

GalleristNY

Virginia Overton at Mitchell-Innes & Nash

By **Andrew Russeth** 3/19 5:19pm

In a sense, Virginia Overton has filled every single inch of space at Mitchell-Innes & Nash for her sophomore outing there. An enrapturing, sylvan scent hovers throughout the gallery, emanating from a curtain of eastern red cedar—*Juniperus virginiana*—that the artist has installed over the gallery's back wall. It smells like a forest is just out of sight.

The sprawling wall's gold and red streaks suggest paintings by Pat Steir or Larry Poons and its scarred surface the collaged paintings of Mark Bradford or Jacques Villeglé, but in fact Ms. Overton has done nothing to it. She has left the wood, which was harvested at her family's farm in Tennessee, entirely untreated.

The gallery is otherwise nearly empty. The only other artwork here is *Untitled (hot tub)* (2013), a sculpture made of two thin, clear vinyl tubes, burping and spluttering, that cycle water between a white coffeemaker and a cast-iron bathtub, also salvaged from the farm.

For her excellent show at the Kitchen last year, Ms. Overton scoured the space's storage for old pipes, poles and pedestals, making tough, gritty sculptures out of the cast-off materials of the institution itself. At Mitchell-Innes & Nash, she has brought the outside in. Like the piles of sand and gravel that Earth artist Robert Smithson collected on his travels and exhibited in galleries ("non sites," he called them), Ms. Overton's wood wall and bathtub point to the world beyond the white walls of the gallery.

The works' scavenged, repurposed materials and their single source allude to societal shifts, like the steady transformation of American farmland into exurbs, a change stalled in recent years by a dismal housing market. It doesn't seem altogether coincidental that one of the other great gallery shows in New York this year, Ragnar Kjartansson's video installation at Luhring Augustine, set at a manse on a farm upstate, also invokes rural living.

But what is most compelling about these new sculptures is the way in which they introduce the element of time into Ms. Overton's post-minimalist lexicon. The water in the tub heats up over the course of each day and is left to cool down overnight, when the gallery is closed. Her wall's cedar odor hits with a pungent force but fades as a visitor acclimates to it. Her works change, as do those who experience them, raising the question: what else are we missing simply because we aren't looking for it?

(Through April 6, 2013)