

# artillery

## RACHEL FOULLON

ltd los angeles

RACHEL FOULLON'S six large sculptures on view in "An Accounting," the artist's first solo show in Los Angeles, combine wooden armatures of stained Western red cedar with dyed canvas drapery elements in barnyard and tack room allusions. Materials are limited and wrought with care: the wood is custom-milled with a specially designed knife and meticulously stained; the fabrics are hand-dyed

and hand-sewn with custom-made clasps; hardware details such as bolts are individually stained and finished. Simple and unfussy, Foullon's hand-made structures are about thorough but understated craftsmanship. The artist often finishes the rosy cedar with a pale gray stain that approximates the weathered and washed-out look of very old wood barns and splitting, warped coastal sheds.

*Hallenhaus* (2008), the only free-standing structure, is a single J-shaped curving wall of vertical cedar beams enclosing a small circular nook. Loops of pale dyed canvas hang from an oversized nail in the middle of the wall's exterior sweep. The curving nook is like the apse of a church as much as it is like a fragment of a miniature farmhouse. It is a cradle, a place to hide behind, a little pocket of privacy or stillness to light a cigarette — just barely a shelter. There is a sly humor latent in Foullon's investigation of barnyard structures evident in her description of them as "original live-work scenarios." The entire rural farmhouse or barnyard vernacular that Foullon draws on materially and structurally throughout her works, then, is framed as a kind of metaphoric model

Rachel Foullon, *The Abacus* (detail), 2010



or precedent for the urban “loft” or studio live-work experience of artists such as herself.

There are several wall-mounted pieces in which central canvas elements hang on a sprawling framework of intersecting cedar slats often extending to the edges of the wall. The huge canvas horse blanket dyed turquoise and gray-brown that hangs from three huge nails in *Commensurate with modern progress* (2010) looks like a flaccid parachute or a gigantic drooping smock. There are straps and fastening hooks, seams and folds and knots that relate to the body and connote work clothing and manual labor, suggesting (in conjunction with the title) a longing for a romantic notion of self-reliance, contemplative rural solitude, and physical work on the land. In this sense, the early American pastoral idyll to which Brooklyn-based Foullon gestures in *An Accounting* feels like the product of an urban dweller taking stock, reflecting and reassessing her values and ideals in reaction to life in the big city by looking to the country.

This idea of taking stock is literalized in a strange new ceiling-mounted sculpture, *The Abacus* (2010), in which three parallel cedar beams suspended from the ceiling are strung with thirty custom-made canvas sacks, each sewn into a twisting mobius-loop and uniquely dyed in marbled browns, pinks, violets, fresh-blood reds and dried-blood blacks. Fleshy and burnt, the palette is reminiscent of both intimate human textures and animal slaughter — the vulnerability of soft tissue. Out of reach above viewers’ heads, *The Abacus* dangles over the exhibition and caps it with the somewhat somber work ethic and methodical manual labor of a disciplined farmer, woodworker, furniture maker — or, perhaps equivalently, artist. Modeling the role of the contemporary artist admiringly after traditional rural trade craftsmen (two groups with, generally speaking, zero overlap), Foullon is both romantic and slightly perverse, not even running directly counter to expectation but at an obtuse angle from it — a very good sign that someone seriously and quietly thoughtful is hard at work.

—S.R. Lehrer