

A Studio Visit with Valerie Snobeck



The route to Valerie Snobeck's Bushwick studio is scenic. We ventured up a cement ramp, and passed a white Hummer, the entrance to a shoulder pad factory, some large sculptures, and two old-school porn posters before arriving at her studio door. Inside, the bright white walls starkly contrast the clutter outside. It nearly feels like an extra room for storage. Much like Snobeck's work, however, once you learn her process, the important connections are illuminated between the seemingly random wooden slats leaning against the drywall and peeled laminate on a table. They can then be understood as realizations of her philosophical meditations on the world around us.

As she peeled laminate from upholstery fabric for an upcoming piece, we discussed her fascination with the relationship between the Great Recession and the Great Depression. Her ongoing contemplation of this subject continues to show up throughout her work and across multiple exhibitions. For her current project with Catherine Sullivan, the two mined an anthropologist's vast collection of restaurant menus from around the world and connected them with American economic boom periods to thought-provoking result. For another, Snobeck makes historical references using ornate Depression-era glass plates, recalling a time when the American economy was so starved that supermarkets gave away the ornaments as buying incentives. As manifested in her work, the thoughtful artist appears less interested in making concrete comparisons between the two eras than she is in reflecting on our obsessive need to make them in the first place.

Valerie Snobeck's work is explorative. When I ask her to discuss the genesis of her pieces, she describes an initial desire to "deal with" a particular material or object she finds striking. She meticulously examines the

primary and secondary uses for that object, along with its historical value, and in doing so begins a meta-conversation about it. The relationships between the objects and materials in her work, then, are transcendent. By exposing and comparing objects' transcendental qualities, she pieces together subtle, intelligent exhibitions that encourage us to engage more deeply with our world.

Photos: Desiree MacDonald