

Julie Schenkelberg

From The Ashes

September 12 - October 24, 2020



Asya Geisberg Gallery is pleased to present "From the Ashes", the fifth solo presentation of **Julie Schenkelberg**. "From the Ashes" is both a timely response to the moment we find ourselves in, and a continuation of the artist's symbolic excavation and elevation of discarded or decaying forms. While the present is but a blip of malaise that will recede in our memories, its anxiety and insecurity speaks to an upheaval that we have experienced numerous times. The artist's inspiration originated in her Midwestern Rust-Belt environs and its endless stream of material, from the former auto factories of Detroit to the crumbling Art-Deco banks of Cleveland, whereas her current references scour a vaster visual dictionary of decay, hope, and rebuilding. Combining research in ancient symbols of the sacred across societies with physical detritus gathered throughout the US, Schenkelberg marries ever wider ranging ideas and visual entry points.

Comprised of wall sculptures and a mid-sized installation, "From the Ashes" feels less theatrical than previous iterations of the architectural, vast, site-specific works for which Schenkelberg has become known. Distilled into concentrated portions, the work is more human-scaled and archival, as if a recluse hired an archaeologist to painstakingly decipher decades of artifacts stuffed in their attic. But rather than the classic hoarder's anguished disarray witnessed in piles of inconsequential rot, we feel a reverential motivation - as if deifying scraps of a saint's robes in a spot-lit relic chamber. Schenkelberg crystallizes the rudimentary origin of her collections into an ethereal combination of lived experience transformed into the sublimely sacred and universal.

Rusted metal parts, the artist's paintings of sacred or alchemical symbols, natural elements weathered by climate, glass washed up on the beach, keepsakes and their containers all recur as motifs in the exhibition. Jewelry boxes, frames, and curio cabinets give a hint of geometry, with parallel yet not quite methodical arrangements. Fragments are symbolically preserved in clear resin, or anchored in plaster. Enigmatic associations across time and place confound any easy connotations, such as Schenkelberg's inclusion of glass slides with images of ancient art, itself an abandoned technology of an image of a ruin. The show's main installation, "Continuum", suggests a mystical cabinet of curiosities, written in a symbolic ancient language. A strangely precious air to the ruins thus compiled permeates the work, as if the narrator of this story is trying to recreate a portrait, using only dilapidated and fragmented clues as their starting point. For us, seeing the world in 2020, Schenkelberg's simultaneous omnivorous interests and narrative restraint allows for us to import our own story, and to hope for a recovery that will inevitably spring forth.



Curio, 2020
Old typeset printer's drawer, plaster, acrylic paint and medium, vintage fabric, found Detroit rusted factory metal and scrap copper wire, soil and pine needles
26h x 20w x 2d in



Diptych: Sun Pair One and Sun Pair Two, 2020
Wax covered vintage fabric, resin, acrylic gold paint and ink on plaster, metal from Detroit factory floors, plaster, jewelry box, vintage pin, found glass from Lake Erie, sand from Brooklyn, clock pendulum
23h x 12w x 1d in