

ARTslant

Saldaña in Mid-Wilshire

by Michael Shaw

Ersatz

Steve Turner Contemporary

6026 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90036

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Combining handmade fetishism within a conceptual framework, Zoë Sheehan Saldaña's exhibition, *Ersatz*, invests craftwork with a new, troubling presence. The procession of handmade life preservers (ranging in size from adult to child) calls to mind the precision of Kaz Oshiro mixed with the tenderness of Charles LeDray. Oddly, the arrangement of life jackets is followed by a paper towel dispenser on the adjacent wall. Like the jackets, the paper is handmade, embossed and hand-folded. A shadow of apocalypse marks both. After the fall, we'll all be making our own life preservers and paper towels.

The exhibition continues into the rear gallery with a group of intimate objects set on shelves, including: a handmade match (edition of 250), a handmade matchbook (edition of 50), homemade ketchup, homemade black pigment and 20 grams of homemade burley tobacco in an acrylic and stainless steel container (edition of 12). And let's not forget *Graphite Recovered From a Dead Man's Pencil Sharpener*, 2009, a vial barely filled with slivers of pencil lead. Though at first the subtle gesture appears as an act of memorial (or even survival), the more time spent with the object, - the procurement of such a nebulously useful item - makes the gesture increasingly macabre. The objects in the second gallery, meanwhile, are joined by the video *1 second/1 hour*, 2008-2009, a time lapse animation of a Vermont landscape condensed from over a year down to 2 ½ hours, which is duly impressive, if a bit out of place.

The emergency/vaguely apocalyptic theme of the *Ersatz* items, with their pristine execution and presentation, deftly play out a process most of us participate in: that of keeping worst-case scenarios and a sense of panic at safe distance, just so that we may eke out one more moment in the here-and-now.

- Michael Shaw



All images courtesy the artist and Steve Turner Contemporary: Zoë Sheehan Saldaña, Installation view, Steve Turner Contemporary, September 2009; *Graphite Recovered From a Dead Man's Pencil Sharpener*, 2008. Graphite in glass vial, 2 5/8 x 3/4 x 3/4 inches.

Posted by [Michael Shaw](#) on 10/05