



TIM ROBY • *Objects of Venerable Decay* • January 14 TO MARCH 4, 2011

Tim Roby grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and earned a BFA in 2001 from Illinois State University. Upon Graduating from ISU, Tim moved to the City of Chicago where he continued his studio practice and supported himself by working as a picture framer and free-lance art handler and installer. In 2005, Tim moved to Minneapolis and earned his MFA degree from the University of Minnesota in 2008. Since graduating, Tim has been the recipient of a Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative grant and has done residencies at Ox-bow in Michigan and at the Blacklock Nature Sanctuary in Minnesota. Additionally, Tim has recently shown in San Antonio, TX, Minneapolis and Olean, NY and has been featured in *New American Paintings* and *Studio Visit Magazine*. He also has a show that opens in January at the Rochester Art Center in Rochester, MN. Tim currently resides in Buffalo, NY where he is the Assistant Preparator at the University at Buffalo Art Galleries and is the Co-director of the alternative gallery Dog and Pony Projects.

Tim Roby would like to thank Rebekah Champ as well as my family and friends for their continued support, and to John and everyone at Hallwalls for believing in art.

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TIM ROBY
OBJECTS OF VENERABLE DECAY

The work of Tim Roby, particularly his quixotic sculptures, often draw upon familiar, quotidian materials. In themselves, they are materials so common that they draw no attention to themselves, but Roby operates from the premise that none of these materials are as ordinary as they appear. Contingent upon how they are juxtaposed and transformed, he seems to suggest there may be nothing ordinary in the ordinary. Even the slightest object or materials may contain more expansive implications than anticipated.

For his exhibition at Hallwalls, Roby was invited to utilize a previously-constructed installation space as a source or raw materials for a new, site-specific installation. His decision to enact a three-quarter demolition job immediately sets up an ambiguous and suggestive *mis en scene*—while there is a distinct evocation of ruin, there is an equal, if not stronger, evocation of transformation and regeneration.

Most of what we see is clearly the re-piled and re-arranged debris from whatever once stood here, but it is in the reconfiguring that we recognize a potent impulse toward renewal. It is telling how clearly that impulse is suggested, given the

purposefully slight gestures that Roby employs. He has not repainted anything, removed any screws, or tidied up his materials beyond a concise and specific re-ordering. There is something almost primitive in his impulse to lean materials and create piles, surely among the most elemental building gestures one might employ.

Squares of insulation foam and drywall are tightly piled and topped by balled garbage bags, as if to keep them from blowing away as they sit and demarcate Roby's territory. Unfinished lengths of wood, pockmarked by screws, lean against walls opposite the partial remains of the previous structure, further framing and defining the setting. Finally, broken drywall is piled like mulch, serving as a base for a pair of tall, vertical stems topped by what can only be described of as aerated flags.

Roby's flags are uniquely the only newly-sculpted element in a scene otherwise defined and drawn by reordered debris. In this way, they function emphatically as pointed emblems within this setting and they are, like much of Roby's work, ambiguous in meaning. Their hand-formed shapes appear organic and humorous and they are painted a warm, friendly color. Then again, what are the suggested implications of a flag full of holes? Are they boldly

asserting identity and placement? Are they doing so emphatically or tentatively? Or are they simply waving surrender?

The elements situated outside this hybridized landscape further both the ambiguity of the setting and its mixture of humor and pathos. And, like the flags, there is a hint of whimsy about them as well—is the raised, elongated sculpture a beautifully mutated earthworm, replete with racing stripe or an abstracted model of a landscape? In either case, its form suggests motion and growth, as does the wooden wall relief, with its tentative but beautiful tendrils rising up from a horizontal plane, as if inclining toward the sun.

It is Roby's gestural touches that inject liveliness into forms that, without these most subtle details, are residing on the edge of being inert and otherwise moot. His work does not read as exactly minimal, but there is tremendous restraint and concision at work. Within this, Roby's treatment of form and judicious use of color emit the elemental instinct readily found in forms and images created by children—an unmannered and direct style that does not read as simplistic but as emblematic and iconic.

That so much inanimate material, through simple gestures, can become so animated hints as the ultimate inclination of the work. It is not a funereal dirge bemoaning a ravished environment—that allusion may exist in some degree, but there are too many details that direct us otherwise. Destruction is also a prelude to rebirth and regeneration.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator

