



***Knock-off Oracle,
Undecider's Anthem...
And a Disaster, After***

by
David Snyder

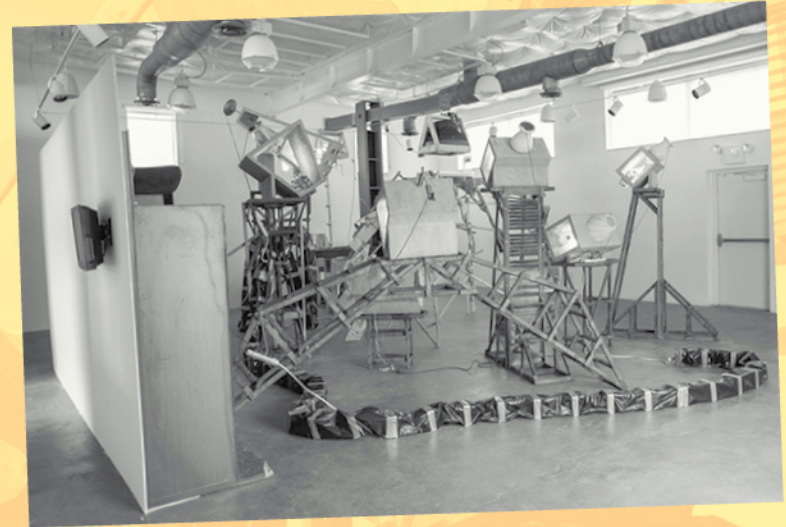
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Galveston Artist Residency

David Snyder's site-specific installation, *Knock-off Oracle, Undecider's Anthem... And a Disaster, After*, at the Galveston Artist Residency, greets you with a banal white wall that blocks the direct view into the gallery space. A mounted flatscreen television plays music videos Snyder cut up and stitched together to form an abstract staccato and patchwork performance of the national anthem. Perhaps this is Snyder's "Undecider's Anthem," and a prologue for what follows.



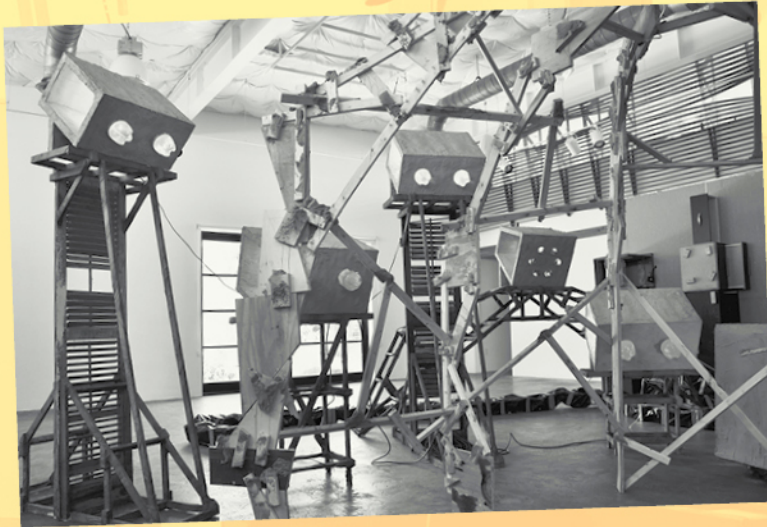
Turning the corner, we see what might be the "Disaster, After." The sturdy looking wall reveals itself to be thin sheets of drywall propped up by old desks, drawers, and cushionless couches stacked and turned on their sides like discarded, roadside furniture. The flimsy, yet polished façade, hides from view dangling extension cords,

clunky black conduit, and latticed trusses with shutters propping up lamps that illuminate sugary, off-brand sodas you can buy from the dollar store (like the Sprite knock off fittingly called "Stars & Stripes").



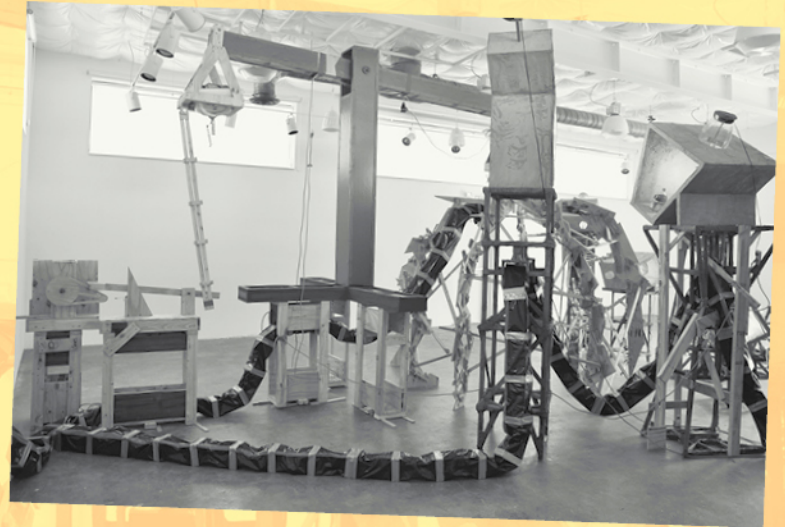
The anthropomorphic structures with glowing soda "eyes" encircle a central, dome-like enclosure cobbled together from rough shards of plywood. Visitors can step inside the enclosure, triggering a motion sensor that sets off a clanking apparatus that moves like an oil pumpjack that violently lowers and raises a television perched facedown overhead. The TV screen, visible through a trough of bubbling water, is the "Knock-off Oracle" and shows a blurred fiery orange image that looks like the gaseous surface of some distant planet.

A soundtrack plays a distorted monologue by Donald Trump, edited together by Snyder from hundreds of sound bytes and interviews in an attempt to fabricate a positive sounding statement from the doom and gloom candidate.



Snyder uses the word “kludge” as one way to describe his approach to sculpture. Kludge, a term used by computer scientists and engineers, describes a poorly designed system of patchwork fixes and inelegant solutions. It could be applied to Snyder’s technique of piecing together scraps of material—pieces of wood, found objects, and snippets of video and audio—to create new forms. Snyder also plays with language as a kind of “kludge,” seeing words as a veneer used to conceal and tidy up messier realities. In his recent work, he specifically

takes on the political rhetoric surrounding the 2016 presidential race and Donald Trump’s proclamations.



Inspired by Trump’s incendiary promise to build a border wall paid for by Mexico, Snyder created the 2016 video *The Guano*, also on view at the Galveston Artist Residency. In *The Guano*, images culled from the Internet and computer diagrams created by Snyder hilariously and rigorously illustrate a proposal to turn defunct Blockbuster video stores into bat guano production factories. To Snyder, this proposal is as outlandish as Trump’s promise, yet Snyder works through the logistics and economics of retrofitting Blockbuster stores to absurd exactitude like an eager consultant using buzzwords and jargon to prop up a hollow idea.



In the current political climate it is trendy to say that we are in a moment of “post-fact” politics where assertions are immediately consumed with a disregard for contrary information. Whether you agree with this characterization or not, Snyder’s installation does not reconfigure political rhetoric into just another new package for easy digestion, but instead a ramshackle dystopia on the verge of collapse where a “knock-off oracle” dispenses nonsensical prophecy.

- Joshua Fischer

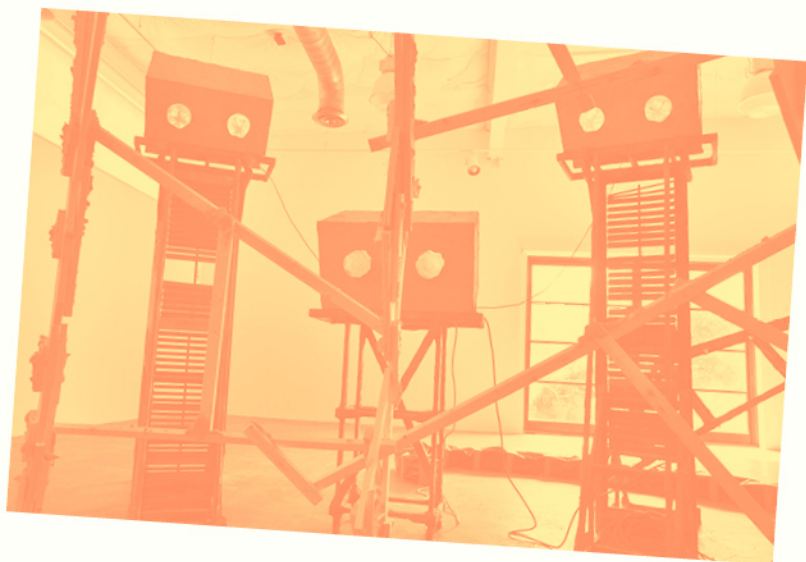
To sugar-coat, to gloss over, to embellish, to fabricate. Such structural and decorative ways of lying! So many poor decisions made with “good intentions,” so many ornately sequenced strings of sentences, logical next steps that have led to one disaster or another. And any given disaster denounced as such with hindsight or made exigent through *ex post-facto* rationale: Anyhow, someone had to do something.

In short, never a moment’s peace from the endless tug-of-war of rhetoric: pro and con, for and against, us and them. Easier to declaim in black and white, of course binaries only, please, with 1s and 0s the currency of our current dialectic. We’ve become so concerned with observing the propriety of accuracy that we fact-check casual conversations, seeking arbitration from a swipe or a click, objectivity from object itself, truth from lump in the pants pocket.

But as with dice or scapulae or a Magic 8 ball, if you shake them enough, you’ll get what you want. We seek to find the answer just where we left it – in some sane, comfortable, and flattering place. An easy-access “truth” is slippery and it is fugitive, built of ingratiating platitudes and the snake oil promise of nothing “real” but of something “better.” Rhetoric is surface, it is veneer; a curtain drawn tight about the shoddy mechanics of a bad decision waiting to happen. The choice between an inherited point of view and the uncertain slog through things as just they are – fragmentary, dissolute, and incoherent – is like the choice between spackle and scraper: peel the paint, every time.

- David Snyder

David Snyder (born 1979, Rochester, New York), received his B.A. from Bard College in 2002 and his M.F.A. in sculpture from UCLA in 2010. He has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad. His work has been reviewed in various publications including: Artforum, Frieze Magazine, the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, and L.A. Weekly. He is currently a visiting professor of sculpture at Cornell University.



Knock-off Oracle, Undecider's Anthem... And a Disaster, After is a site-specific installation and video piece by David Snyder, curated by GAR in collaboration with Joshua Fischer, Rice Gallery.