

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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AMANDA ROSS-HO: *My Pen is Huge*

By Hovey Brock

Los Angeles-based artist Amanda Ross-Ho has built a career focusing on the studio as locus, metaphor, and container for the creative process. Keeping her interests tethered to this line of inquiry has given her the freedom to cover a swath of art practices including sculpture, painting, photography, installation, and performance. In *My Pen is Huge*, she gives us a book of hours aimed not at religious devotion but rather devotion to creativity, parsed into minute snippets of time. As with Proust, Ross-Ho's method is to dilate on a given topic through the accretion of memories and associations she both projects on and finds embedded in the objects she produces through her practice. As is also the case with Proust, this dilation begets gigantism, expressed here in an installation of outsized objects: tables, household implements, clock parts, and more. The ribald pun in the show's title evidently speaks to Ross-Ho's belief that creative fecundity is tied to the ability to expand on our experience and the cascade of connections that follow every moment of awareness, rather than to filter and edit that process. Ross-Ho even dilates the passage of time itself, as her pen ticks off, moment by moment, the thoughts that have raced through her brain, which she has scribbled on the paintings and tables in the installation.



Amanda Ross-Ho, *Untitled Timepiece (COCA COLA)*, 2017. Gesso, silkscreen, acrylic, gouache, coffee, wine, and graphite on canvas covered panel, 52 x 52 in. © Amanda Ross-Ho; Courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, NY.

The idea of time dominates the show. Spaced evenly along the walls of the main gallery space are twelve paintings of silkscreened clock faces. Ross-Ho had found some paper clock faces on eBay around the same time she lost her studio last summer. Left without a place to work, she decided to use them as a portable stand-in for her lost space and as doodle pads during her travels. Ross-Ho reproduced a dozen of these works on paper onto canvas and during the month of August worked on the resulting paintings as a

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performance piece, turning the gallery into a de facto studio. There is considerable variation from one clock face to the next in terms of the amount of writing and doodling, as well as the font styles of the numbering. Some are quite busy, especially *Untitled Timepiece (LET THIS BE A SERMON)* (2017), where Ross-Ho filled in the spaces between the roman numerals on the clock face with blue pen cross-hatching. The rest of the surface is filled with jottings, mini-diagrams, and the like. Ross-Ho added additional coloring with coffee stains and acrylics to produce a formally arresting composition. Others are quite spare. *Untitled Timepiece (COCA-COLA)* (2017) has virtually no writing except for a few crossed-out lines at the lower right and lower left. The interior of the clock face is painted a barn red. This painting has an elegiac effect out of keeping with the generally frenetic surfaces of the other clock faces—a suppressed memory, perhaps, that bubbles up and fades away.



Installation view of *My Pen is Huge* at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, NY, 2017
© Amanda Ross-Ho; Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, NY.

Other hyperactive surfaces include the two tables that dominate the central space in the gallery, covered with scribbled notes, gigantic wine glasses, tea cups, coins, pens, and more. With other huge objects scattered across the installation—a hair tie with the diameter of a tire, enormous scissors, three-foot long clock hands hanging on the wall, a white glove, and a sleep mask as big as a rug—Ross-Ho invites us to zoom in on every

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detail of her life. Her father and mother were photographers, and the metaphor of photographic manipulation, especially enlargement, seems crucial to her process. At the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 2016, with the help of movie set technicians, she made an installation of a faithfully scaled-up reproduction of an enlarger her parents used in their dark room (in her remarks about the piece, she said it represented “the origins of my creativity”). Engaging the viewer in a close-up of her process, Ross- Ho produces an intimate look not just at the ways in which she goes about making art, but in this particular show, the very stream of her consciousness. *My Pen is Huge* is a sincere and moving act of generosity. In opening a window on the interiority of another human to empathize with what that feels like, it also performs one of the most vital functions art is capable of.

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