

Jenna Balfe's Adventures at Shoot The Lobster's 20th Street Art Lot

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by Jenna Balfe, posted Jun 7, 01:10 PM



An art exhibition in an abandoned lot on NW 20 Street off of Second Avenue popped up on May 17 – not the best part of town. New York artist Ryan Foerster primarily works in photography but also makes zines, films, and installations incorporating found objects. It was his art that was displayed at the site. The show was put on by Shoot The Lobster, a gallery in New York, curated by Bob Nickas. His vision for this ongoing curatorial project is to have outdoor exhibitions in hot and strange places... That's Miami alright!

I approached a bunch of art weirdos hanging around a large tamarind tree that was a bit off-center in the lot. A lot inhabitant (a homeless gentleman) was casually mixing with the crowd. Before touring the grounds, I noticed that some people had booklets in their hands. I asked to see one and discovered that it was a zine also made by the

artist, very simple, beautiful, and clear. There were images of his girlfriend, his garden, and a few decaying things.

The mode of display was dependent upon the preexisting structures on this lot: Several large slabs of cement that once were building foundations, an old sign post, and fence across the alleyway. Artist Naomi Fisher, explained that the show was strewn about the lot for people to discover, so I explored the lot. The first thing I saw was a big rusty sign leaning against an old post. Taped to it were a few photographs of people and other abstractions. The artist explained that the clear images were old pictures from high school. The blurrier more magical images were products of his recent experimentation with discarded materials employing chance as the main agent of process. Ryan explained that all of the material he used for this exhibition was either randomly found or discarded. All the photo paper was discarded from the lab where he prints his photos. He left it out in various places to allow time, weather, or circumstance to have their way with the chemicals in the paper. This process created strange and ethereal abstractions. Some images were of his garden, and one print was of his compost pile. Given that Ryan also prints zines, while at the printer's shop, he became intrigued by the process which led him to take the discarded print plates home with him. He left them outside in his yard with random stuff piled on top of them. This process yielded abstract imprints of the objects once there. The artwork was dispersed around the lot, placed down on the ground, and covered with unfitted pieces of glass that Ryan bought at the thrift store down the street.

An image of bars created by taping discarded photo paper to a window was wedged between a chain link fence and a wrought iron fence. One piece laying on the ground almost looked just like the ground, however, it actually was a printing plate with a bunch of stuff on it, including a clump of dirt with grass growing out of it, a work in progress. Much of the art is in an active process of decay. When Ryan removes the objects, an image will be left behind on the plate. The random colorful style of the photos matched the random colorful items discarded in the lot. The images were all different shapes, and sizes, and several of them had gone through different processes of neglect and improper treatment, giving the discarded remains a sense of life.

The topics of decay, re-use, and chance mediate the gap that exists between the art world and art as an actual expression. In society, we witness and are party to absurd and contradictory dualisms. The good essence of humanity crammed up against the dry and capitalist driven machine of "progress". Oil rig company headquarters with dual flush toilets, plastic surgery centers that also offer spiritual consultation, Urban

Outfitters is a corporate dispenser of hip counter-culture wear. Similarly, placing artwork that deals with societal excess while employing chance as a medium of expression in an abandoned lot strewn with garbage and danger begins to strike a balance between the art world machine and expressive sensibility. The unimportance of the object was expressed by style, materials, and the manner of display. The expression that can only exist for a few moments in time is what is important. Not purchasable, just memorable. This is the innate sense that makes artists begin to create in the first place. Being outside of the galleries or museums, with their neutral white walls, and surrounded by ephemeral art work, was very refreshing.