

# ARTslant

Wolfe-Suarez at Silverman  
by Julia Hamilton

## Ginger Wolfe-Suarez: Theory of a Family

Silverman Gallery  
804 Sutter St, San Francisco, CA 94109  
February 5, 2010 - March 13, 2010

*“With these words I am going to take all the darkness away from you and store it in this hole within my body just below my heart. Don’t worry — it is not a big gaping wound- it is a slow seeping one — just small enough to cover with a sweater”*

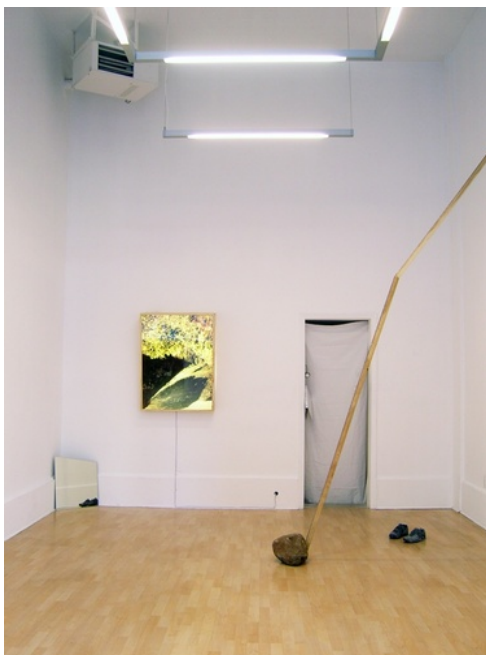
An excerpt from the audio of *build your own mountain*, 2010

The gallery seemed sparse, as if it had been emptied out. Yet Ginger Wolfe-Suarez’s exhibition is one that demands time, and the more I gave it, the more the work began to fill up and out the space, and what at first seemed like an excess (of breathing room, of emptiness) became pressing, necessary.

Like one installation fit together from of a series of interlocking components, the objects work together to create a larger abstract narrative. In the front of the gallery, two low wooden benches nestle into the two alcoves on either side of the door (titled *Separate/ Rigid*, all works 2010). Both benches have a slightly raised “arm” at one end, and a soft pink orange light that seeps out from the edge, along the sides. Above each bench hangs a menacing black wooden cube (no such cubes without echoes of Judd) that protrudes from the storage space and runs along the ceiling of the front entrance.

On the wall in the back of the gallery hangs *..build your own mountain...*, a light-box with an image of the close up of the side of a mountain, turned upside down. The work is accompanied by an audio component delivered via headphones - a text composed by Wolfe-Suarez, read by the artist and various others of the Wolfe-Suarez clan.

The most assertive sculpture in the show is a bent wooden beam (the side facing toward the gallery coated in glitter) precariously leaning against the wall and supported by a rock positioned in the center of the gallery. I was hyperaware of my movements around the beam, it felt like a physical being, a living creature seethed in the room with me.



Also, I was terrified of accidentally knocking it over.

Sundry other objects in exhibition include a pair of concrete running shoes, a cut mirror that leans against the back left corner of the room, and *Sister/Sister*, a photograph of the artist's sister with her back turned away from the camera and towards an open field. The photo is mirrored on two handmade light-boxes that have been installed two feet from the ground directly across from each other.

Both literal repetition and implicit duality repeat and repeat throughout the show. What these reiterated objects represent is unclear. It could be two people, or the split personality of one person, or two members of the same family who are different yet share so many defining characteristics, and so on. We decide for ourselves. The effect of dual-ness also results from the play between opposites. Running shoes made out of concrete, an inverted mountain, impossible to climb, and the conundrum of the wooden benches — the one comfy space in the gallery — also being the most dangerous, what with the black cubes protruding from the crawl space, always threatening a fall.

It is clear that Wolfe-Suarez studied her contemporary art history textbook, particularly dogearing the sections marked sculpture,

minimalism and early conceptualism and that another of those interlocking components involves an internal conversation about the nature of the form.

For one, she uses the language of minimalism in the same way that Eva Hesse, an artist she admires according to the press release, had used it. In *Separate/ Rigid* for instance, Wolfe-Suarez relies on the language of the cube, but subverts it with anthropomorphic associations, the body breaking the hard lines. Artist Doris Salcedo came to mind as well, especially how her unsettling and pared down sculptural forms carry the burden of specific political and historical weight.

Yet the burden Wolfe-Suarez appears to be referring to is something much more personal, and without the benefit of her own biography, the forms feel distant, ambiguous, and abstract. For the unversed viewer, this simply means that they turn into much more general mnemonic devices, the fragments of half memories that provoke deeper associations to complete the scene.

Looking at the objects, reflecting on the show title, recollecting my own family, I felt sad. I turned *Theory of a Family* into something theatrical, a domestic tragedy. The slow seeping wound described in the text to *...build your own mountain...* lingered long after I left the gallery.

It left me wanting to see more.  
To see other sides of the story, the wound healed, the forthcoming portrait of joy.

- Julia Hamilton

All images courtesy the artist and Silverman Gallery.

