

## LOS ANGELES – “NEO POVERA” AT L&M ARTS THROUGH JULY 6TH, 2013

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Andy Ralph, *Manifold Destiny* (2013), via L&M Arts

L&M Arts' current exhibition, *Neo Povera*, presents a group of works in the spirit of the 1960's *Arte Povera* movement, meant to exist purely in and of their own material while pushing the boundaries of acceptable art. The *Arte Povera* movement attempted to strip symbolic implications from an object, leaving only the true material, thus making art that is unassuming, present, undivided from reality, minimal in material cost, and devoid of signifiers. At its conception, the group of Italian artists brought together by [Germano Celant](#) intended to dissolve the boundary between elite art and a common experience.

*Neo Povera* continues this theoretical tradition, while avoiding some of the revolutionary sentiments exposed by Celant and his fellows. Even though the exhibition displays a breadth of art forged from untraditional materials, it does little to question contemporary economic practices surrounding the art market, instead, creating works that exist firmly within that same market. No piece matches the incendiary work of the original movement, such as [Piero Manzoni's](#) *Artist's Shit* or [Jannis Kounellis](#) and [Mario Merz's](#) (*Untitled / Twelve Horses*). [Patrick Meagher's](#) *Chest* is one of the most subversive objects, presenting a polystyrene and chromed steel sculpture identical to common packing crates. It is completely devoid of the artist's touch, showing that the modern iteration of *Arte Povera* is more plastic and less alive, focusing rather on the item created.

In many cases, the exhibition explores phenomenological experience rather than cultural critique. Works in the gallery's Viewing Room are mostly off-white, jarred by the violent pink/orange of [Tom Driscoll's](#) *Flip*, which encases found construction equipment with colorful gypsum cement. Also in this room [Jiri Kovanda's](#) *Sugar House* is stoic and weighty; despite being constructed of sugar cubes.

On the other hand, certain works magically transform their material into something fanciful. Like [Tara Donovan's](#) *Untitled (Mylar)* a shining sculpture of intricately constructed spheres which organically blossoms in one corner of the East Gallery, or works by [Ana Bidart](#) and [Maya Lin](#) who transformed credit card rolls and a phonebook respectively by topographically cutting away from the paper.



*Neo-Povera* (Installation View), via L&M Arts



Neo-Povera (Installation View), via L&M Arts

Numerous works in plastic are displayed, including [Karla Black's](#) *Spared the Sight* — a large cellophane installation in the center of the East Gallery that transparently divides the viewers from the gallery's skylight, or [Jedediah Caesar's](#) *Untitled* urethane resin, mixed media, and wood sculpture which captures found objects in a ghostly, semi-transparent block. Adjacent to Caesar's work is [Marianne Vitale's](#) *Cold Cut (C)*, comprised of reclaimed lumber that is scratched and beaten, bearing faded orange stripes from a construction site. Both these works have a depth and mystery to them that draws the viewer in, while the porous, warm wood marks a strong contrast with the concealing, solid urethane resin. Vitale's piece stands as the by-product of manual labor, contrasted with Caesar's technological, precise approach.



Neo-Povera (Installation View), via L&M Arts

Works in the West Gallery appear to be in strong dialogue across this spectrum of products of labor against the products of science. For instance [G.T. Pellizzi's](#) *Four-Hands-on Abstraction (Composition 1)* is a beautiful installation of iron pipes in a geometric constellation. Nearby, *Clear Idea Bubbles* by [Aki Sasamoto](#) repurposes plastic recycling bags, hanging them like square flags. While Pellizzi's pipes take on a secondary 'artistic' quality due to their composition, Sasamoto's work only transcends its plastic-bag beginning with the aid of her title. In fact Sasamoto's piece is more closely aligned with Arte Povera's core value of pushing the boundaries of art, where she asks the viewer to contemplate synthetic thoughts.

Curator [Harmony Murphy](#) brought together a broad assortment of work united by their unusual materials and straightforward presentation, placing contemporary materials alongside more traditional ones, thus modernizing the philosophy. Ultimately, however, this exhibition does less to challenge the nature of art so much as it questions our relationship with technology and modernity.