

The New York Times

Thursday, March 21, 2013 Last Update: 5:40 PM ET

ART IN REVIEW

Virginia Overton



Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash

Virginia Overton's show at Mitchell-Innes & Nash includes only two pieces.

By [ROBERTA SMITH](#)

Published: March 21, 2013

Mitchell-Innes & Nash
534 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through April 6

The latest solo show from the sculptor Virginia Overton is spare but satisfying as a sensory experience. “Untitled (juniperus virginiana)” the largest of only two pieces, works visually, then spatially and finally in terms of smell and touch. It consists of the gallery’s immense back wall covered completely with vertical planks of Eastern red cedar. It strikes the eye first as a blast of warm, tawny, oscillating color. As you approach, the planks’ suggestion of flooring (they’re tongue and groove, like most well-made floors) can create a bit of vertigo; for a moment it’s like having an aerial view of what should be a horizontal plane. There’s nothing to do but get to the bottom of it. Walk closer and closer until you can see the textures and splinters of the unfinished wood and smell that bracing cedar smell.

The second piece “Untitled (hot tub)” is an old four-footed bathtub whose completely rusted exterior concentrates the red of the cedar wall into something darker. Sitting on two chunks of limestone in this big space it is as adamantly sculptural as the wall-floor is environmental. The tub is filled with water in which dangle two thin tubes connected to an electric coffee maker. This apparatus circulates and heats the water, which heats the tub. As the tub becomes a truly “hot tub,” it emits percussive cracks and pops, like a cast-iron radiator. It adds sound, and maybe steam to the odorous air, claiming the gallery’s space in another way. Ms. Overton’s show is something of an oxymoron: a modest, intimate spectacle.