

## ART

## AROUND THE GALLERIES

## Dicing, splicing, thrilling

LEAH OLLMAN

Even as **Kim Rugg's** exhibition title urges us to "Please Remain Calm," everything in her show at Mark Moore is fantastically destabilizing.

Rugg reconstitutes familiar objects — cereal boxes, newspapers, postage stamps — after having cut them apart, often into minute fragments. In their new incarnations, the objects are altered but still true to either their essential form or function. What Rugg does, in one thrilling technical feat after another, is slyly expose the gaps between different ways of seeing and perceiving.

In "Daisy," she strips a panel of William Morris wallpaper of its blossoms, meticulously excising each flower and replacing it with a patch of the print's background pattern. The shorn panel is inset seamlessly among the others, abloom. A photograph of a lawn mower (not the real culprit but inspiration, perhaps) hangs on the papered wall, and a scattering of plucked paper flowers litters the floor below. In "Pimple," another reconfigured wallpaper piece, the Canadian-born, London-based Rugg coerces a pattern of interlaced lines into a hugely swollen, Escher-worthy bulge seeming to push out from the wall.

A group of standard white envelopes hanging in the show bears postage stamps that Rugg has diced and reformulated into cartoon exclamations — THWAAK! BOOF! — or decorative patterns of concentric circles or cascading



**KIM RUGG:** The artist's "Please Remain Calm" exhibition at Mark Moore features a 2008 reconfigured wallpaper and framed photo work titled "Daisy."

dots. Each envelope has passed through the local mail processing system and earned a postmark, since the automated machines register the presence of the stamp's pigment rather than its image or shape.

Like Rugg's entire enterprise, the stamp pieces have a playful deviousness to them. They subvert an authoritative system and defy expectations of legitimacy. They look sprightly and fun but are also mildly daring.

In Rugg's stunning first appearance here in 2007, she presented a series of newspaper pages that she had reduced to tiny mosaic squares and reorganized. She alphabetized the text, divesting it of coherence and meaning, and turned the photographs into graduated fields of color, absent any imagery, context or information. One such front page is included in this show too: The London Daily Telegraph's report on President Obama's inauguration.

Wryly titled "That's Enough Hope I'm Off to Work," the piece's illegible headline (Aaaceegilkmm-Rr) hovers over a large square of what looks like television static. At once, Rugg conjures radically different moments in the history of information technology — movable type and today's digital pixelation. There's gamesmanship to what Rugg does but also a sense of wonder, reverence even, at the mechanics of visual and verbal communication.

Other newspaper-based pieces take a simpler approach and offer slighter gratification, though, like all of her work, they are marvelously executed. Each is a rendering of a front page or inside spread (usually with auspicious news of some sort) in pencil and ink, as seen from a reader's perspective.

The paper appears to mound at the fold and recede in space. Each story is transcribed with painstaking precision, the work of a latter-day, Luddite scribe. The drawings are visually persuasive, but not as conceptually ticklish as the rest — optical treats minus the puzzling and puns.

For her cereal box pieces, Rugg subtly transformed familiar packages of Frosted Flakes, Corn Flakes and Cap'n Crunch. She scalped and glued each three-dimensional form into a convincing two-dimensional version of itself, an image reading as object. Upstart progeny of Warhol's Brillo Boxes, the cereal boxes cleverly fulfill the broader mandate of Pop — not just to reimagine the everyday icons of popular culture but to puncture the veneer that sheathes the ordinary and renders it plain when it is really quite remarkable.

**Mark Moore Gallery**, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 453-3031, through March 13. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.markmooregallery.com](http://www.markmooregallery.com).