

# Amanda Ross-Ho

Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York, USA

'Somebody Stop Me', Amanda Ross-Ho's title for her first New York solo show, has the platitude of a bumper sticker or the type of all-caps outburst that the American comic-strip character Cathy might make just before a frenzied spending spree at a shoe shop. (Punch-line: 'On second thought, don't!') Applied to a body of work as deliberate as Ross-Ho's, it might seem disingenuous: few artists would bother to notice, let alone highlight, the precise aesthetic relationship between, say, the swooping form of a French curve and the cursive scrawl of the word 'Life' on a piece of rhinestone jewellery. In *Onesource 2a Mock Milestones (Perforated Sampler)* (all works 2010), these items (the latter represented by an enlarged photocopy of an eBay advertisement, rather than the real thing) are tacked at careful right angles on a pegboard along with a few sundry items. Hardly the act of an artist who's not in full control.

But that's just it – Ross-Ho's affection for such casual affinities borders on the pathological. Her best unions seem inevitable: *Bedroom Bandit*,

a riot of sympathetic colours and textures, features a 1980s poster of Van Halen frontman David Lee Roth (in tropical-coloured warrior paint and feathered headdress), looking crazy and cosy as he peeks out from under a quilt sewn by Ross-Ho's Aunt Gina. Both objects co-existed in the artist's bedroom for some time before she brought them together, just so.

The works in 'Somebody Stop Me' demonstrate the breadth of Ross-Ho's practice – macramé paintings, inkjet prints of her studio walls, arrangements of found objects and personal items, and enlarged sculptures of everyday stuff – yet each work contains a key, or at least a hint, to interpreting others. Having a bit of background helps with the more oblique works: an odd, rectangular sculpture with a pair of column-shaped oculi in its centre turned out to be a foam-core scale model of the Mitchell-Innes & Nash gallery space (*Heirloomed Model with Scale Natural Disaster (Preserving Memories Is What We Do Best)*). It endured a series of unfortunate events in the artist's studio: first, cat pee, and then a freak rainstorm. Ross-Ho gold-plated it, creating a degraded monument to the process of mounting a show.

Similarly, *Onesource ...*, with its balanced, X-Y grid of ephemera, preserves a slice of the artist's professional and personal life (among the items included is a humorous, personalized postcard from her cat's veterinarian: 'Jorge, It's time to schedule your next visit.'). It's also an example of Ross-Ho's best-known visual trope: ersatz pegboards made by meticulously drilling holes in sheetrock, a laborious act of craft masquerading as shop-bought prefab. Such modesty and obfuscation seem fundamental to Ross-Ho's art; several works involved invisibility, ghosts and negative spaces. *Untitled* features a tattered found cartoon of one ghost painting a portrait of another with a jar of invisible ink. Across the gallery, a double self-portrait called *Invisible Ink* shows the artist shrouded except for two black, ghost-like holes torn around her eyes, presenting a serendipitous link to the oculi of *Heirloomed Model ...*

Serendipity. There's another notion trending toward platitude: the happy accident, the lucky find. Ross-Ho incorporated a variety of second-hand materials, including single earrings purchased in bulk from eBay. In a recent interview with fellow University of Southern California alumnus Elad Lassry, Ross-Ho said she loved online sales platforms like eBay and Craigslist because they 'attempt to unite fugitive, unwanted garbage with loving homes. The total uselessness is exhilarating.' Arranged in constellations and added as decorative touches here and there, the earrings seemed like lucky little refugees rescued from a vast scrapheap, an example of what makes Ross-Ho's work self-consciously trite and true.

Anne Wehr

Amanda Ross-Ho  
*Bedroom Bandit*  
2010  
Quilt sewn by Gina Ross-Chilvers and a framed David Lee Roth poster  
2.5x1.4 m

