

# ARUSHA

## GALLERY

### *Smotherland*

I like to work with super simple, blocky, almost childish shapes. I use big, flat brushes and viscous materials that make it nearly impossible to get overly fussy or detailed. Some of the forms are vaguely 3D or seem to reference something from the real world, but these are isolated cases and are almost always surrounded by choices that disrupt any kind of illusion or reference. It is important to me that the visual language I'm creating is highly elemental and never overly reliable. To me, this makes a painting, a sculpture or a body of work come to life.

I intentionally muck-up visually pleasurable terrains with misfit elements. I always notice and appreciate stuff that is out-of-place and off-vibe in the real world as well. The person dressed inappropriately for a funeral. The colorful lobster buoy bobbing in the ocean. The neon orange safety cone on a dirt road (actually, any neon safety elements anywhere). I respond to the broken pattern. Always have. It is no surprise that my palette of choice includes bright, flamboyant, out-of-place colors right next to all the easy-going ones. For me, the brights are more awkward and challenging to work with. I love to negotiate between gaudy and tasteful in my work.

In talking about this body of work, I also have to mention a lifelong love of infographics — especially ones that are cross-sectional in nature. I love scientific diagrams of innards and mundane processes. At a basic level, I have a really strong desire to see what is underneath the surface. And then what is underneath that. And how it all fits together. Hair follicle and geological cross-sectional diagrams are my favorites. In painting, I'm given the chance to be the one creating and then revealing these layers. Mushing up and connecting all the bits and pieces. A friend looking at my work once commented that the way I pile these draping, slumping forms in my paintings reminds her of the phenomenon that happens at the bottom of the stairwell in a family brownstone. A bag lands next to a pair of boots which is then covered over by a jacket and then a soccer ball and then a little stack of laundry and on and on. In my paintings, each new layer shares the basic topography of the element that came before but with less specificity and intriguing new lumps.

Often, the main event in my paintings is a mound of interlocking forms with bits and pieces flying by or tearing away. Process-wise, it just feels right to me to attach some elements to the bottom of the frame and grow it from there. It reminds me of planting a garden and watering it each day and seeing what emerges. The bugs move in. Trash lands in it. There are high winds. Sections get matted down by neighborhood cats. I am intrigued by the infiltration of foreign elements into an otherwise ordered, stable scene. In my paintings this is often the role of the pointy geometric forms floating around. They create that sense of mild disruption and harmonious disharmony that I'm always searching for. Sometimes there is no central, grounding form and the painting is all scattered, brutalist geometry. In these instances, I become transfixed by the way the shapes relate to one another and how this energizes the field.

Like the oil paintings, the sculptural work grows out of a loose, additive, layered process—mostly constructed out of paper mache and pulp that is draped over some kind of found core form. The sculptures are vaguely familiar and foreign at the same time—like suggestive, abstract pinatas.

Stacking, layering and lining things up in the way that I do is instinctive, as is mixing and building color worlds. Planning and premeditation are not part of it. My choices as a painter and sculptor emerge out of a responsive, way-finding process—building and reacting, building and reacting—and the results are vaguely foreign yet familiar.