

rachel uffner

BOMB – Artists in Conversation

December 21, 2015

Portfolio

by Strauss Bourque-LaFrance

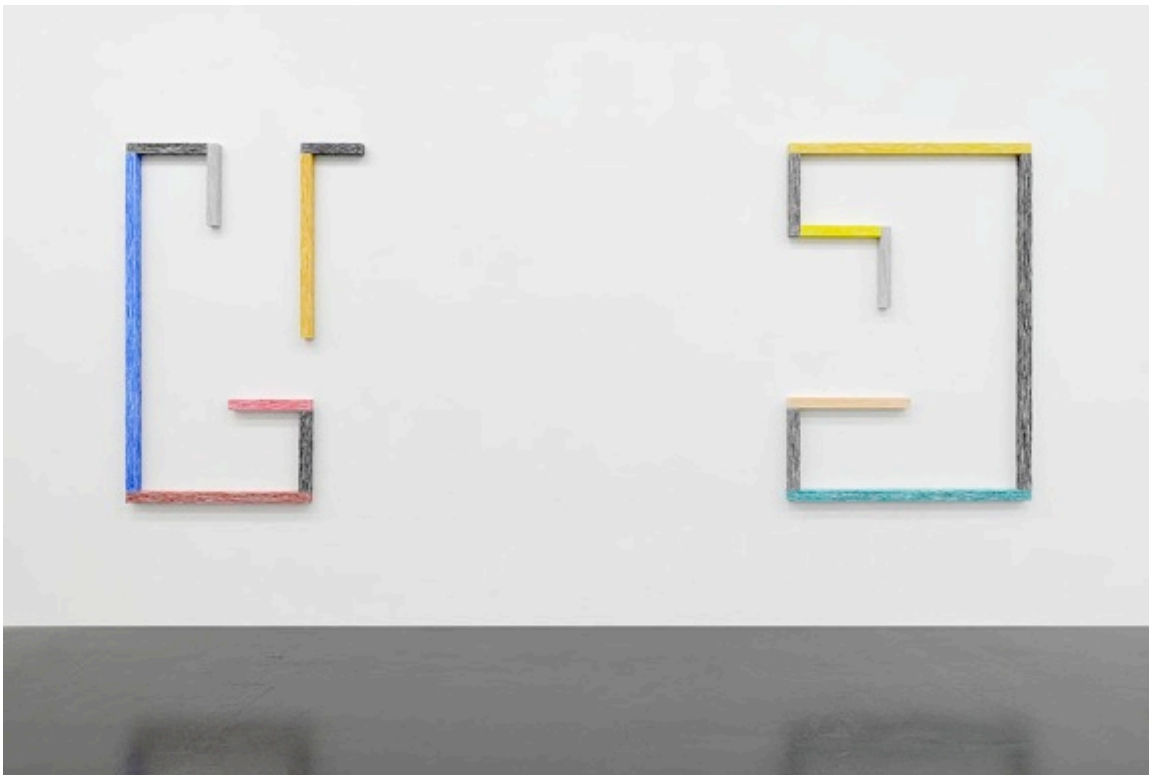
"I started making this work because I was sick of seeing everything."



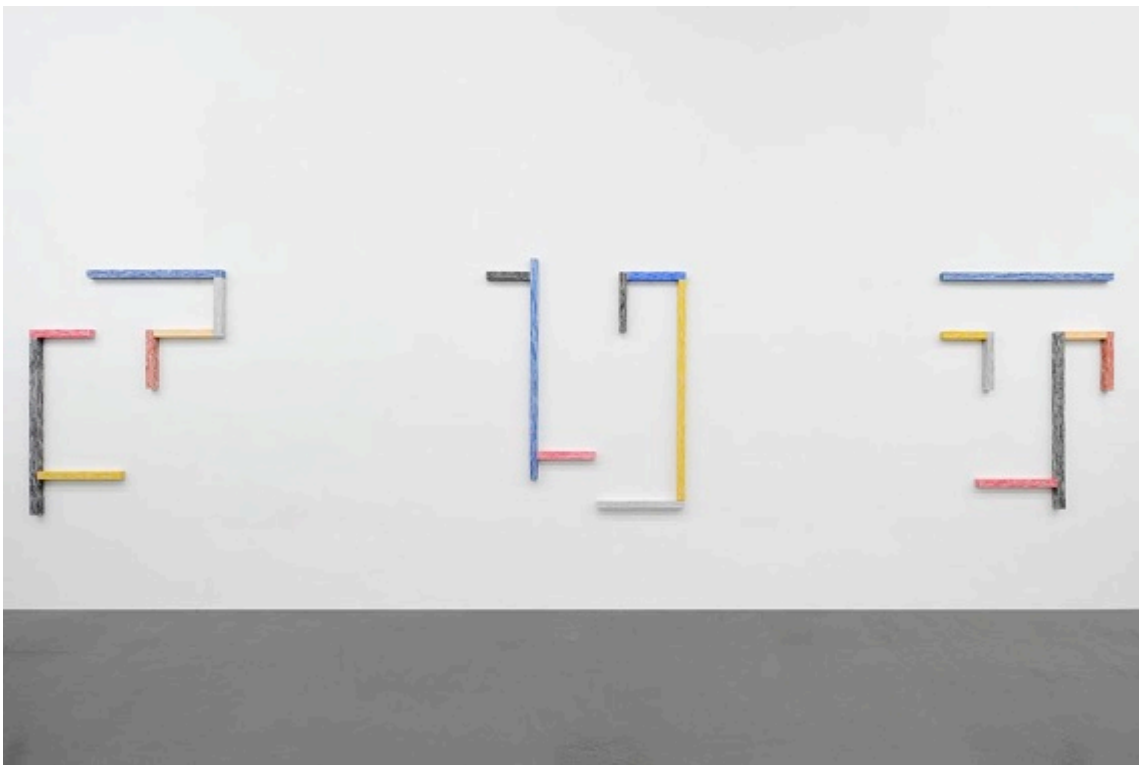
I started making this work, *USA Objects*, because I was sick of seeing everything—too many feeds, too many images, too many materials. I put everything in my studio away and bought balsa wood to make some maquettes. The balsa brought to mind a range of vernacular American folk arts and crafts, like wooden country ephemera or model kits—objects found in domestic interiors in rural Maine where I grew up. I decided to play on the shape and proportions of the balsa, but shifted the scale to make larger beams. Each beam is painted and drawn on with beeswax stick in a determined scribble motif and can be hung in any orientation. These resemble faces. This gesture is typical of my work, as my abstractions are often, mystically, related to the body. The works oscillate between image, object, and painting

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Installation view of Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, *USA Objects, T293*, Rome, 2015. All images courtesy of the artist and T293.



Installation view of Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, *USA Objects, T293*, Rome, 2015.

Through my arrangement of the beams, familiar images began to emerge. I was reading about early Modernism, and it's no surprise that Mondrian seeped into my process. I think his impulse to partition color was an interesting one: clean, organized, neurotic maybe. The compositions of those black partitions kept appearing as I arranged the works in my studio, a reference I eventually used. The lines that corralled color for Mondrian became lines of color for me to explore abstraction modularly.



Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, *Helen (Staring at the Sea)*, 2015. Basswood, acrylic, beeswax stick.



John (Father Figure), 2015. Basswood, acrylic, beeswax stick.



Stanley (Most Likely to Manifest), 2015. Basswood, acrylic, beeswax stick.

I named the pieces in the same manner we name boats or antique cars or tropical storms, giving a hint of personality and a gender to an inanimate object or natural force. I chose names from the canon of art history, but they are also just typical American names. This naming device mocks gendered terms of endearment and ownership, and it points at the patriarchal aspects of art making and of naming things.



Babe (American Dream), 2015. Basswood, acrylic, beeswax stick.

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance (b. 1983) lives and works in New York. He received his BFA from Hampshire College and his MFA from Tyler School of Art. Recent solo shows include T293, Rome, Italy, which was accompanied by an essay by Em Rooney; Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York; KANSAS, New York; Courtney Blades, Chicago; Bodega, Philadelphia/New York. His work has been included in exhibitions at ICA Philadelphia, SculptureCenter, New York; Contemporary Austin Jones Center, Texas; Abrons Arts Center, New York; Johannes Vogt Gallery, New York; Vox Populi, Philadelphia; Crane Arts, Philadelphia; Extra Extra, Philadelphia; Clifford Gallery, Colgate University, New York; and White Flag Projects, St. Louis, among others. Strauss has been in residence at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and Movement Research and has been a guest lecturer at Swiss Institute and Hampshire College.