

# reviews

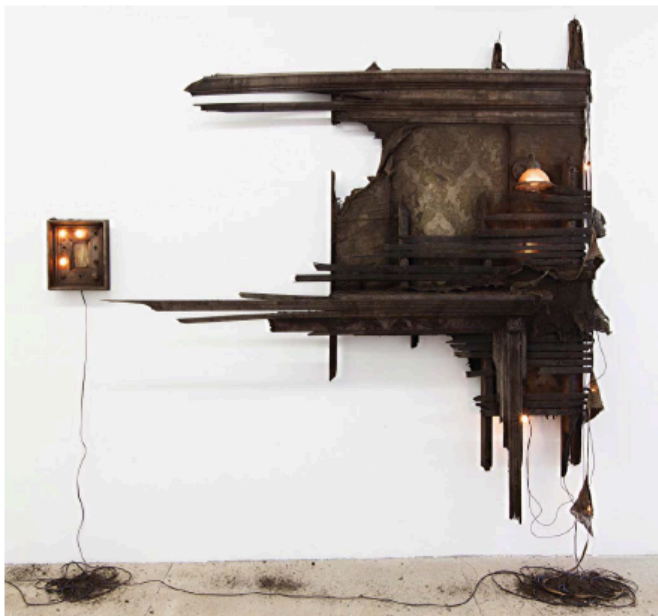
## NEW YORK

**Drew Conrad**  
Fitzroy Gallery

In "Ain't Dead Yet," Drew Conrad's iconography of turned wood, Victorian printed wallpaper, and LP record albums evoked an indeterminate past. Indicative of prewar architecture, wood lath and plaster become vehicles for sculptural communication, especially as Conrad strategically clusters, exposes, and breaks them down. The fresh splintering of each lath-line reads as an Expressionist brush mark and shows that despite applied soot, the wood is not decayed or burned. The works at first seem like architectural fragments, the recognizable bits that remain after a disaster. Signaling the contrived qualities of these sculptural fantasies, however, Conrad fractures architectural logic by layering skeletons of lath on top of wallpapered plaster in *Dwelling No. 2 (The Wonder Wheel)* (2011). Heightening artifice, he situates a corner of a translucent window sash within a lath wall in *Dwelling No. 3 (Gazelle)* (2012). Similarly, he stuffs the underside of a stairwell full of wood strips in *Dwelling No. 1* (2011) to make a spread of diagonal rays that activates an otherwise gridded composition.

The powdered residue that covers the surface of the works, shedding onto the floor, gives his installations a painterly quality. At first, the works read as fire-charred; on closer examination, the blackening emerges as strategically administered. Conrad not only finesses his carbonous

Top: Drew Conrad, *Dwelling No. 2 (The Wonder Wheel)*, 2011. Mixed media, 110 x 101 x 14 in. Right: Drew Conrad, *Dwelling No. 1*, 2011. Mixed media, 131 x 117 x 110 in.



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Sculpture 32-7



blacks and oxidized browns to occlude and reveal wood grain, wallpaper patterns, and electrical fixtures, but also uses masses of the dry pigments to engage the bases and the areas below the works. This pigmentation heightens the weird dynamic at work in these objects, which appear simultaneously centuries old and newly produced.

Most of the installations include derelict lighting, with weak incandescent bulbs and dangling wiring (Conrad acknowledges Christian Boltanski as an inspiration). In their starkness, the illuminations appear as survivors, especially since their warmth and light are swallowed by surrounding matte blackness. *Dwelling No. 4* (2012) contains an especially moving passage in which bulbs clustered into the half-arrow of a roadside sign point to nothing.

In addition to the still-functioning lamps, Conrad includes relatively intact objects, such as the taxidermy head in *Dwelling No. 3 (Gazelle)*, the glass chandelier of *Dwelling No. 1*, and the promotional photo of *Remnant No. 1 (Elvis)* (2012), which are set off from their fragmented and blackened backgrounds. Firefighters often speak of such uncanny and unsettling juxtapositions in which layered heat wreaks utter destruction in an area but leaves vulnerable

objects a few feet below unscathed. In Conrad's works, these persistent elements further the artifice while offering footholds of recognition in his nostalgic dreams.

While Conrad's concepts for and execution of his sculptures occurred before Hurricane Sandy, his aesthetics of disintegration were all the more meaningful in a moment when art galleries and studios across several New York neighborhoods were left devastated. It was astonishing to see powdered muck in shuttered Chelsea storefronts and then, in the Lower East Side, witness the poignant displacements of Conrad's ruins.

—William V. Ganis

## OAKLAND

**Cyrus Tilton**  
Vessel Gallery

This is Cyrus Tilton's fourth exhibition at a gallery near downtown Oakland, part of a recent burst of art activity that started there in 2006, when a few storefronts began to display artworks. Now, nearly 30 galleries and mixed-use venues show works by young artists; there are art walks on Saturdays, and on first Fridays, busy Telegraph Avenue is closed to traffic, food trucks appear, and the place becomes an art party. It's a bit like the East

Left: Drew Conrad, *Dwelling No. 4*, 2012. Mixed media, 108 x 64 x 106 in. Below: Cyrus Tilton, *High Hopes*, 2010. Concrete and steel, 63 x 26 x 18.5 in.

Village in the '70s or Venice Beach without the beach.

Tilton grew up in the Alaskan wilderness near Anchorage, and nature remains primary in his work. A previous show, called "The Cycle," featured works using the locust as a metaphor for problems of overpopulation and conspicuous consumption. The innovative installation consisted of hundreds of kinetic locusts with whirring wings.

André Breton is reported to have called on painters and poets to "Surprise me!" "Absence," Tilton's recent show, assembled a range of surprises. Suggesting Magritte's

paintings with a 21st-century aesthetic, these sculptures form fantastic equivocations, prompted by the mysteries of life. *High Hopes* (2010), for instance, consists of the headless body of a horse rendered in cement—Tilton welcoming the challenge to mold the quick-setting substance before it dried. A steel armature rising from what was once the back of the impaired creature holds a section of earth, which in turn, supports several slender steel trees. Like Brancusi, Tilton considers his bases, including the square, transparent pedestal for *High Hopes*, as essential parts of the works. The title, *High Hopes*, indicates Tilton's aspiration to achieve the desired results during his working process. The craftsmanship of forming and making—absent from much current art production—is primary to him.



TOP: COURTESY FITZROY GALLERY / BOTTOM: COURTESY VESSEL GALLERY

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