

# ARTslant Miami

## Three for the Course

by Eduardo Alexander Rabel

### [Cheryl Pope: Matter of Fact](#)

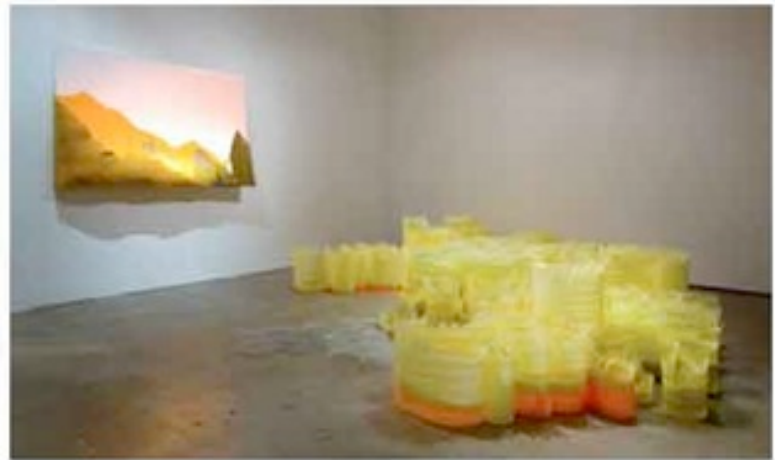
Cheryl Pope

Dorsch Gallery

151 NW 24th Street, Miami,  
Florida 33127

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1, 2011

On view now at Dorsch Gallery are three solo shows by artists whose work mixes seriousness and playfulness, lightness and darkness, in various ways.



Audrey Hasen Russell's exhibition, humorously titled *Gold Slaw*, fills the first two rooms, as well as a connecting hallway, with whimsically constructed sculptures that combine a wide variety of synthetic materials to create arresting three-dimensional "landscapes." The sole natural ingredients—found tree branches—are mostly smothered by artificial green fabric or neon spray paint, an apt metaphor for humanity's ability to destroy nature even as we profess to care about it. The eclectic diversity of the materials Russell uses also challenges gender expectations by successfully uniting highly "masculine" objects—



Cheryl Pope, *Stacks*, 2010

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cinderblocks, insulation foam, construction debris, etc.—with "feminine" objects such as dishes, acrylic rhinestones, fabric, and thread. Take an especially close look at the impaled dishes, as they serve as foreshadowing for what is to come in Cheryl Pope's installations in the next two rooms.

Pope's work recalls Lorna Simpson and Yoko Ono, but she has a unique voice that is all her own. Her magnificent feminist exhibition engages the viewer/listener's senses right from the start with an odd, repetitive screeching sound, setting the tone for a powerful multi-media installation which speaks volumes about the everyday expectations and negotiations involved in the doing of domestic chores. Along with sound comes movement, in the form of a sped-up video showing an anonymous woman—in a plain gray dress, with her head cropped out—stacking white dishes and cups atop a plain tabletop. On and on she goes, walking off camera to get more dishes, bringing them back, and setting them all in place until the stacks are so high that they almost begin to take on the character of a miniature porcelain cityscape—that is, until the table can't bear the weight of all those dishes any longer, and the whole thing comes crashing down, dropping off camera. All that's left is the faceless woman with her arms by her sides and her empty hands—an elegant metaphor for the seeming pointlessness of domestic drudgery, and work in general.

The rest of Pope's show consists of four eye-catching and eloquent sculptural installations that each use dishes to build on the theme of household toil. On the floor in front of the video lies *Thresh*, a long felt "carpet" crammed with shards of broken china plates that stand up vertically. A pair of life-size bronze feet faces this treacherous walkway, alluding to the well-worn back-and-forth path between kitchen and dining room.

For *Shove*, the artist has built her own wall and pierced it with a variety of found "Happy Anniversary" plates so that half of each plate sticks out neatly from the front, while the other half, if you peer behind the wall, reveals not just the rest of the plate, but also the violence of torn drywall. The piece functions as a clever commentary on the tension between a married couple's shiny, happy, outward façade and the conflicts and ragged edges that often lie just beneath the surface.

The source of the discordant screeching sound turns out to be *Tick*, a large stack of china plates pierced by a steel rod that is motorized and moves heavily back and forth, with the plates scratching lines into the wall, as though marking the endless amount of time it takes for anyone—or any couple—to do the daily household chores.

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Filling the next room is Cheryl Pope's final installation, *Tops*, in which she playfully displays a series of large "tops" created from found china plates and steel rods. They look exquisite, like gorgeous toys for giants. Just don't try to actually spin them, or they'll shatter into pieces like a marriage destroyed.

Striking an altogether different note, Raymond Saá's abstract expressionist oil paintings fill the last room of Dorsch Gallery. All but one of these untitled works share a very similar composition, with black lines and shapes in the lower left or right quarter struggling against a surrounding white background. Although they are easy on the eyes, and they do achieve some interesting spatial effects with a very limited palette, Saá's paintings lack the kind of conceptual punch that both Pope's and Russell's works have. Rather, his work comes off as a series of overly formal exercises, as monotonous as they are monochromatic.

One might think of Dorsch Gallery's current offerings as a three course meal for the mind, with Russell's work as a delicious appetizer, Pope's an outstanding main course, and Saa's an attractive, but ultimately disappointing, dessert.

~[Eduardo Alexander Rabel](#), *an artist and writer living in Miami.*