

Art in America

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Amanda Ross-Ho

NEW YORK,
at Mitchell-Innes & Nash

by [Elizabeth Buhe](#)



View of Amanda Ross-Ho's exhibition "My Pen Is Huge," 2017, at Mitchell-Innes & Nash.

When Amanda Ross-Ho lost the lease on her downtown Los Angeles studio recently, she took the post-studio condition not as a limitation but as the impetus to produce new work. The result is a set of twelve scribble-laden paintings that she planned while on the road and later produced on-site for her show at Mitchell-Innes & Nash's Chelsea gallery (all works 2017). The exhibition also included six aluminum

sculptures of clock hands hung near the gallery's entrance and, in the center of the space, two broad white tables covered with all manner of paraphernalia one might find in a studio, or in a carry-on bag: coins, X-Acto knife blades, scrunchies, gloves, wine glasses, and sleep masks. As she had done in previous work, Ross-

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Ho played with scale in this arrangement by including exaggeratedly large or miniaturized versions of some of the objects, such as jumbo paper clips and tiny beverage bottles.

Ross-Ho made studies for the paintings while traveling over the past year. She used a set of thirteen-inch-square vintage clock-face patterns she purchased on eBay as surfaces on which to paint, draw, and take notes. She produced the paintings, in turn, at the gallery, which she treated as a studio throughout the month of August. Colorful drips and smears are visible on the white tables where the artist apparently laid the canvases flat to work on them. Wine and coffee seemingly played crucial roles in her creative process, as evidenced by the prominent liquid stains on *Untitled Timepiece (Acid Free Environments)*. Many of the paintings suggest cerebral wanderings. *Untitled Timepiece (Let This Be a Sermon)*, for example, is inscribed with a near-obsessive patchwork of lists whose organizing logic remains opaque. The paintings recall what art historian Leo Steinberg, writing about Robert Rauschenberg's work, dubbed the "flatbed picture plane," a flat surface that tabulates diverse kinds of information.

The graphite scrawlings Ross-Ho crammed in and around many of the paintings' clock faces are sometimes personal and idiosyncratic (blackhandled scissors backhanded compliment; shave cats!) and sometimes broadly relatable (death by a thousand emails; go to bed). Some of the works' titles suggest an ironic attitude toward the possibility of finding meaning either in the language or in the overall compositions. *Untitled Timepiece (Tidy Narrative)*, which features washy silhouettes of eye masks, bottles, and drinking vessels, would seem to encourage viewers to draw connections between the painting and the tabletop displays. With her painting pointing back to the setting of its own production, or the things in that setting, Ross-Ho foregrounds the recursive nature of her process.

Ross-Ho compressed a year's worth of working on the clock-face patterns into a month's worth of working on canvas—a discrepancy that reflects the upended sense of time that ran throughout the exhibition, as underscored by the separation of clock faces (the paintings) from clock hands (the aluminum sculptures). Even though her artworks bear traces of the labor that went into them, some of her scrawlings hint at the instability of interpreting her work as a direct record of this

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process. Her scale-shifting tabletop installation hints at a multiplicity of narratives behind the creation of her work. Among the text written on one of the tables are the phrases a temporary set of empirical facts and the limitations of a single narrative—a canny warning against the easy acceptance of received truths or "tidy narratives" in our time. Though the canvases may make visible the labor of painting and the artistic process, they also bear the marks of sprawling imagination.