

McGarvey, Forest “Ryan Wallace: LD50 at Romer Young Gallery”

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Ryan Wallace. LD50, 2015; installation view. Courtesy of the Artist and Romer Young Gallery, San Francisco.

In his first solo show at Romer Young Gallery, New York artist Ryan Wallace has filled the space with junk. Wallace has accumulated a hoard of construction materials—Hydrocal, plaster, Plexiglas, lead, enamel, tape, and more—into his new sculptures, paintings, and a site-specific installation for LD50. Swinging freely yet comfortably between the poles of chaos and order, composed and unintentional, Wallace’s process seems intuitive. Yet the repetition of the materials betrays their grungy disposition to present a tight body of work that forfeits the chaotic in favor of a more structured approach.

Immediately after the door, a random collection of 10-inch square tiles is gridded across the entire gallery floor. Each tile is impressively composed of layered construction materials, paint, and other detritus in aesthetically familiar ways. The installation, *Pitch* (2015), cracks, moans, and shifts with each step as the unevenness of the tiles pushes through the bottoms of one’s shoes. The dirty squares of Plexiglas and mirrors murky with dust reflect one’s image to effectively mimic wandering through an abandoned building or junkyard. The installation emphasizes the physical act of looking, and implicates viewers in its grit and (with its distinct Abstract Expressionist allusions) macho valor. When the tiles are considered singularly, arresting compositions and surprising material juxtapositions lurk quietly in the sea of cracked plexi and mangled duct tape. But together, as an installation, these smaller significant moments drown in the oppressive grid imposed by the installation’s scale.

Wallace’s material interests continue within his two-dimensional work. In *Redactor 4* (2015), the repetitive process of endlessly adding and subtracting materials proves

engaging up close. Jaggedly cut canvas in ashy grays adheres over indiscernible strips of deep reds and inky blacks, echoing the posters or adverts that appear and disappear on city walls. The pieces compress together tightly on the canvas in long vertical strips, making the spray paint and enamel seem to ooze from each crease, transformed through the accumulation. In this way, the systematic construction of Wallace's work begins to mimic the systematic function that the materials themselves possess, both in their construction and utility.

LD50 engages with specific ideas in a closed loop. Relationally to each other, the different works frame the same materials in new ways, but conversely normalize their otherwise eccentric qualities. Less may sometimes be more, but Wallace's work acts as an example of how the two can function as one and the same.

Ryan Wallace: LD50 is on view at Romer Young Gallery in San Francisco through July 25, 2015.

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