



It's easy to imagine bad things happening in the dark, cavelike space of Abigail DeVille's *Gold Mountain*, at Marginal Utility. Charred sticks poke out in the red and black light aggressively, like ribs. On the floor, a TV's static fuzz is reminiscent of the white ashes of a dead fire.

There's no central focus; instead, the viewer moves pilgrim-like from one spot to the next, careful not to lose her footing. The dimly lit walls are covered with a painted, tumbling mass of dead birds and bricks, as if dashed there by a whirlwind. "I use pigeons and crows as stand-ins for people," DeVille says.

DeVille, a black artist and Yale MFA student who built *Gold Mountain* onsite from materials scavenged in nearby Chinatown (including charred sticks from the incinerated Trestle Inn), is a font of information about the Chinese experience in America.

The title refers to the nickname the Chinese gave to California during the 1848 Gold Rush, when immigrants came to seek their fortunes, but often found harsh conditions and discrimination instead. At the opening, DeVille spoke about the Chinese Exclusion Act and miscegenation laws, peppering her talk with dates and references, but *Gold Mountain's* ire is aimed at all racial discrimination in America.

Discrimination based on race is a part of American history that even now is often not portrayed honestly in history books and our collective memory; it's essential that artists like DeVille and, to mention just two others, Kara Walker and Hank Willis Thomas, expose the hidden history through their art and keep the dialogue going.

Abigail DeVille: *Gold Mountain*  
Through Sept. 25.  
Marginal Utility  
319A N. 11th St., 2nd floor  
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