

ARTFORUM

January 2012

Sarah Braman

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

In 1969, Shasta Trailer Industries—then the best-selling mobile-home manufacturer in the United States—introduced a new product: the Loflyte. Sporting better amenities than the classic silver toaster-on-wheels, this leaner, more compact trailer allowed itinerant Americans to take on the country's mushrooming interstate system in hitherto unheard-of comfort. Now fast-forward forty years: The once-prominent Shasta Industries has collapsed, its innovative vehicles nearly gone from memory. For her first solo show at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, Sarah Braman dissected and transformed a Loflyte model from the 1980s—bathroom, kitchen, bed, and all—turning the nomadic, emblematically American dwelling into something monumental and tomblike.

To be sure, her carving up of dusty mobile domestic space was inspired by many precedents, from John Chamberlain's crushed automobiles to Gordon Matta-Clark's iconic building cuts. More additive than subtractive, Braman's five new sculptures also feature Plexiglas cubes and rectangles balanced on or bolted to the so-called camper chunks. The largest piece in the show, *Good Morning (November)* (all works 2011), fuses a significant portion of the butchered trailer's back end—sans wheels—with two rectangular Plexiglas vessels arranged in an upside-down L. One of these boxes bears random marks of blue, purple, and brown paint, like a late-'60s Light and Space piece from LA trashed by an angry Ab Ex-er. By and large, the Plexiglas throughout the show conjured California: Shadows bounced off the transparent but violet- and indigo-hued cubes, bringing to mind the specific, subtle changes of coastal light and atmosphere you might become enamored with while driving along Highway 1 at sunset. (In fact, in a recent interview, Braman linked her layering of colors upon Plexiglas to the feeling of "being in the car, and the reflections on the windows, and things moving.") Simultaneously, the chunks of a real trailer affirmed ready-made materiality, balancing associative sensation with hard empiricism.

Four large paintings on plywood accompanied the sculptures. While less dazzling, these reliefs underscored the show's line-based and chromatic formal affinities. The spray-painted rainbow of streaks on *Sunderland Drive*, for example, evoked the edges and linear qualities of the sculptures as well as the striped, multihued Shasta logo that decorated the sides of the trailer. *LAY DOWN DOWN* commanded one of the plywood paintings, covered in erratic gestural skeins of paint. Across the room, the wall-based *Outside Night* incorporated a mattress—a place to follow the directive and recline.

Or perhaps Braman wanted us to lie down in *Coffin*? Sitting on a cassette-size box of mirrored Plexiglas, a section of the trailer's bathroom, its interior painted in washy strokes of purple and orange, seemed like a good enough place to curl up and sleep—or expire. Indeed, the sliced-up trailer relics read as a comment on the death of a classic American brand. But what made the cheekily titled "Yours" a standout show this fall was how it rendered those ideas in more complicated ways. Instead

Sarah Braman, *Good Morning (November)*, 2011, camper chunk, Plexiglas, steel, paint, 109 x 85 x 94 3/4".



of giving her audience a treatise on capitalism and its discontents, the exhibition evoked the American open road, but in a fractured, disassembled state—torn apart and under duress.

—Lauren O'Neill-Butler