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REVIEW

Shut Up and Keep Swimming

[Jail](#)

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Shut Up and Keep Swimming

This powerhouse group exhibition, curated by Claressinka Anderson, wrangled an array of styles in order to illuminate a perplexing, slightly urgent subject: the prevailing global apocalypse. Robert Billings contributed a sculpture of an enormous, apparently patriotic, robot warrior named Doughboy. In this imaginative, wickedly hilarious, labor-intensive assemblage, Billings employs the literal and figurative raw materials of model plane assembly -- his childhood pastime -- to indulge his habit of ignoring directions. He uses too much glue and tar, plays with the packaging as well, and generally gets it all wrong. The towering figure is festooned with high- and low-culture signs and symbols, photocopies of George W. Bush's face superimposed with a shooting target, and a plethora of military insignias. Ultimately no more upbeat, Ricky Allman's glorious painting *Sister-Wives* indicted organized religion, specifically Mormonism, and its penchant for perpetuating illusions with soul-crushing fear and guilt. *Sister-Wives* bespeaks a truly bifurcated existence in which a radiant, infernal chaos of thick paint and supersaturated color may or may not symbolize the mysteries of the faith, but in any case holds captive some of the richest, boldest abstraction around inside the dimensions of a rigid box. MB Boissonnault again demonstrated a penchant for depicting disasters and warlike aggression with a well-developed, multiple-focal-plane painting style that blends the smoothness of the natural world with the harsh, banal geometries of missile attacks, plane crashes, and environmental tragedy. Eve Wood's quirky, off-kilter folksiness combined to great effect with her predilection for unseemly imagery, in this case a small girl in a gas mask with a rat perched on her tiny frizzled head. This odd figure stands in an indistinct setting of meandering paint drips, leaks, oil slicks, and viral menace. Despite their divergent formal strategies, what these painters ultimately have in common with one another, and with the other talented artists in Anderson's show, is a willingness to stare straight at our demons and render their likenesses faithfully.



Ricky Allman
Sister Wives, 2008
acrylic, ink on canvas
48x60"

by *Shana Nys Dambrot*

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