

AMY O'NEILL

Nov 14 2012 - Jan 27 2013

Amy O'Neill's impressive and varied body of work includes drawings, installations, sculptures, and videos which reference Americana, art history, and folk art. In this exhibition, O'Neill creates a super-sized environment filled with religious and cultural symbols that explore the American penchant for monumentalism in various forms.

The exhibition's title, HLUSA, is an initialism referencing Holy Land USA, an abandoned 18-acre theme park in Waterbury, Connecticut. The attraction is featured in a large-scale video projection in Swiss Institute's lobby. Visitors to the exhibition can view O'Neill's footage of the now-decaying Biblical wonderland from a raised platform that is normally used as the gallery's office. The camera lingers over Egyptian and Israelite inspired architecture, constructed from cinderblocks and discards. Glossy white paint, a hand painted signage, and white curtains on Swiss Institute's exterior usher visitors into this video-viewing "chapel."

Behind an obfuscating wall in Swiss Institute's main gallery, O'Neill's site-specific installation emerges: nine rows of hydrocal and burlap pyramids rise up several feet from the gallery floor. The pyramids, referencing scenes from the Holy Land video, are emblazoned with symbols referencing tweets, slang, and text-messages, shorthand that is recognizable yet cryptic. Language and position are combined, mummifying the currents of time.

Drawing from the visual vocabulary of holy rollers and pop-up churches, HLUSA articulates parochial America with circumspection, spurring the viewer to follow

O'Neill's lead in self-expression.