

Nancy Grossman: 'The Edge of Always, Constructions from the 1960s'

By ROBERTA SMITH

Michael Rosenfeld Gallery
100 11th Avenue, at 19th Street, Chelsea
Through July 3

Nancy Grossman is best known for the elegant, androgynous, highly suggestive sculptures that she began to make in 1968: carved wood heads attired in intricate, hand-sewn leather hoods and masks festooned with chains and spikes. But the little-seen assemblage reliefs that she began making in 1964, when she was only 24, are just as good, maybe better.

In any event, this show, the first in-depth presentation of these pieces since the 1960s, is remarkable. They are alien forces of nature yet fiercely in dialogue with much of the art of their time, riffing simultaneously and effortlessly on Abstract Expressionism, junk sculpture, Pop Art and a "specific-objects" type fusion of painting and sculpture.

Ms. Grossman made these reliefs by first dismembering all kinds of leather goods, including boots, biker jackets and luggage as well as saddles and harnesses given to her by the sculptor David Smith (to whom one piece is dedicated). She then sewed, tacked and glued the disparate scraps together, along with torn-up garments, select car parts and bits of wood infrastructure to raw canvas mounted on plywood.



Nancy Grossman (b.1940), *For David Smith*, 1965, mixed media assemblage on canvas mounted on plywood, 85" x 85" x 6 3/4", signed and dated

The results are intensely figurative but also abstract, finely detailed but implicitly violent. The twisting, turning compositions evoke midair collisions – but of what? – and eviscerated carcasses. Titles like "Mummy" and "Warmongerick" add to the effect.

Mainly, the best of these pieces are so triumphantly on top of recent artistic developments that you may almost laugh. Their sauntering confidence seems to say: Willem de Kooning, Bruce Conner, Edward Kienholz, Franz Kline, Mark di Suvero, Lee Bontecou, Richard Lindner and Francis Bacon have nothing on me. Ms. Grossman jumped fast out of the starting gate with natural-born showstoppers that would do any museum proud.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/arts/design/nancy-grossman-the-edge-of-always-constructions-from-the-1960s.html?ref=design&r=0>



100 ELEVENTH AVENUE @ 19TH • NEW YORK, NY 10011 • 212.247.0082
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