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Lynn Aldrich, “Romance and Reality Will Kiss One Another”

by Jody Zellen

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Lynn Aldrich, “Grid Buster,” 1989, 10 x 17 feet

In many senses Lynn Aldrich’s work is Duchampian. Her nuanced career spans more than forty years of witty and conceptually based works that ingeniously combine found materials, often including household objects, as well as common items from hardware stores. She transforms them into large scale sculptures that often become visual metaphors for the complexities of the natural world. Her expansive works are filled with visual puns, art history, and scientific inquiry.

The works included in “Romance and Reality Will Kiss One Another” are both new and old. The centerpiece of the exhibition is “Grid Buster” (1989), a room-sized installation. This multifaceted piece takes its point of departure from the German painter Matthias Grunewald’s “Isenheim Altarpiece” (c. 1512-16). A small reproduction of the work hangs on the wall and is illuminated by a single tiny light which is plugged into eight interlocked surge protectors hanging below it. On the floor is a huge orange, black and green plaid carpet with the shape of Christ’s body removed. The cutout rises above, centered on an adjacent wall, a silhouette mimicking the crucified body. Although created in 1989, the work feels very current as it deals with dissociation and issues of power, religion and faith.

In “All I Know So Far” (also 1989) Aldrich cuts apart and horizontally stacks sections of ‘flat cactus’ paddles, reshaping them into rectangles. They are presented on a wooden shelf bookended by bronzed baby shoes. In this curious juxtaposition, the prickly surface of the cactus and the title “All I Know So Far” implies a potential for danger.

Alongside these older pieces are two recent works: “All the Colors Will Bleed” and “Backyard Bird Count” (both 2026). For “All the Colors Will Bleed” Aldrich created a rectangle with more than 100 small, square paint chips. Attached to each chip are like-colored threads. The individual strands move from the edge of the work to its center, where they become a chaotic interwoven pile — a massive tangle of threads — in the shape of an oval. “Backyard Bird Count” combines three sets of pointed fence pickets in varying tones of gray into a rectangle framing a section of astroturf that contains a smaller painted landscape. Attached to the surface of



Lynn Aldrich, Installation view, 2026

this combine are numerous bird swings (wires with plastic bars) in varying sizes and colors. The implication is that caged birds inhabit an artificial space that also mirrors the 'real' world.

Reading the materials list for Aldrich's works provides insight as to the context and content for the pieces. "Parch" (2010), "Free Refill: Never Thirst Again" (2023) and "Desert Prophet" (2026) are made with steel downspouts — vertical conduits connected to gutters that direct water away from the foundations of buildings. Aldrich combines these generic forms, often personifying or combining them to resemble plants or animals. The titles subtly reference water or its lack to direct the reading of the works toward climate change.

"Rose Ghost" (2015) is a large circular wall relief made from numerous layers of light purple, nylon tulle held in place by similarly shaped thin sheets of clear plastic. This cut out shape is inspired by the rose windows of Chartres Cathedral. Aldrich's work is simultaneously solid and ephemeral, a ghost-like presence that suggests impermanence in direct contrast with the original. Circular forms are also seen in "Cloud of Unknowing" and "Through the Oculus" (both 2026), where Aldrich collages tools for measuring, images of planets, architectural details with rounded openings, and hand-drawn or painted shapes in shades of blue.

Throughout the gallery space Aldrich weaves between past and present. Always aware of the relationship between form and function, she continuously transforms the ordinary — be it garden hoses, tree branches, found postcards or wooden dowels — into something extraordinary and beyond expectation. Her human scaled pieces resonate both formally and conceptually. They are at once familiar, yet also other worldly, and offer multiple pathways for contemplation.

Jody Zellen is a LA based writer and artist who creates interactive installations, mobile apps, net art, animations, drawings, paintings, photographs, public art, and artist's books. Zellen received a BA from Wesleyan University (1983), a MFA from CalArts (1989) and a MPS from NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (2009). She has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1989. For more information please visit www.jodyzellen.com