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Gallery Rounds
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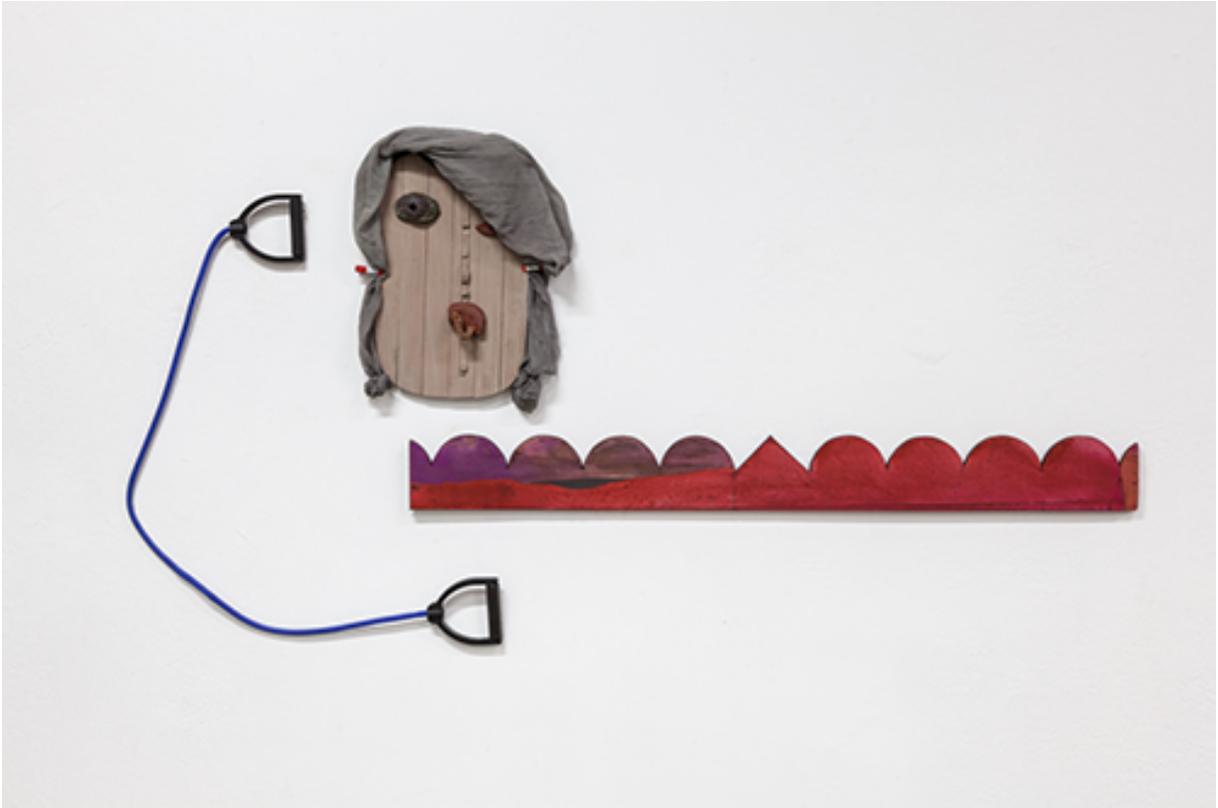
Blair Saxon-Hill at Joan
by Jody Zellen



Blair Saxon-Hill, *to no ending except ourselves* (2016), installation view

In Blair Saxon-Hill's installation *to no ending except ourselves* (2016), wall and floor based sculptures fashioned from discarded and broken materials come to life. Making art from found objects is nothing new and while Saxon-Hill's works pay homage both to outsider art and the *Arte Povera* movement, her figures are uniquely of the moment. Each figure has its own personality and *raison d'être*. Created in response to the anxiety felt around the election, they have risen from nothing—cobbled together from junk and detritus. Simultaneously broken and strong, they exert a presence as if holding court upon the gallery walls

The careful arrangement of objects comes together as coherent figures in the viewer's eye. The most intact figure in the grouping is *Lives of Others* (2016), composed from a basket lid, tarp eyelet, ceramic rib, industrial glass shard, stick, leather mule blinders, inner tube, wood spindle, plastic bag, gouache, paper, stir stick, ceramic, wood, rubber glove, cement, paper clay, stage paint, masonry and dry pigment, driftwood, club, shellac and a quilt.



Its facial features are clearly defined and it has two arms, legs, hands and feet whereas many of Saxon-Hill's other characters are comprised of just a few disparate fragments. These child-like figures appear to have banded together, many taking arms—if a stick or coat hanger can be used as a weapon—as an act of defiance and solidarity. Although the floor based works are a bit more obtuse, they anchor Saxon-Hill's exploration of struggle and compassion. *American Asylee* (2016) projects the idea of surrender. A flag made from a pillowcase is attached to a piece of wood and extends from a wire chair whose back forms the shape of a heart.

Collectively, Saxon-Hill's personification of junk alludes to the diversity of our culture and asks viewers to think about the qualities that make each individual unique. Her figures entitled *Veteran*, *Spectator*, *Informant* and *Pitcher* take on the characteristics and qualities of those labels, yet the work also questions what those labels mean. Though *to no ending except ourselves* at first glance appears to be a quaint and charming collection of assemblages, upon close examination Saxon-Hill's message is a call to action.

Blair Saxon-Hill, *to no ending except ourselves*, December 3 2016 – January 29, 2017 at JOAN, 4300 West Jefferson Boulevard, #1, Los Angeles, CA, joanlosangeles.org.

<http://artillerymag.com/joan-blair-saxon-hill/>