



REVIEWS

Liz Glynn

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Its drum churning, a red, white, and blue A&A Concrete truck awaited the verdict. Should, or could, Liz Glynn refabricate the five big open concrete boxes, now weathered and crumbling, of Donald Judd's 1977 *Untitled (for Leo Castelli)*? As the truck idled and a restive audience looked on, Glynn and four assistants screwed together plywood molds to match the Judd boxes. Every few minutes, Glynn read into a microphone excerpts from decades of internal Los Angeles County Museum of Art memos and letters, laying out the complex deliberation behind the conservation of Judd's sculpture. Nearly two-hours into the performance, the third plywood form was being completed, and the truck backed up to the first. "We could pour this," said Glynn. "We could do it right now. . . ." Her narration had led in this direction, and the audience was ready for action. But what good would it do? The replacement



Liz Glynn, *[de]-lusions of Grandeur: The Myth of Permanent Material (After Donald Judd)*, 2014. Performance view, January 18, 2014. From the series "[de]-lusions of Grandeur," 2013–14. Photo: Brica Wilcox.

would crumble, too—and this time without the endorsement of Judd, who died in 1994. Better to tend to the original, then, concluded Glynn, citing a recent conversation with the museum's director, Michael Govan. And after all, the plywood forms lacked rebar and were only roughly leveled—ultimately little more than props for an almost Brechtian structural drama. The truck drove off.

This January 18 performance, titled *[de]-lusions of Grandeur: The Myth of Permanent Material (After Donald Judd)*, concluded a cycle of five pieces or "episodes," each a deconstruction of an art monument, by masters from Auguste Rodin to Richard Serra. The second episode, *The Myth of Getting It Right the First Time (After Alexander Calder)*, came close to being an actual play, reenacting blow by blow the conservation saga surrounding Calder's *Three Quintains (Hello Girls)*, a fountain commissioned for the LACMA campus in 1964. Here, too, the museum's archive provided a script: Dancers played elements of the mobile sculpture and local art handlers played preparators; the awkward acting enveloped Calder's piece in its own halting particularity. For the fourth episode, Glynn and a small crew rebuilt segments of Tony Smith's 1967 sculpture *Smoke* out of plywood and then dissected them before an audience. The performers wore black, like stagehands

costumed to disappear, but were starkly visible against the white walls. Each of Glynn's episodes foregrounded the exploitation inherent in apprenticeship, the system of under- or uncompensated labor that to this day underpins large-scale artistic production—much of her own work included. For the first episode, Glynn turned LACMA's sculpture garden into a shop-like studio modeled on Rodin's: She made plaster casts of fragments of Rodin sculptures, then hired fifteen "emerging" artists to modify and assemble them on-site into Frankensteinian pastiches. Glynn and the museum are looking to cast the results in bronze; here, in the one episode with an unscripted outcome, Glynn's project not only reduced the myths and mysteries of artmaking to grinding practical details but also traced the museum's internal mechanisms of accession. Presumably Glynn's series has itself left a trail of e-mails and invoices, subtly building the force of personality so central to the aura of the shop-built Rodins and the dubiousness of a refabricated Judd.

Back in January, the La Brea Tar Pits bubbled in the background as Glynn and her crew pounded the lid onto the second plywood mold. Across an asphalt walkway in a sandbox stood the real Judd, which at this stage in the performance served as seating for onlookers. Glynn paused to read letters describing the damage to the piece, pointing out chips and discoloration as well as blemishes that are part of the industrial process. One letter paraphrased Judd's own acknowledgment that his work would change with age. Indeed, perfection wasn't the goal of either his aluminum works or his outdoor pieces. Similarly, Glynn had structured an event whose presentation made the museum itself seem permeable, fragile, worldly—more mutable than monolithic. She read a memo asking LACMA's guards to please keep visitors from touching the concrete. Yet in the context of her performance, the audience felt comfortable enough to stay put. "Really?" said Glynn. It's uncertain whether Judd would have approved.

—Travis Diehl