

PELICAN BOMB

Unfathomable and Infinite: "Alluvial Constructs" at Octavia Art Gallery

BY BROOKE SCHUELLER

NOVEMBER 28, 2014

Brooke Schueller reviews a group show curated by Laura Sandoval.



WAYNE AMEDEE, CONSOLATIONS, I CARRY YOUR HEART, 2014. PAINTED ALUMINUM. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND OCTAVIA ART GALLERY, NEW ORLEANS.

"ALLUVIAL CONSTRUCTS"
OCTAVIA ART GALLERY
454 JULIA STREET
OCTOBER 18 - NOVEMBER 29, 2014

In "Alluvial Constructs," curator Laura Sandoval considers the curious paradox of present-day New Orleans—a city simultaneously undergoing rapid construction and degradation. The exhibition brings together new and existing works by a selection of local and international artists. The result is a visually varied, richly layered exploration

that allows for larger themes of transformation and transcendence in the city's history to emerge.

New Orleans artist Wayne Amedee's sculpture, *Consolations, I Carry Your Heart*, 2014, is a collection of painted aluminum slabs whose serpentine arrangement gives the illusion of motion. Here they conjure an image of water, specifically the river that defines the city's ever-changing contours. Sydney-based Simryn Gill's installation *Paper Boats*, 2009, while not created with New Orleans in mind, also references the important role that water has played in shaping the city and its mythology. Small stacks of encyclopedias are adorned by dozens of paper boats composed from their pages that flow from a table and onto the floor. Inherent to Gill's installation is a sense of evolution, as the encyclopedias morph from leather-bound books to tiny vessels. The volumes, part of *Encyclopedia Britannica's* 200th Anniversary Edition, by definition contain a fixed, constructed social narrative—one that is now long out of date. In contrast, the hand-made paper boats serve as playful vehicles for the imagination and the fluid creation of new stories.



INSTALLATION VIEW OF SIMRYN GILL'S PAPER BOATS, 2009, AT OCTAVIA ART GALLERY, NEW ORLEANS.

Ideas of growth and transcendence similarly surface in the work of New Orleans photographer Michel Varisco. In *Doorway* (from the *Cotton Mill Series*), 1997, a thick, black doorway reveals a courtyard flooded with sunlight but otherwise overrun by decay. A tree stands triumphantly in the center of the frame as the sun catches its leaves. It's a lovely metaphor for the city itself, where change is the only constant, and every collapse contains the opportunity to rise again.