

CHRISTY GAST: OUT OF PLACE

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Christy Gast, "Out of Place." Installation view.
Photo courtesy of Gallery Diet.

Out of Place features ten sculptural wall works constructed almost entirely out of burlap. As a distinct shift in practice for Gast, this new body of work was conceived through an intuitive process of exchanges, meditations, and transformations in and around the artist's studio. There, claimed objects from various arbitrary sites were manipulated into assemblages, and translated finally into the fibrous cloth. In this process, Gast's significant skill and background in textiles murmured to the surface — traced from a rural adolescence fashioning her own clothes and experimenting with cloth as a medium in bucolic Ohio. For Gast, burlap is a choice that seemed somehow obvious, its rawness offering a place to begin.



Christy Gast, "Estero," 2012.
Photo courtesy of Gallery Diet.

Some of the works in *Out of Place* form archetypal shapes such as "Lee" (2012), an oval fold of the rough-hewn material leaning into natural curves and

stitched pleats. Others are more akin to shamanistic Beuysian assemblages of semi-recognizable objects, such as "Walkabout" (2012), a cowboy hat rigged to a series of ropes and pulleys, the hat snaking off the wall and sitting quizzically upon the floor. "Redland" (2012) is the only piece that betrays its objecthood, a reconstructed burlap feed sack with the word "CORN" and details of a label carefully reverse-stitched into the material. It is not only Beuys's insistence on materiality and symbolic associations for the inherent qualities of such which are recalled by Gast's employ of burlap, but also a recognition that the objects — their representation here — are imbued with powers.

Out of Place marks a departure from the outside-studio practice and situation-specific works investigating particular sites of Gast's former work, such as "Herbert Hoover Dyke" (2010), a performative tap-dance upon the dike surrounding Florida's massive Lake Okeechobee, and "Batty Cave" (2010), a portrayal of the artist's time spent in a cave on a dust-bowl stretch of southern Utah. Ironically, moving into the studio to create the works for *Out of Place* posed significant conceptual challenges for Gast, forcing her not only to drastically adapt the scale of her practice to that of the four walls of the studio but also to consider representation beyond documentation.

While previously engaging in the fundamentals of a site through the creation of situations — a practice defined by Claire Doherty as when a particular site, time, and space converge to destabilize notions of *place* — Gast is more involved here in an act of transmogrification. Though defined by the limits of their own making, the works collapse physical distance by strongly evoking a site/non-site dialectic. Yet, the relationship between site and object is disrupted. Entrenched in a fetishization of site, the new works worry over signs and signifiers for places both essential and irrelevant to their creation. Whether placeholders, totems or wisps of memory, the works in *Out of Place* are a clean slate on which to consider the reality of an object/place vs. the idea of such.