

# ArtReview



Eva Koťátková

Inside: Roche Bobois 8×8 Mah Jong Re-imagined

## Bea Fremderman *Solastalgia*

*Born Nude, Chicago* 30 January – 27 February

The disaster whose aftermath is suggested by Bea Fremderman's solo exhibition is left unnamed. Many of the works on view look as though they are overgrown with moss; nature has overtaken all. In *Untitled (Clothes)* (all works 2016), a laundry-line bearing blue jeans, a grey hoodie and a long-sleeve shirt is suspended along the walls of the gallery; the garments are covered with patches of green growth, which are contoured by the folds of the material. The clothes have a texture similar to that which one might find on a damp forest rock after exposure to months of humid temperatures. Here the flora is in fact chia sprouts, which grow impressively on the draped structures. The effect is one of some future time, as if the world's landscape had been waterlogged some time previously, and this is what remains: a domestic ruin.

The exhibition's press release, written in the form of a first-person letter, similarly traces a postapocalyptic narrative. Using vague references to a state of emergency, the letter, addressed to an unnamed other, describes the difficulty of communication between the protagonists: the shortage of paper, the lack of cables, the closing of the city borders. In addition to the clothes, there is a collection

of bowls and ceramicware fashioned out of laundry lint stacked on a pedestal made of cardboard – *Untitled (Bowls on Artist Pedestal)* – and a brick wall made out of compacted newspaper, mortared together with dirt, which closes up the space's rear doorway – *Untitled (Brick Wall)*. The ecological affect of the sculptures, which traces the recycling of one material as its function is transformed, takes on the quality of necessity within this context.

Although as a whole, the content of the exhibition is presented under the guise of privation – as if these makeshift objects were the only remains of some encampment, some piece of civilisation – its approach feels contrastingly ornamental. While everything seems requisite, everything is adorned. These are postapocalyptic props. The aesthetic of conservation, of postdisaster provision, is meticulously created out of new materials. In *Untitled (Scattered Fruit)*, a variety of citrus fruits, cut in half and sewn together with medical-grade sutures, are scattered throughout the floor of the space. They become fleshlike stand-ins for warm bodies, just as the clothes hang as if waiting to be worn again. All of the objects on view are in various states of decay, with some further

advanced than others. An implied absence of human care is the only constant.

*Solastalgia*, a neologism coined by Glenn Albrecht, an environmental philosopher, at the turn of the millennium, is a mixture of two words: 'solace' and 'nostalgia'. As opposed to nostalgia, which mourns the absence of the past, solastalgia specifically affects those missing home while they are still in their home environment. This condition is echoed throughout Fremderman's installation – an environment that carries the affect of absence while still being present in the space itself. The domestic quality of the sculptures appears at once at home and estranged, forever trapped in a cycle of belonging and abandonment. Each viewer that enters becomes a surrogate protagonist, returning to a home once it has been destroyed. Perhaps the perfect metaphor for Fremderman's work would be one we see often in urban environments: a chainlink fence absorbed by the bark of a tree that continued to grow despite the presence of a metal border, subsuming the manmade material into its own. For Fremderman, human history is trapped within nature – our best hope is to be absorbed into its path in due course. *Stephanie Cristello*



*Untitled (Clothes)*, 2016, found clothing, chia seeds on wire.  
Courtesy Born Nude, Chicago