



How Do We Sleep When the Future Is Melting? Sarah Braman: *You Are Everything*

by Anthony Hawley

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One of the first things greeting viewers in Sarah Braman's stellar show at Mitchell-Innes and Nash is half of a white Toyota Celica. Rear fender kissing the ground, stick-straight antennae at a neat 45-degree angle, half a white car points skyward, ready for launch. The sharp diagonals of the rear side windows and slight tail fin off the trunk give it the retro-futuristic feel characteristic of many 1980's Toyota dream machines. Its antennae appear ready to receive interstellar airwaves, signals from elsewhere. Looking at the car from the rear, one can't help but feel the large back windshield is built specifically for stargazing or the openness of drive-in theater. Everything about this half a car appears not only inviting, but also promising—the clean cut down the middle; the well-kept interior and body; the expansive glass that signals looking of a different sort (in there we look out rather than in towards a screen that instructs us how to back out of a parking space or driveway). Here we are, circa 1985, ready to race off into space.

Any utopian daydreams this evokes get complicated by the fact that attached to the Celica is a non-descript steel bedframe and storm doors. A new, awkward structure rests where the front of the car once was. At inverse angles, the car and bedframe now depend on each other to stay balanced. The confident skyward angle of the car comes only in its being supported by this ubiquitous mass-produced piece of home furniture. The storm doors attached to the front and sides of the bed frame turn the inverted metal frame into a booth of sorts, a passageway to this dated vehicle. On the front door, a muted blue screen faces the ceiling almost like a tinted windshield. On the side door, blocky diagrammatic



Installation View: *Sarah Braman: You Are Everything*,
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Courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash.

drawings resembling something like several condensed overhead views of a city block serve as an enigmatic sort of map.

Is this for entry or exit? Is this our escape pod or our trap door? The beauty of this piece (aptly titled *Now?* (2016)) along with so many others in the show is its ability to be all these things at once.

Whether a way in or out, no matter, these pieces teach us how to be in the remains of our own tired things. Take *Driving, Reading, Sleeping, Screwing* (2016). Comprised of an old truck cap, steel, aluminum, colored glass, a Persian rug, and hand-dyed fabric, this shelter invites viewers to do any or all of those things inside. Strewn across the rug, a selection of books awaits viewers, free to enter the pieces and stay awhile. Inside, we could be camping, hiding out, seeking refuge, or simply making the best of this world in all that's left. Walking throughout Braman's field of domestic and spatial configurations, one has the distinct sense that anything more uniform would be denying current global and geopolitical climates. *Driving, Reading, Sleeping, Screwing's* combination of highly manufactured colored-glass walls with hand-dyed tent-like fabrics and an old maroon truck top (most likely also from the 1980's) speaks to the impossibility of relying too heavily any old self-assured architectural or sculptural strategies.

Particularly stunning is the work's ability to balance unrest with a distinctly Panglossian attitude. Braman's pitch-perfect coloration (oranges, pinks, purples, magentas) combined with her gleaner's sensibility firmly announce it will make the best of this world in spite of it. At the same time the material and formal juxtapositions articulate a disturbance in the most literal sense and in the broader historical one. With *In Bed* (2016) (how do we sleep when the planet is melting?) steel bunk beds sit stacked at an angle. The normal configuration, one bed atop another, has been disrupted. A new structure emerges that is both alluring in form and impossible as a functional object. And yet, the particular arrangement seems to propose a strategy for a new kind of habitable space. Here again, Braman creates additional walls in the frames where there weren't any previously. On one side, a large pane of pink glass fills a void in the framework. On another, more hand-dyed fabrics hang down creating a kind of fort. In the top bedframe, a large semitransparent stock reproduction of a sunset and clouds rests where the mattress should be, again a reminder that this is perhaps all we have, the best we can do.

In the future, after all the presidents, when America is thinking again, piecing itself back together the best it knows how, we might look towards Sarah Braman's sculptures to help us. The beautiful precariousness of a piece like *Now?* has an urgency about it that feels all too appropriate to our flailing political institutions and neoliberalism economics. What can we do in the aftermath of our failed machines? How, if at all, can we recuperate or make use of these? Enter half a Celica. Enter a bedframe with a door attached to it. Enter two minimal wall pieces made of plywood, one titled *T.V.*, the other *Radio*. Braman's work asks how we can be



Sarah Braman, *Driving, sleeping, screwing, reading*, 2016. Truck cap, steel, aluminum, glass, rug, books, hand-dyed fabric, acrylic sticker and acrylic set paint. 81 by 100 1/2 by 101 3/4 inches. Courtesy the artist and

mindful custodians of cultural and domestic spaces.

Mitchell-Innes & Nash.

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