

frosch & portmann

Magnolia Laurie

what could hold us together

frosch&portmann is pleased to present *what could hold us together*, Magnolia Laurie's first exhibition with the gallery. The artist lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland.

In her show, Magnolia Laurie poses the question of what could hold us back from the brink of falling apart, as mounting political, social, and economic calamities perpetually threaten. The paintings and sculpture may be seen not only as a question to a hopeless answer, but also as a resilient statement of hope and assurance of what will persist, endure, and maintain. The title of the exhibition comes from a line in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. The artist has been recently rereading the novel along with Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* and John Steinbeck's *America and Americans*. These narratives of precarious transition with wandering narrators inform the visual language and psychology of the environments in the artist's work.

To create the paintings in this exhibition, Laurie first composed collages as a starting point for the structures that inhabit her illusionistic, yet abstract landscapes. Her formations and barriers appear to be manmade, however the figures who created them are nowhere to be seen. The viewer is the only witness to the sense of an aftermath in the paintings. Structures and barriers are perched upon seemingly uninhabitable landscapes that have endured a devastation of some sort. Despite the imagined disasters present, there is also a strong sense of hope in Laurie's work. Throughout the paintings, brightly patterned nautical signal flags appear. This universal emergency system is a call for help amidst the chaos. The curiously built framework and flags bravely endure despite the precarious environments they inhabit. The paintings work to balance domesticity with survival, the falsity of facade and the reality of barriers, and the hopeful with the hopeless.

The installation in the exhibition, *leisure came to us before we knew what to do with it*, is composed of found and gathered materials, many of which are from the artist's home. Two structures, similar to the ones in Laurie's paintings, unite as one. They are rigged together, connected across the gallery with bright orange mason line, making them dependent on one another with the notion of counterweight. This sculpture, which includes objects of leisure such as a vintage croquet set and a stereo casing from the 1970s, is indicative of the multitudinous forms of entertainment we create to construct seemingly comfortable lives. The chaotic nature of the installation suggests that when we have an excess of leisure activities we can make chaos out of them and they can become absurd and counterproductive. The sculpture may also be seen as two people connecting despite all the chaos surrounding them. The amalgamation of disparate parts creates a unified and beautiful whole. In her latest work, Magnolia Laurie deftly uses structure to imply vulnerability, and the persistence of futile gestures to embody hope.

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Hours: Wednesday to Sunday, noon – 6pm

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