

Gummies, Naming Gallery, June 2017

We don't go through an entire package of Haribo gummy candies because of their nutritional value; we do it because the sensory experience of eating them elicits an emotional response. They're cutely shaped, brightly colored, translucent, fruity, and have a texture that's fun to play with.

For their show *Gummies*, Allegra Rush and Ari Bird explore the appeal of objects and images that are considered kitschy, cheap, nostalgic, or worthless. A fruit packing box, a nail salon sign, a sheet of stickers, a dollar store toy...They all have qualities that are strangely satisfying. Whether it's an object's tactility, it's relieving texture or color, or a good memory associated with it, Rush and Bird rely on these objects to be the foundation of a safe, self-created world. While Rush creates tiny, detail-oriented dioramas and Bird makes oversized, blown-up paintings and wood cuts of tiny objects, both artists access strength and a sense of command through different means. Much like *Otaku*, a Japanese word used to describe a young person with a pop culture obsession that ends up being detrimental to their social interactions, both artists collect and utilize objects in their art in an obsessive or compulsive manner.

Ari Bird (b. 1988, San Diego, California) creates large and graphic oil paintings with rainbow gradients and blocks of color or texture. These pieces waver between flat and 3-D, between painting and sculpture. They allow themselves to take up physical space, while remaining energetic rather than overwhelming or stifling. Bird starts with an image pulled from her surroundings, and then abstracts and reduces. In this way, she symbolically cuts up her surroundings to create a collage, or a new story. Bird explores concepts like misplaced and shifting identity, the life we imbue in lifeless objects, and the strains between privacy and social/public interactions.

Allegra Rush (b. 1986, Oakland, California) is a mixed media artist whose creative process is influenced by the precious objects and ephemera she has been collecting since childhood. Her collections have continued to expand over the years and some have been incorporated in her art. She creates surreal miniature dioramas with craft supplies, experimenting with a range of mediums materials and trinkets. With a psychedelic and playful sensibility, Rush creates tiny interiors of imaginary domestic scenes and ideal worlds where she is in control.

