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LOS ANGELES

Lisa Williamson: "People In Nature" at Tif Sigfrids

Sometimes, counter-intuitively, the best way to make a small space look larger is to fill it with large things. Or so it seemed with Lisa Williamson's recent, highly enjoyable exhibition at Tif Sigfrids gallery in Hollywood. Williamson, whom viewers may recall for her memorable vault installation at the 2012 version of the Hammer Museum's "Made in LA" biennial, is particularly adept at creating sculptural objects that are informed and enlivened by their dialogue with each other. In this case, she populated the narrow storefront space with seven colorful, painted wooden columns, based loosely on the notion of "pilings." Each of these seven vertical pieces exudes tangible heft and mass, yet at the same time, each one has been carved according to some individual formula, to create geometric indentations or cavities. One large cylinder, painted dark blue, called *Clearing*, is punctured by five circular white holes, wide enough to slip one's arm through. Another, called *Long Stretch*, painted pink, is slit through with a dark green vertical slot that nearly runs its entire height. One green column has five narrow white vertical slits in its surface, with a bright chartreuse top. There's also a deep yellow column, pocked with a swirling line of pale green dots, and another, electric-bright yellow piece, cut with shelf-like white horizontal rows. Lastly, there's a pair of pieces that resemble barbells set on end: one is divided by color horizontally at its midsection, while the other is bisected vertically.

The result is rather like an eccentric set of human-sized modernist Lincoln Logs, or gathering of abstract totem poles, with hints of Donald Judd and Anne Truitt mixed in. Indeed, Williamson's ongoing fascination with the modernist tool kit is evident in her deceptively simple works, along with her abiding interest in such old-fashioned sculptural concerns as mass, volume, surface, and material. But despite their formal rigor, her works are also distinctly hand-wrought, putting them in distinct opposition to Judd and aligning them more with postmodernist sculptural critique. As if to belie their mass and boldly colorful geometries, from up close the works seem unsettlingly soft—rather than hard-edged, and the inferences of bodily allegory—and vulnerability—linger as one walks among them. It is that frisson that lends Williamson's works their true heft, behind their upbeat palette and play-ground-bright vocabulary. At once thoughtful yet playful, her works are formal experiments with a corporeal, humanist subtext, beguiling totems of imperfection.

—GEORGE MELROD

"PEOPLE IN NATURE," INSTALLATION VIEW
Lisa Williamson
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2021 S WABASH AVE
CHICAGO IL 60616
+1 (312) 226 2223