth Harris Gallery in New York.

www.lisahoke.com

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Lisa Hoke (American, b. 1952). *Come on Down*, installation at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, 2013. Cardboard, colored packaging, and glue, 1,248 x 185 x 36 in. (31 m 69.9 cm x 4 m 70 cm x 91.4 cm). Courtesy of the Artist and Elizabeth Harris Gallery, NY, NY. Photograph courtesy the Oklahoma City Museum of Art.

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Organized by the Oklahoma City Museum of Art.

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The Rapture of Excess

Writing a catalogue essay for a Lisa Hoke installation is, in part, an exercise in divination. I can't write as if I know what the piece is going to be because she doesn't know herself. Hoke is an immersive, intuitive artist who, through the process of an artwork coming into being, holds the final image of the finished work in abeyance right up until its presentation. This was true even in her near monochrome constructions in stone, metal, and wire of the late 1980s and early 90s. These were freshly imagined tensile suspensions of mass and line executed out of a classic modernist inventory of materials. They were unusually forthright in their graphic presence, as though her drawings had pursued their linear tensions out of two dimensions and into the third. Hoke's work from this period exemplifies the standard art school ethos that sculpture is "drawing in space;" a modernist tenant, to be sure. By 1992, however, painting began to supersede her wire constructions, setting in motion a reorientation of viewers to her work that brings them back around towards a two dimensional surface.

Hoke's movement towards painting begins with her introduction of the broader color spectrum into her formerly monochromatic world. Found materials in a kaleidoscope of colors like plastic chair webbing, a shower curtain, and clothing fragments began to find their way into her work in the form of hanging screens. Even within these free-standing sculptural forms from the mid-nineties, Hoke would flatten and compress dyed materials against the flat surface. Sometimes these would be fabric, other times bunched thread. By the end of the decade, Hoke was collecting and deploying more pristine found materials in her constructions. She would link together materials such as drinking straws, CD cases, and colored paper rolled into cylinders like mosaic tile in both free-standing and hanging constructions, or on panels. In some of this work she actually would pour paint into the

cups and let it dry before mounting the cups to face outward like a forest of little color megaphones. This was the process that led to the dynamic, undulating wall installations that have commanded so much attention over the past several years.

Hoke had been expanding her collection of found materials to all manners of consumer packaging and plastic table ware, to the point where it was filling her studio in piles arranged by size and color:

A horoscope in the *Village Voice* on October 5, 2010 said I should make soup that day. Hmmm... It was then that I decided to draw from all my sources of color, including all the studio debris of cups, matches, cardboard, paper, etc. that was piled high. Go with the contradictions and look for the commonality. The only way I could find some semblance of initial structure was to collate by color... I had tired of the work that required assistants. I was looking for a way back to the intimacy and privacy of the studio. I shifted materials to the rich color palette that I experienced daily in the form of packaging that was mine for the taking.¹

Here, Hoke is generously describing the manner in which inspiration can strike as whimsy. But she is also aware of ominous implications in her bonanza: our curse of overproduction and waste, the allure of manufactured desire expressed in color and smooth surfaces, an anxiety of art's own relationship with commodification. Even the title *Come on Down* refers to the celebration of excess in the ecstatic rush of the stage by contestants on *The Price Is Right*.

I cannot help but see the sad excess in this bounty. And I cannot resist now the desire to construct this regurgitated mirror of what I see in every store, every block, every house, pantry, closet. My own appetite insatiable to possess this stuff, even digging through trash bags on the street.²

She makes hundreds of small collages, 2x2' or 2x3', and edits and assembles them on-site into overwhelming tidal pulls and arabesques of color and fanning form. Curls of overlapping violet plastic plates might resemble the finger painting of some giant while the resulting overall design of waves and crests finds echoes in the modernist architecture of Antoni Guadí and the paintings of Gustav Klimt. But Hoke is a late modernist, with her own aesthetic community of extraordinary talents that her work engages, such as Polly Apfelbaum, Judy Pfaff, and Tony Feher. Like these artists, Hoke finds color and pattern in non-traditional art materials that have been pulled into art from a prior function. All push their materials towards abstraction even as each material carries the narrative of its own identity along. The only prediction I can make about Hoke's 150 foot wall installation, *Come on Down*, is that viewers will be able register the aesthetic DNA I've outlined in this short essay, and that it will be spectacular.

Stephen Westfall is a painter and a writer in Brooklyn, New York. He is the Graduate Director at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, and the painting Co-chair at the Milton Avery School of the Arts, Bard College. He is a Contributing Editor to *Art in America*.

1. Lisa Hoke, e-mail message to author, October 30, 2013.
2. Ibid.