

VISUAL ARTS & ARCHITECTURE: Two shows reveal variety of looks at conceptual art

By Debra Wolf
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REVIEW

“Russell Maltz: In the Process of Becoming: Painted/Stacked (for Sol LeWitt)”

“Anissa Mack: To Be Sung as a Round”

Through March 29. 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays;

11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Thursdays.

Prices: \$1,500-\$15,000.

Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, 535 Means St.

404-688-1970; www.thecontemporary.org.

Bottom line: Two installations at the Contemporary show the pleasures and perils of conceptual art, while offering divergent explorations of process and materials.

In concurrent shows at the Contemporary, two artists expose the pleasures and perils of conceptual art.

Russell Maltz: Lost Without Words?

With a nod to minimalist Sol LeWitt (and his Atlanta installation, "54 Columns"), Maltz stacks painted cinderblock and PVC piping in the Contemporary's courtyard, with a similar installation at a construction site on Decatur and Hill streets. Inside the gallery, 54 inkjet images highlight a single detail of concrete block, varying tone and color in a rhythmic display.

Maltz's work is unconventional, to say the least. He appropriates building materials, paints them, stacks them and installs them in related but unexpected settings. Eventually, they will be reused as originally intended in residential or commercial building.

This isn't our usual definition of art. But it's an effective illustration of the temporary nature of environmental installations. And Maltz is eloquent on the subject. He speaks of the blurring of art and architecture, his desire to engage passers-by who may only glimpse a bit of Day-Glo color and wonder what they've seen. These words illuminate his work. But without them, are these just stacks of cinderblock? Is conceptual art, however admirable, dependent on lengthy explanation?

Anissa Mack: At Face Value

This artist's delightful installation is more easily savored than Maltz's. She utilizes found and store-bought objects and fabricates the rest. Her resulting vignettes combine childhood memories and quirky humor, as she re-creates ribbon candy out of modeling clay, pairs Playboy magazines (circa 1975) with a painted bronze pumpkin and slyly reminds us of more innocent days.

A particularly engaging series of photographs charts a decade of encounters with ice machines. This most inconsequential act, through repetition, cleverly takes on heft.

Maltz's ambitious installation epitomizes the challenges of conceptual art. "Getting it" is heavily dependent on explanation. By contrast, Mack's art speaks for itself.



Russell Maltz's 'Painted/Stacked' utilizes cinderblock and industrial piping in the courtyard at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center.