



Features, List: Natalie Hegert / MutualArt

June 24, 2015



Standing Out in the Crowd: 10 Summer Solo Shows Around the World in 2015

The [summer group show](#): it is an art world standard, a simple placeholder for the slower months, and, increasingly, a cliché ripe for parody and subversion. But as the art world grows and grows, and the 24/7 art news cycle keeps spinning year round, galleries are packing their calendars with big solo shows in the hot months. Shedding some of its listless lackluster, the summer show is becoming a testing ground for young artists, or those working in less saleable and more experimental mediums, like installation and video. Bucking the trend of your usual summer group show roundups, we've put together a list of great summer solo shows around the world, from commercial galleries to non-profit art centers, featuring artists on the young and experimental end of the spectrum.

Rachel Higgins, *Logistics*, installation

Rachel Higgins – *Logistics*

[Kristen Lorello](#), New York, through July 17



Rachel Higgins' sculptures can often be confused for something they're not, and that's part of their appeal. A waist-high black cylinder, interrupted by a wall of MDF slat board, is instantly recognizable as a (partial) rubbish bin, and, indeed, there's a collection of tiny paper cups that have been deposited in it. Composed of materials you're likely to encounter in corporate lobbies and generic show rooms, Higgins' sculptures of peg board, stucco, and synthetic stone engage in a game of associative free play in this tiny but incredibly tactile show.



**Rachel Higgins, *Logistics*,
2015, Installation view**

© Courtesy Kristen Lorello, New York

Rachel Higgins is an interdisciplinary artist currently working in Brooklyn. Her work has been recently exhibited at Kristen Lorello, NY; EFA Project Space, NY; SUNY Purchase, NY; Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY; the Flint Public Art Project, Flint, MI; Franklin Street Works in Stamford, CT; Babel Kunst in Trondheim, Norway; the Crane Arts Center in Philadelphia, PA; and the Artisphere in Washin...[\[more\]](#)



From the Salvage Yard to the Shopping Mall: Rachel Higgins' Logistical Aesthetics

New York City, June 2015: I remember despising the revamped, restyled strip malls that proliferated in the late 1990s, replacing dilapidated 1960s-era kitsch elegance with chunky stucco postmodern monotony in various shades of taupe, terracotta, and teal. These non-places had names conjured from corporate boardrooms—"The Shoppes at Villa Terraces," "Sycamore Plaza Town Centre" and the like—a nomenclature almost offensive in its disavowal of history and specificity in favor of a generic, anesthetic appeal. Years later, as these shopping centers have fallen into an inevitable state of decline or mere shabbiness (there's a pattern here), they look like the relics and ruins of the recent past, a testament to the cycles of economy, fashion, and taste. It doesn't matter that I'm speaking specifically of the Southern California landscape, this is happening everywhere.

For Wyoming-born, Birmingham, Alabama-raised, and New York-based artist Rachel Higgins, the vernacular of the shopping mall, the corporate lobby, and the retail space becomes a territory for sculptural objects, installation, and social practice. Styrofoam, stucco, and synthetic spraystone are some of the materials she uses, simulating the aesthetics of the shipping, shopping, and storage industries. Form and function become confused when pedestal becomes receptacle becomes sculpture becomes furniture.

In one project she opened up shop, with a cohort of other artists, in an **abandoned shopping mall** in Alabama, positing the uncanny space as “a post-apocalyptic playground in the ruins of late-capitalism.” Her MFA thesis exhibition in 2010 at Hunter College—an exacting, hyperreal, immersive installation featuring a water fountain, skylight, trash cans, and scuffed tiles—transported viewers to the kind of liminal spaces that exist at the edges of commercial or recreational architecture, and her installation at Socrates Sculpture Park formed a playground out of vague architectural elements. She’s constructed homemade Jacuzzis, polystyrene Papasan chairs, and enlisted passersby to help carry her Styro-stone sculptures through the streets of New York. Higgins’ works are deceiving—both generic and specific, highly synthetic but lacquered with the gloss of the natural—revealing the paradox in our society’s collective desire for comfort, convenience, efficiency, and bargain-basement prices.

Her work is currently the subject of a solo exhibition, **Logistics**, at **Kristen Lorello** in New York, on view until July 17. In the following exchange, we discuss dream projects, salvage yards, and the aesthetics of the suburban shopping mall and all that it signifies.

Natalie Hegert: How would you define the “aesthetics of logistics”?

Rachel Higgins: I think the “aesthetics of logistics” runs deep in my work, but it’s something I’ve just begun to name in this way, and I think my new show just barely scratches the surface of this. I’ve been thinking about my own attraction to logistics and this drive for systems of movement and efficiency. I often work as an art handler, so this is something that I think about all the time with regard to art objects: packing, moving, securing, storing. But I am also thinking about logistical fetishization in mass production and militarism. I encounter this kind of aesthetic experience browsing U-line and McMaster catalogs, going to the Container Store, or in the mapping of larger, more complicated systems and bodies. There is a beauty in it I think, but also an absurdity, a violence. Our culture loves seeking efficiency to an excess. The logistical drive to organize goods is one that begins to supersede the goods themselves. I’m interested in the material reality of what that *looks* like.

NH: Can you tell me a bit about your residency at Build-it-Green and how that experience impacted the work you’re showing now? What’s it like to be an artist-in-residence at a salvage yard?

RH: I have always been attracted to re-sale shops and salvage yards, and Build-it-Green is an exceptional such place. What America discards is a fascinating and terrifying material reflection of our culture, as well as an incredible wealth of resources. The residency was organized through my fellowship at Socrates Sculpture Park, and B.I.G. supported my project there by basically giving me free pick of their warehouse and a little lofted workspace above their lumber rack. My process was a call-and-response to the objects I found there, so it totally shaped my installation at Socrates. And I am still re-using some of the giant hunks of Styrofoam I got from them almost five years ago.

NH: The sculptures you made at the Sculpture Park in 2011 are constructed from some very unique materials like stucco, synthetic stone, and a material known as EIFS that’s used in re-facading building exteriors. These materials resurface again in the work you’re showing now. How did you come to work with these kinds of materials?

RH: When I was working at Socrates, I was creating a sort of postmodern architectural ruin-scape and finding a lot of shapes and forms I wanted to use, but I had to re-build them in such a way that they would be safe for kids and withstand the weather for 9 months. At the time I was also watching this crew of workers re-facade a store and apartment building in my neighborhood, just carving this Styrofoam into stone-like shapes. It was snowing Styrofoam everywhere for a week and then they coated it all with this painted stucco and *voilà*. It was kind of incredible; so many buildings are facaded like this now—Styrofoam and synthetic stone or stucco. So I became fascinated with this material and process that has become a basis for a lot of my recent sculptural work.

NH: What kinds of materials do you want to explore in future projects?

RH: Plumbing! This is something that keeps coming up in my personal life—through many recent floods and plumbing disasters in my studio, home, work, with friends; it feels like something I need to learn more about. But it has come up in my work before; I've built systems for a fountain, showers, and most recently a Jacuzzi, so I suppose there is a precedent already there. But it is really beautiful—plumbing. It's this incredible and often invisible infrastructure that our entire society depends on. It literally connects us all, but most of us don't think about it, until a part of it breaks and suddenly it is a huge and urgent problem. A few years ago I started documenting hand-made signs from bathrooms concerning the rules of the toilet: what not to flush, how to flush, etc. I made a print that compiled this idiosyncratic language and phrases together. I guess I am interested in how bathrooms (and plumbing in general) are places where the bodies confront the institution, and I'm interested in the kind of negotiations that occur as a result.

NH: What is it that originally drew you to the vernacular of suburban shopping malls, corporate lobbies, and other public/private spaces? The features you might encounter in these spaces, which you're echoing in some of the sculptures here, have this kind of universal ubiquity, but with some elements of regional variation, so that when you encounter the work there's this moment of uncanny recognition... What do these kinds of forms signify in your work?

RH: I love this line between specific and generic, how the most mundane of these forms can resonate with so much weirdness and emotional memory. One thing I find really interesting is that very often someone sees my work and says to me, "Oh, this is just like the mall I grew up with in (insert-your-city-here)," and they have a really strong aesthetic memory and relationship to, like, a trashcan or a color palette. They feel it is regionally specific to the architecture they grew up with—like it is a specifically "Southwestern" mall or whatever. Yes, it is like the mall they grew up with, but it's also basically the same mall every suburbanmiddleclass American of my generation grew up with. One of our great myths is that capitalism encourages diversity, but when we look across our landscape, it devours diversity. Now we can't even sustain the imagineddiversity of those malls. But there is some truly weird specificity happening in these repeating forms that denote this kind of generic private/public space. I am interested in the material reality of whatever that is.

NH: Many of your projects have a social element to them—rather than simply making and exhibiting sculptures, you might ask passersby to help you carry them from point A to point B, for instance. How do you see the relationship in your work between sculpture and social practice?

RH: I think I work somewhere in between. I am very much a "maker," and someone deeply invested in the process and physicality of these objects and materials, and part of that for me is also about how our bodies negotiate and interact with that physicality. But the social element of many of my projects is ultimately what drives me, and that motivation for creating a social exchange is often essential to the content of the work. But at the same time, it is not an immaterial experience. I want viewers to physically and spatially relate. I think this is increasingly important to me as technology and screens dominate our relations—to have a practice that is tangible and limited to a certain kind of physical presence.



Rachel Higgins performing *It's Not That Heavy (12 Sculptures carried with the kindness of strangers)*, 2014. Performance with sculptures at the South Street Seaport, for Out to See, NYC. She asked passers-by to help her carry sculptures around to various sites in the neighborhood currently under re-development. Inspired by the past, present, and future commercial developments of 3 main real estate magnates active in Lower Manhattan: the Howard Hughes Corporation, General Growth Properties, and Brookfield Properties.

NH: What would be your dream project, if you had no budgetary or space restrictions?

RH: This is a great question—while I'm not sure bigger is better, I do think the impossible is sometimes the best place to start from. Many years ago I asked myself this question and my dream project then was to make an artwork with an entire shopping mall. And incredibly, it slowly happened. I started with a totally satirical proposal to take over a dying mall in my hometown. The proposal included an imagined 10-million-dollar subsidy from the government (a figure equal to what the city gave Wal-mart for redeveloping a neighboring mall). I wanted not to re-develop it, but to preserve the empty mall as it was, a sort of living-dead mall, with no functional stores, as a community space. I put out an open call for project ideas for this empty mall. Obviously I didn't get any money or permission, but I did end up leasing one store for two weeks in this almost totally abandoned mall. Each day a different artist presented a new site-specific project. This experience and the architecture of that space has driven a lot of my work since. It is definitely time for a new dream project to work towards, but I don't have a perfect answer yet. But even if I did, I think I wouldn't tell! I believe in attempting the impossible until it becomes some kind of reality.

—Natalie Hegert

ArtSlant would like to thank Rachel Higgins and Kristen Lorello for their assistance in making this interview possible.

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN

10 Galleries to Visit in Brooklyn and Queens

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER APRIL 16, 2015

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THE KNOCKDOWN CENTER

Just over the Brooklyn border, in Maspeth, Queens — a 10-minute walk from the Jefferson stop on the L train — the [Knockdown](#) Center is impressively housed in a former door factory. Weddings and television shoots help pay the bills, but the current show, “Negative Space,” offers a fine selection of art conjuring uncanny domestic spaces. Rachel Higgins’s “Clock” (2014) is a revolving polystyrene and Cerastone disk with no face; Jeremy Coleman Smith’s shed-like structure is built almost entirely from paper; and Lauren Gregory’s video combines animation with a surfing soundtrack. (Through Sunday.)

...

I Serve Art

John Ahearn
Nicolás Dumit Estévez
Ghana Think Tank
Wojciech Gilewicz
Heather Hart
Rachel Higgins
Yoko Inoue
Mladen Miljanovic
Michael Rakowitz
Tattfoo Tan
Mierle Laderman Ukeles
Visual AIDS

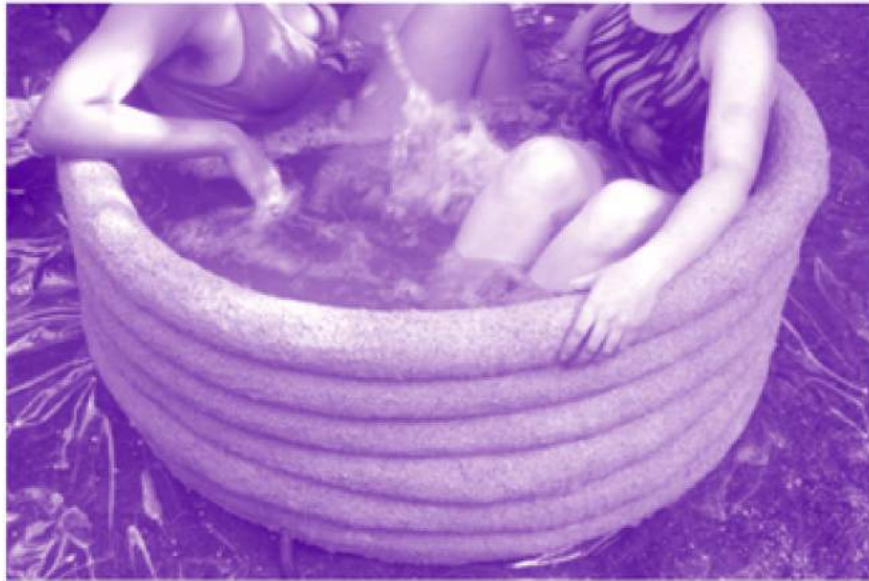
Curated by Sara Reisman

February 17– March 27, 2015

Richard & Dolly Maass Gallery
Purchase College, SUNY

...
Inspired by ongoing commercial development in lower Manhattan, Rachel Higgins' *It's not that heavy* (2012–2015) is a playful but critical

response to developers like the Howard Hughes Corporation, General Growth Properties, and Brookfield Properties that have been active in lower Manhattan for several decades. Higgins' ongoing sculptural performances reference public space design elements like security bollards and planters that she made as an artist in residence at 1 Liberty Plaza (in a residency hosted by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council). Higgins has brought the portable sculptures to sites of development where strangers are compelled to help her carry the objects from one place to another. *It's not that heavy* questions how large scale development can be resisted on the ground and instigates an ad-hoc collective action that fits seamlessly into a cityscape under continuous developer-led construction.



Jacuzzi, 2013. Inflatable baby pools, expandable spray foam, polystyrene, plywood, fiberglass, cement, cerastone, water, mugwort, garden hose, and shop-vac, 24 x 48 x 24 inches.

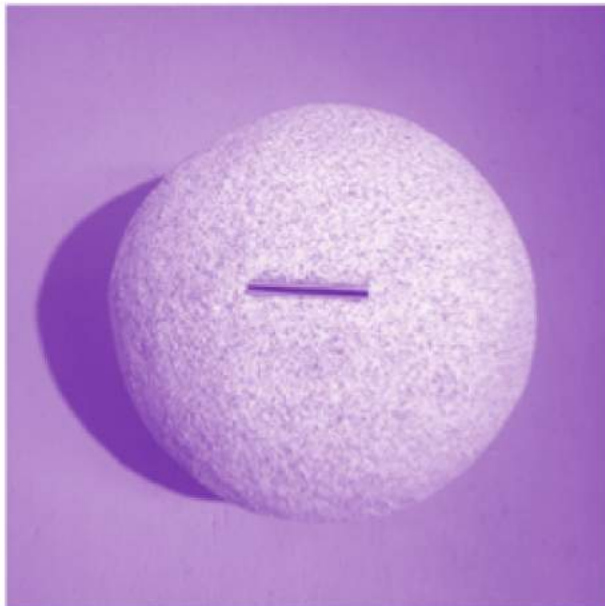
V Rachel Higgins

***Jacuzzi*, 2013.**
Inflatable baby pools, expandable spray foam, polystyrene, plywood, fiberglass, cement, cerastone, water, mugwort, garden hose, and shop-vac. 24 x 48 x 48 inches.

***Deposit*, 2013.**
Polystyrene, fiberglass, cement, cerastone, aluminum, and unknown items deposited by viewers. 12 x 12 x 12 inches.

Higgins's sculptures isolate the ubiquitous forms, patterns, and materials of postmodern architectural details and urban furniture, repurposing them to, often, hilarious results. Contesting the original form and function (or lack thereof) of her source materials, Higgins imbues her creations with unexpectedly fresh, subversive potential, freeing them from the burden of their own formal awkwardness as well as from Postmodernism's questionable legacy.

Rachel Higgins (b.1981) is a Brooklyn-based artist from Birmingham, Alabama. She is a current resident in the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's 2013-2014 Workspace Program. Her work has been exhibited at Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY; the Flint Public Art Project's Free City Festival, MI; Franklin Street Works in Stamford, CT; Babel Kunst in Trondheim, Norway; the Crane Arts Center in Philadelphia, PA; and the Artisphere in Washington, DC. She was a recipient of the 2011 Socrates Sculpture Park Emerging Artist Fellowship and has also been awarded residencies with the Build-It-Green salvage yard in Astoria, Queens, and Real Time & Space in Oakland, CA. She received an MFA from Hunter College in 2010.



Deposit, 2013. Polystyrene, fiberglass, cement, cerastone, aluminum, and unknown items deposited by viewers, 12 x 12 x 12 inches.

JONATHAN HOROWITZ RECOMMENDS RACHEL HIGGINS

contingent upon a given site, problem or context."

HIGGINS ON

HIGGINS: "I've been making work from commercial architecture, primarily using the decor of shopping malls, office parks, and corporate lobbies. This architecture presents a façade of power, stability and order, often articulated through really dumb objects and arrangements. I am most interested in the absurdity of that architecture. It reflects how our culture attempts to control the physical reality we all share, enforcing an absurd logic over the way we negotiate things like desire, shame, necessity, history, and visibility. I may use concrete to foot them in the ground, but mostly I use a lot of fake stone, synthetic stucco, fibreglass, styrofoam, plastic and artificial materials, and salvaged bits from construction yards. They look kind of sturdy and they are resilient to a certain extent, but you can usually jam a pencil through them if you want."

Raised in Alabama, trained at Hunter, and based in New York, Rachel Higgins makes architectural interventions into public space where the interactivity of her faux-corporate structures rips away the veil of solidity and power.

HOROWITZ ON HIGGINS: "Rachel Higgins makes work from the stuff shopping malls are made of. 'Don't Worry About Buildings and Food' is a grouping of architectural fragments faced with synthetic stucco on polystyrene, evoking the ruins of a Walmart. 'Islands' are like two cement-bound, weed garden vases from the parking lot out front. In other works, Higgins creates participatory, open-ended social situations. For 'do it outside yourself', Higgins invited viewers to display on a pedestal and or take from it any object of their choosing. For 'W.A.S.H.', made in collaboration with Kate O. Miles, Higgins built a working sauna amid the concrete wasteland of an abandoned parking lot, providing a small pocket of social-sensual release. Common throughout Higgins' work is a wry utilisation of the work which is always

WWW.RACHELHIGGINS.COM



All images
RACHEL HIGGINS
**Don't Worry About Buildings
and Food, 2011**

Wood, steel, and salvaged construction materials, polystyrene, EIFS synthetic stucco, concrete, paint
Installed at Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, New York
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist



Pop-Up Shop

CECI MOSS | Mon Dec 15th, 2008 6:20 p.m.

Share



With the economy undergoing a severe downturn, and [retailers reporting an especially slow sales season](#) during what is typically the busiest time of the year, the organizers behind *Everything Must Go* could not have asked for more fitting circumstances for their upcoming exhibition, which will take place in a partially abandoned mall in Birmingham, Alabama. Curator Rachel Higgins rented one retail shop out of the over 60 vacant stores in the Century Plaza Shopping Mall, and from December 20 through January 3rd, twenty artists, including Sascha Braunig, Walton Creel, Matthew Farrell, Rachael Gorchov, Jess Perlitz, and others, will approach the space as a stage, rotating works on a daily basis in order to spotlight a specific group or artist. The project's title *Everything Must Go* touches on the fast pace of consumerism, which steers the rate at which malls are built and discarded, but it also carries with it a darker cadence, one that suggests that our current models for economic growth, which favor rapidity and waste, cannot persist.

Gallerist

GALLERIES

Next Up on the Lower East Side: Kristen Lorello Gallery

BY ANDREW RUSSETH | 3/27 11:31AM



Works by Higgins and Occhionero. (Courtesy the artists and Kristen Lorello)

building, just off the elevator, and measures about 165 square feet. "I had a collector ask me recently if there was a bathroom, because he was worried it would take up half the space," Ms. Lorello said. (There's not, but there is one nearby in the building, for the record.) On the plus side, the location is solid: the New Museum is directly behind the address.

Ms. Lorello's first show is a two-person outing from Brooklynite Rachel Higgins and Rome-based artist Giacinto Occhionero. (The dealer spent time in Italy on a Fulbright so there is likely to be an Italian contingent to her program). She's starting out with Scott Alario, Goldschmied & Chiari, Giacinto Occhionero and Josh Slater on her roster.

Before going into business herself, Ms. Lorello worked at both Eleven Rivington and Greenberg Van Doren Gallery (now Van Doren Waxter Gallery) and most recently earned a master's in art history from Hunter College. She's curated shows at Louis B. James ("Touch the Moon," which closed in January) and GVD.

Why start a gallery now? "I wanted to implement my vision rather than work as a director at a gallery," Ms. Lorello said. "It was time for me to carry my vision out."

The address 195 Chrystie Street, between Stanton and Rivington Streets on the Lower East Side, has been home to a practice space for the No-Neck Blues Band, the very tiny gallery Art Since the Summer of '69 (which billed itself as "the smallest gallery in the world") and, recently, a branch of Eleven Rivington. Now it's getting a new gallery, an eponymous operation by Kristen Lorello, a former associate director at Eleven Rivington.

She is starting modestly. Her space, which opens April 17, is on the sixth floor of the