

“From the Ruins”

601ARTSPACE

601 West 26th St., Suite 1755

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Abigail DeVille's *Haarlem Tower of Babel*, 2012, is a steel tower that has had the top lopped off. It's in two pieces, both of them choked by rusting metals, broken branches, and bits of cloth and paper that seem to shed like snakeskin. *Babel* is the centerpiece of a group show curated by Jane Ursula Harris, and DeVille's motifs—assemblage, foliage, the growth of defunct technologies—seep outward like nuclear waste until each piece glows with green-grey apocalypticism. Doom registers in the punch-click of Luther Price's *Light Fracture*, 2013, an old-school slide projector casting images of smashed insects and bubbling paints on the wall, and each slide change marking time slowly, methodically. Foreboding, too, is Julie Schenkelberg's *Hearsay*, 2013, a booth composed of bashed doors and household objects that slumps in the corner like a battered fort—home, destroyed.

So perhaps what's being worked out here is how to shove the question of environmental collapse into the dainty vase of Art. Miniatures and models abound, like Christain Holstad's *Flotsam*, 2012-2013, a fabric and metal work that reproduces, in microscopic scale, the vast island of trash floating somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. But for all the fantasy and bricolage, the works that seem boldest, the most regal in their mourning even as they traffic in chaos and dread, are LaToya Ruby Frazier's photographs of Braddock, Pennsylvania. The shots are a grid of perpendiculars, buildings propped up like stage sets but still settling into dust. Braddock is a steel town that was swallowed by the Rust Belt, and these photographs, less "contemporary" than current, sum up the show's sensibility: they're about memory and relics and ruin, and yet they carry with them a portent, some chilling prophecy of a future of pitted landscapes and empty space.



Abigail DeVille, *Haarlem Tower of Babel*, 2012, reclaimed lumber, accumulated debris, family heirlooms, 72" x 72" x 16'.

— Tobi Haslett