

LOS ANGELES I'M YOURS

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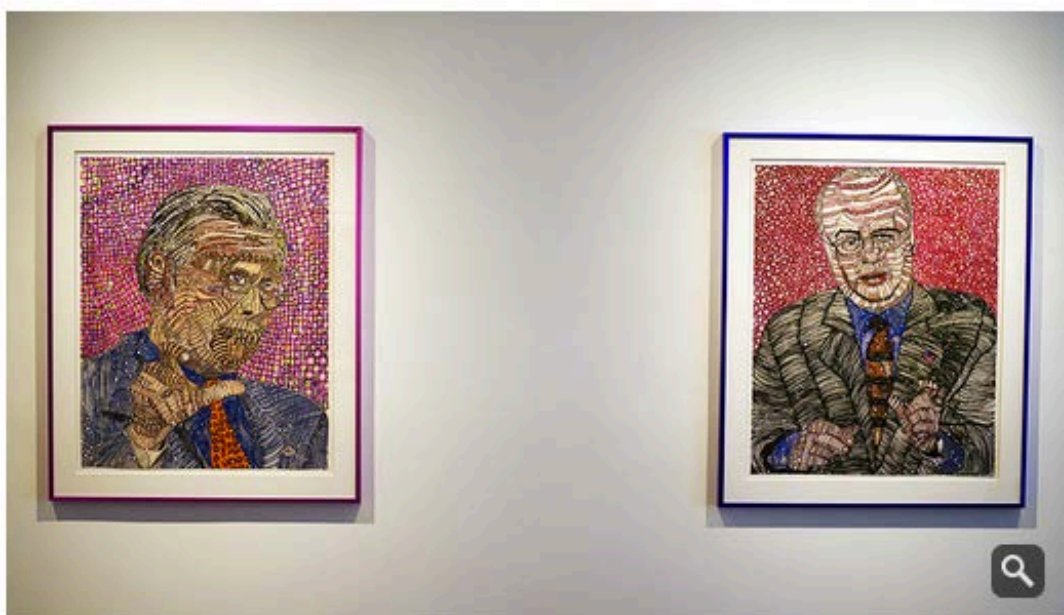
A Look At Jaime Scholnick's Artifacts



They're very bright. They look like they have been painted and complimented with Rodartesque netting. They're elaborate structures that can stand taller than you or I. Some jut out three feet from the wall they are hung from. You could mistake them for giant, neon circuitry or forgotten relics from a futuristic society. The figures are incredibly curious and endlessly fascinating. They are Jaime Scholnick's *Artifacts*, a body of work that reside in the past, present, and future.

Her artworks span many disciplines. She has elaborate glitter paintings, mixed media drawings, and painted sculptures. Her work from the past few years are collected and **currently being showcased at Downtown's CB1**. The show—*Artifacts*—is about Scholnick coping with American politics, consumerism, and craft through art. The pieces are all a means for her to confront the sociopolitical climate we inhabit.

The best way to digest the work is start from the beginning with her *Chuckles* series. Scholnick—a tiny black haired woman, dressed in all dark colors with neon green paint on her hands—stands in the middle of a group of glitter portraits of figures from the Bush administration. They all look alien and have a hand up, each of them holding an invisible item. “When these guys were in office, it was such a dark phase. I was so depressed,” she says. “This is how I felt better about it. I found these pictures of them all making this gesture. For me, I’m thinking they’re referencing how little they are. They’re so screwed up. I wanted to make it look like they were in the future and relegated to some gameshow like *Hollywood Squares*. I became fascinated with the backgrounds and, after they got out of power, I wanted to take out the obvious figure.”



The portraits have an element of fine art portraiture through the medium of glitter paint. The resulting images are abstract representations that appear to be extras from *Star Trek* caught in the middle of a drug trip. She has eliminated these politicians' despicableness in her gestures and playful presentation: instead of cast members in a nefarious cabinet, they're the funniest clowns in a box of crayons.

The *Chuckles* series represented an end of an era for Jaime, too. She wanted to shift her work away from being so literal. “I wanted to stop doing figures,” she says. “I moved into this styrofoam packing material that intrinsically is saying a lot of the same things that I’m concerned about without being so in your face.”

To arrive at this conclusion, she had to push herself. She didn't want to work with color but understood the value of using more than black and white. To work through this, she created a series of small collaged works that meditate on her techniques and color. "I wanted to do color pieces but, honestly, color was so scary to me: I have every choice in color—how do I use it?! I started doing collages to help me breakout of my hangup on color. They're cut outs from magazines that I would paint with a Jacquard tip. Whenever I'm stuck, I do something like this to help me get out of it. They don't really have any meaning: the form dictated it. They have an architectural feel to them and can be a bit foreboding—but none of that was conscious."

The collaged work helped Jaime understand her take on color, narrowing down a large spectrum to a vocabulary she was comfortable with. The collage pieces are a small part of *Artifacts* but an integral part as they are a bridge from the glitter portraits to her polystyrene sculptures. Their architectural nature also lent itself well to three dimensions, as the skills applied to collages can very directly be seen in her objects.

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The objects are intended to be like fossils. They are “remnants of society” as Jaime says. The group look like they could be made from muted stone or a lightweight paper but they are found styrofoam pieces. The forms she works with are bizarre canvases that represent the American desire for more. Politics are embedded in this body of work even though it is not literally on the surface.

“It’s such a wasteful, unbiodegradable thing,” she jokes about her base for work. “What if somebody found these in years to come and said, ‘Oh my god: what society did this come from? This must have been something really important!’” This is a big theme for Jaime: the idea that this styrofoam waste represents more than protection of a silly product that will likely end up in the garbage itself.

“These all have a meaning because they are of the object that it cradled, representing the next iPad, the next this, the next that,” she explains. “Intrinsically the material speaks to something political. If these are fossils and the evidence of a society’s destruction, I feel like these are me throwing up my hands and saying, ‘We’re sort of doomed!’ We don’t learn and I can’t do anything about it. I feel so helpless.”

The styrofoam works are born out of her being physically uncomfortable. A few years ago, her studio was too cold and she purchased a new heater for it. The item arrived in a packaging that was so interesting and, in its own way, beautiful. She started painting it and began to paint like materials in private. Eventually people saw this work, loved it, and now they are being exhibited quite a lot.



"I treat them almost like these layered paintings and, when you look through, it leads to a painting and a painting and a painting," Jaime says. The styrofoam works are her most recent and, as you move through the show, you can see different movements and practices she's placed on them. Some are spray gun painted while others are only one color. A giant wall piece at the back of the gallery emphasizes the original objects' form while a piece playing with only three colors expresses a mood study. Each piece is entirely different from the next because her source material, these foreign polystyrene vessels, are all so dissimilar from each other. The only through line is that she applies the same painterly direction to each of them, treating them like three dimensional canvases.

Jaime is constantly fielding new styrofoam material and people are always giving her items "to make these new fossils" with. She treats them like precious objects because of what they are made from and how people treat them. She embraces this waste, which she understands is a strange idea. She mentioned how her *Artifacts* really pushed her, especially the large wall piece at the end of the gallery. Like Robert Irwin once said, "you should always be on this line," a line between the comfortable and uncomfortable, the attractive and the ugly.

Jaime has found a good balance of this line with this body of work. Now she is playing, juggling shapes with colors and patterns and form. Her work is from American waste and from American ingenuity. They are futuristic remains from a race of people who always wanted more. Let's hope whoever finds these fossils understands their deep history.

Artifacts is now up at CB1 Downtown and will be on view through October 7. There will be an artist reception September 9 from 5PM to 7PM as well as an artist talk September 22 at 2PM. CB1 is located at 207 W. Fifth Street.
