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ART & DESIGN

Review: In ‘A Rare Earth Magnet’ at Derek Eller, a Focus on Repurposed Materials

By ROBERTA SMITH AUG. 13, 2015

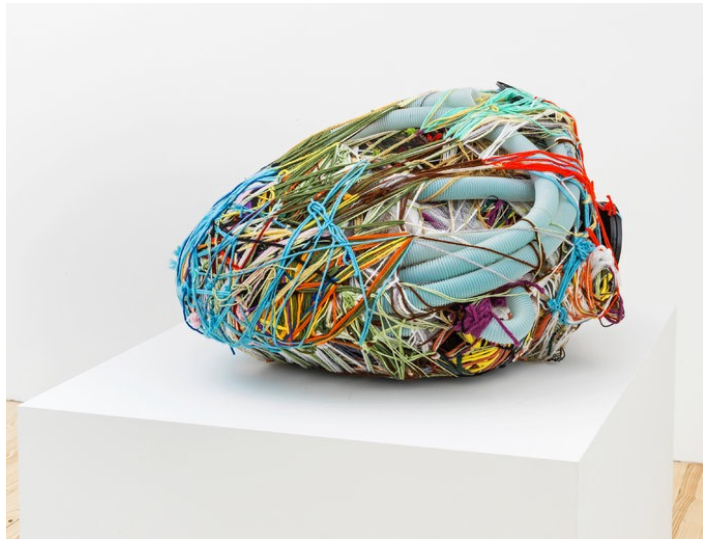
‘A RARE EARTH MAGNET’

Derek Eller Gallery

615 West 27th Street, Chelsea

Through next Friday

This is one of those late-summer group shows that can stir optimism about the coming season. And it may be germane that eight of the 11 artists here are women. Organized by Brian Faucette, director of the Derek Eller Gallery and co-owner of his own establishment, the Brooklyn gallery Know More Games, the exhibition concentrates on artists avidly drawn to found materials, recycled objects and strong color, with robust, often tactile results. In a reasonable description of contemporary art, the show’s news release states that widespread digitization and “the canonization of poststudio practices” are creating “a materialist counterculture.”



“Untitled” (2004), a wrapped-yarn sculpture by the fiber artist Judith Scott. Credit Derek Eller Gallery

Helpless in the face of Google’s sundry definitions of the term “rare earth magnet,” I can only take the show’s title poetically, as possibly suggesting the counterculture’s irrevocable attraction to physical stuff. The presiding angel here is the fiber artist Judith Scott (1943-2005), represented by one of her wrapped-yarn sculptures — a soft, irregular mass made from a line — that includes vacuum-cleaner tubing among its multicolored strands. And the influential artist Mike Kelley seems present in spirit, especially in Anna Rosen’s insanely cheerful paintings — flowers and a bright sun — appended with lovingly worn knickknacks that evoke a simpler past.

There’s little here that hasn’t had a previous life, whether it’s the slice of bright International Klein Blue bread atop Michelle Segre’s Calderesque sculpture; the baroque arrangements of jump ropes, resin, foam and plastic bread with which Adam Parker Smith playfully conjures the ghosts of Frank Stella’s past; or Nancy Shaver’s combining of real and trompe l’oeil painted wood into serene Morandi-like reliefs. Ann Greene Kelly complicates weirdly recycled objects with bits of carved alabaster. Sydney Shen reminds us that hornets’ nests are domestic no-trespass realms. Ajay Kurian builds a kinetic sculpture to torture — or at least change the expressive eyes of — a plastic Minion toy. Both Thomas Barrow and Amy Brener make familiar things strange, as does Anna-Sophie Berger, who contributes two pairs of small sterling silver earrings set with pea seeds.