




Things fall apart – A collection On Loan at Tiger Strikes Asteroid

By [Ben Meyer](#) August 14, 2012

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Entering [Tiger Strikes Asteroid](#)'s current show is like going into the parlor of some half-cracked, old art collector. The mixed-media works on display in *On Loan*, which was curated by TSA member Nora Salzman, have been arranged into a harmonious concord that's almost as interesting from a curatorial perspective as the works are themselves.



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The domestic theme common in the works — like the stack of mens’ undershirts, wallpaper on one wall, rocking chair, porcelain dishware, and decorative figurines – adds to the living room feel. But the homely exterior is undermined by pervasive elements of decay or decomposition that are present to some degree in all of these works.



Salvatore Scibona’s Typewriter (on which he wrote his highly acclaimed novel, *THE END*), Meghan Gordon, 2009, photocopies, glue. Photo by Ben Meyer



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“Salvatore Scibona’s Typewriter (on which he wrote his highly acclaimed novel, *THE END*),” by Meghan Gordon, is a twisted and decrepit faux-typewriter that’s falling to pieces and covered in faux cobwebs. Scibona was listed in 2010 as one of *The New Yorker’s* “Fiction Writers to Watch: 20 Under 40,” and his 2009 novel *The End* was short-listed for a National Book Award. But Gordon’s piece looks like a prop from David Cronenberg’s *Naked Lunch*, or a typewriter that’s over 70 years old. The sarcastic tone of the piece’s title indicates the artist’s lack of regard for critical “acclaim,” and for any sort of importance given to the tool used by an artist, which here is a rotting relic on which some artistic labor may or may not have occurred. The name of this particular Underwood model, “Champion,” seems bitter and mocking on such a pathetic and defeated-looking device.



Serena Perrone, Maintaining a Safe Distance and Living to Tell #20, 2012, lithograph with silkscreen, 11 x 15 in.

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Serena Perrone placed two precise, peculiarly-hypnotic prints in the show – the first and last print of her 20-print, 25-foot-long series, *Maintaining a Safe Distance and Living to Tell*. This series of lithographs incorporates volcanoes from Perrone’s earlier *Volcano Pilgrim* series, which was displayed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Now, the volcanoes serve as backdrop to a personal narrative charting natural landscapes as scenes of tumult and inspiration. The uprooted trees and destructive billowing clouds make the chaos of nature feel real.



We Cannot Accept Your Position, Anna Elise Johnson, 2011, graphite on paper

In “We Cannot Accept Your Position,” Anna Elise Johnson tries to figure out — through seven whimsical graphite drawings — the exact nature of a small figurine from the background of an awkward 1986 photograph of Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan. Johnson recreates multiple versions of the figurine, which she then humorously labels as a Jamaican redemption song-type character, a Russian hero, and a Spanish dancer.



The Reagan/Gorbachev photo which inspired the artist. C37406-14, 1986, Ronald Reagan Library Archive

Johnson's notes scribbled in the margins of the sketches, commenting on the subject's face, hands, clothes, feet and penis, seem to ape the overly analytic mindset of Cold War-era and modern-day neurotic newspaper readers. Is the figurine just a figurine, or is it like one of Madeleine Albright's symbolic lapel pins, carrying some important diplomatic significance?



All of His Shirts (Everything Must Go), Elizabeth Hamilton, 2012, plexiglass, worn undershirts

“All of His Shirts (Everything Must Go)” by Elizabeth Hamilton is a stack of dozens of white “worn undershirts.” That this flimsy relic of day-to-day life was stored in a glass vitrine is a statement about the futility of preserving any kind of memento against the forces of time.



*Self-Portrait as Ben Franklin (2 of 5),
Lucia Thomé, 2011, porcelain*

The small details making this gallery a complete, livable room add to the harmony of the show. Lucia Thomé’s wry “Self-Portrait as Ben Franklin” was modeled on popular porcelain statuettes of Benjamin Franklin from the 19th century. Look up to enjoy the ceiling moldings – “Papercrown,” by Jamie Horgan – which are made of recycled paper pulp in an antique American style.



*Meissen from the Kunstgewerbemuseum
Contemplating a Basket of Flowers, Meghan
Gordon, 2010, paper, glue, cardboard, wire, paper
pulp, acrylic paint, acrylic medium, oil paint*

Gordon's "Meissen from the Kunstgewerbemuseum Contemplating a Basket of Flowers" is another enjoyable highlight in the show, portraying a mummified child riding a leopard over a wave of wild greenery. Gordon's "Trey Anastasio's Grandmother's Chair (My Vermont Studio Chair)" is striking in its flimsiness, looking like it's about to collapse, yet strangely durable. Thankfully, you don't need to know anything about the band Phish to pick up on the weird tension between decay and graceful aging that this chair evokes.

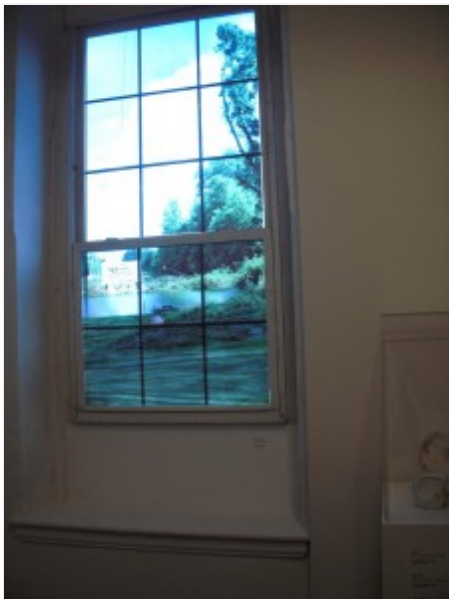


Foreground: Trey Anastasio's Grandmother's Chair (my Vermont studio chair), Meghan Gordon, 2009, paper, gesso, glue. On wall: Evil Swan, Jessica Smith, 2012, screen-print on Okawara paper with mica pigments.

“Vues de Pooler,” by Jessica Smith, are translucent digital prints on vinyl film placed over the windows of the gallery, which add to the holistic nature of this gallery show – literally everywhere one looks is part of Salzman’s show, including out the window, where Smith’s pictures of nature obscure and enhance the ugly urban Philadelphia scenery outside. Smith also created “Evil Swan,” the bizarre and beautiful wallpaper pattern over a wall near the entrance of the gallery.



Gallery photos courtesy of Tiger Strikes Asteroid.



*Detail, view of window enhancement
by Jessica Smith at TSA*

The show leaves you feeling like you have experienced the space of an imaginary, absent inhabitant of the show, the collector behind this assortment of decay. How these objects are falling apart seems to bind them more than any typical outward similarity.

“On Loan” will be up at Tiger Strikes Asteroid through Sunday, August 26, 2012.

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