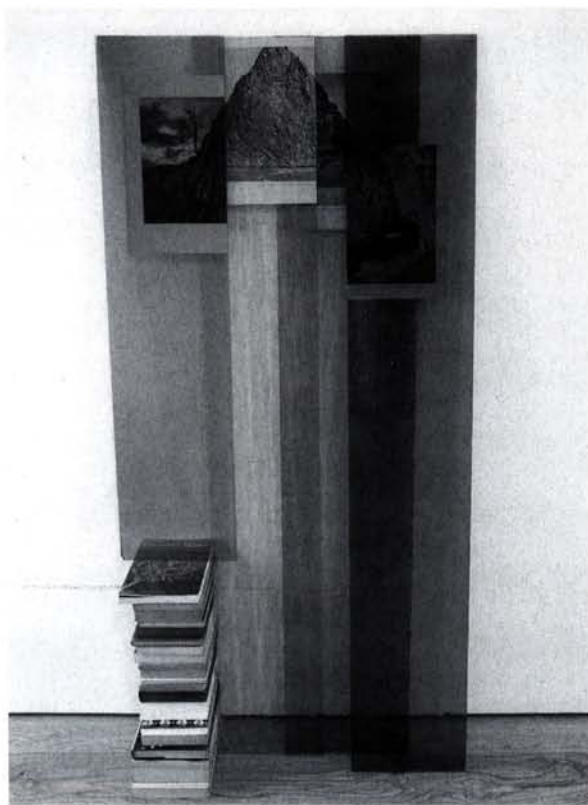


## REVIEWS ●



Abigail Reynolds, *Magic Mountain*, 2011.

### ABIGAIL REYNOLDS

AMBACH & RICE

BY JODY ZELLEN

COMBING THROUGH FLEA markets and used bookstores is an integral part of British artist Abigail Reynolds' practice. For her current installation, "A Common Treasury," she continues her exploration of creating physical dimensionality with found photographs and text, making

sculptural assemblages. Past work combined illusionistic space with constructions reminiscent of Buckminster Fuller, but the new work departs from a 17th-century manifesto penned by Gerrard Winstanley, an early proponent of social and environmental activism. Reynolds uses his writings to examine how the landscape is viewed, interpreted and socialized. By making montages of historical images she creates a continuum and alludes to a lineage linking past with present. Despite their academic aura, the works have a formal elegance and Reynolds' keen wit infuses them with double entendres.

The centerpiece of the show, *Off Camera* (all works 2011), functions as an architectural partition. Tinted glass panes are attached to freestanding steel frames and feature images that reference framing, looking and seeing through—the themes that embody the work. The caption beneath an image of a crowd reads, "A forest of periscopes in Trafalgar square." It overlaps an image of a father and child sitting on a bench in a museum who have rolled their programs into paper telescopes. While images within the sculpture explicitly reference sight, sight lines within and through the sculpture point in the direction of and frame other works in the space.

Many of the works are about coupling and interruptions. *The Road* is a collage of two book pages tacked to the wall without a frame—an image of a motorway in Birmingham is paired with another of the collapsed 5 Freeway after the 1971 San Fernando Valley earthquake. As one image fuses into the other Reynolds suggests that growth and destruction are visually and conceptually linked. While *The Road* is a minimal response to the effects of man-made structures on the environment, *Magic Mountain* incorporates glass, book pages and a stack of books in delicate, almost ecological balance. Here, four overlapping panes of tinted glass lean against the wall, creating the colors of the rainbow. The shortest piece of glass is supported by a pile of paperback books whose titles include: *Dig for Survival*, *Utopias*, *Mysterious Britain* and three copies (all different editions) of Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*. Taped to the backside of the glass are reproductions of mountains from various sources combined to create a mythical uber-mountain.

By placing her appropriated materials behind glass, Reynolds not only creates distance but a structure through which to view the originals. Books on precarious metal stands and images taped to colored glass placed on wooden shelves dot the space. Captions intact, these pieces invite reading. What happens in front of and behind the planes is where Reynolds' intervention asserts itself. On a formal level the pieces are a gratifying read, yet when seen in relation to each other the installation becomes a complex architectural environment through which myriad landscapes can be contemplated.